



Untold War

New Perspectives in
First World War Studies

*Edited by Heather Jones, Jennifer O'Brien
and Christoph Schmidt-Supprian*

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Untold War

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UNTOLD WAR—FOREWORD

John Horne

Untold, a war that produces new books by the hundred and articles by the thousand every year? Untold, the story of the ten million war-dead and the cohorts who survived when the disappearance of the last living link with the conflict through the death of the final veteran is, almost everywhere, a national event? Untold, an epic that has been widely related in the tragic mode as a tale of destructive modernity—an anti-Iliad for our times? The claim might surprise. And yet like a vast mountain brooding behind the closer and even vaster peak of the second world conflict, the First World War has long been omnipresent while poorly perceived, some faces lit with constant attention and apparently familiar, others shrouded in darkness and whole aspects facing away from historical attention. Only in the last twenty years, as the flags were struck on the ideological battle-grounds of the twentieth century and people sought to fix their place in history more by the past and ‘memory’ than by future utopias, has it seemed possible to begin taking something like the full measure of the earlier conflict.

In part this has been a matter of sources—made possible either by the new use of the vast record base long available in many western societies or the opening of whole archives in the former Communist states, a process that is still under way. Even more it has arisen from new questions, and notably from those about the nature of the war experience and how this was later reconstructed or marginalized through remembrance and silence—in ways that are, themselves, deeply historical. The war has been triangulated. A rapidly shifting present has allowed the limited and partial nature of past coverage to be explored and accounted for while revealing multiple facets of the original event that have remained . . . well, untold. Officers, military chaplains, occupied peoples, juvenile prostitutes, illustrated war magazines, children’s toys, women artists—these and more are unknown chapters of the war explored in this book, whose title is apt and amply justified.

Cultural history has provided the conceptual tools and methodologies on which this process has relied. This is not because ‘culture’ (whether high, low, official or commercial, avant-garde or mainstream)

has always been the object of the inquiry, although sometimes it has. Nor is it because, after the political and military history that dominated earlier generations of writing on the war and the economic and social history that held sway in the 1970s and '80s, the hour of cultural history as a newer sub-discipline (at least for the contemporary period) had somehow come, influenced by the vigor of neighboring literary, feminist and cultural studies—though there is some truth in this. Rather a more profound shift was under way, or so it seems to me, which is best illuminated by the way the American anthropologist, the late Clifford Geertz, defined and practised cultural anthropology. Since culture derives ultimately from humankind's innate need and capacity to engage in symbolic communication, including language, culture is not a sub-set of human activity but a constitutive element of it. Consequently, all forms of history—economic, social, political, military—have a cultural dimension, whether it be (to take two examples from this volume) the self-understanding of officer corps transformed by the maelstrom of the Western Front or the ways in which wartime populations imagined a code of justice and fair dealing in terms of its nemesis—the war profiteer. The best cultural historical writing on the First World War does not create a separate speciality or deny the specificity of other approaches but rather seeks to map the manifold histories of the war by paying particular attention to the cultural dimension—through experience, meaning, representations and memory. The contributions to this volume are exemplary in that regard.

One further feature of the volume should be commended to the reader or potential reader who may be leafing through this foreword. The bulk of the contributions come from postgraduate or newly post-doctoral students from across Europe. It is clear that a new generation of historians is in the making which moves easily across national as well as intellectual frontiers, thinks in comparative and transnational terms about a war that was truly global, and is inventive in its passion to research and recount the sides of the conflict that have for so long remained unseen and untold. We have been privileged in Trinity College Dublin to have a remarkable cohort of such doctoral students. But we are not unique, as is shown by the vitality of the International Society for First World War Studies, which was founded in 2001 by research students and whose third conference in Dublin in 2005 gave rise to this volume. If the strength of a subject is measured by the youth as well as the quality of its practitioners, the book promises a bright future.

INTRODUCTION: UNTOLD WAR

Heather Jones, Jennifer O'Brien and Christoph Schmidt-Supprian

If we had come back in 1916 we could have unleashed a storm out of the pain and intensity of our experiences. If we go back now we shall be weary, broken-down, burnt-out, rootless and devoid of hope. We shall no longer be able to cope. No one will understand us [...].¹

Perhaps we have misunderstood the First World War. However, this is not for want of trying. Over the past twenty years there has been intensive historical study of the conflict which has provided a rich variety of new assessments and debunked older myths. The staple teachings about the war, which had become established 'truths' by the 1970s, have largely been revised. To cite but some examples: it has been conclusively shown that German atrocities did happen in Belgium and France in 1914; that the European response to the outbreak of war in 1914 was not one of unmitigated enthusiasm; that the conflict was not seen as futile by civilian populations at the time who were often prepared to go to great lengths to support their country's war effort; and that the Treaty of Versailles was not the principal cause of interwar Germany's economic problems.² In addition, the belief in a rigid separation between the world of the front line and the home front has been radically revised—the interaction between the two has been shown to be far greater than previously thought. Although civilians' and soldiers' actual physical movement between the two spheres was limited, letters, parcels, newspapers, photographs and the system of leave meant that a constant cultural exchange occurred. Our view of the war's impact on gender relations has also become far more nuanced. For example, women's entry into previously male-dominated

¹ Remarque (1996), p. 206.

² On German atrocities see Horne and Kramer (2001); on the myth of 'war enthusiasm' see Becker (1977); Gienitz (1998); Gregory (2003); Verhey (2000); Ziemann (2007), pp. 18–19; on popular belief in the war effort see Audoin-Rouzeau and Becker (2000). On the Treaty of Versailles see Marks (1998) and Bessel (1993), pp. 69–124.

spheres of employment during the conflict is no longer seen simply as a straightforward process of emancipation.³

It may, therefore, seem churlish to describe the First World War as 'untold,' given the range of new research taking place and the significant historical interest in the conflict. Yet the idea of the war as 'untold' is indeed fitting. Not only does the ambiguity of the term express the dramatic scale and unprecedented nature of the 1914–1918 conflagration, it also aptly captures the reality that much of what we know about the war is still partial or based upon old assumptions which would benefit from new examination. There are still many questions that have yet to be answered. In this sense, historians continue to work within the initial postwar problematic, first posed by those who lived through the conflict, summed up by Vera Brittain as 'a desire to understand how the whole calamity had happened.'⁴

This desire continues to inspire historical study and new interpretations. Major historiographical debates about the nature of the war have taken place in the past fifteen years and have opened up vast new areas for research. Principally, the shift towards a cultural investigation has led to a dynamic cultural history of the conflict and has also revitalized the diplomatic, social, economic and military histories of 1914–1918. This book is testimony to the vibrancy of this process—each of the contributions in different ways has integrated elements of the new cultural analysis. In addition, however, each of the chapters is loosely linked by a broader question which emerges throughout this volume: how to locate the war in terms of a specific, coherent 1914–1918 cultural-historical space, given the problematic scale of the conflict and the shifting, plural nature of the global war experience. The range and diversity of the war experiences that emerge in this collection illustrate both the inner and outer limits of the conflict's parameters. The sheer variety of war experiences revealed here challenges the very definition of any unitary 'war' of 1914–1918: its location, its functions and its principal agents emerge as more far flung, diverse and inchoate than the keywords often used to describe it—catastrophe, total, great—can convey. Perhaps what this volume offers is, in some regards, a series of 'wars' each with their own very different relationship to the traditional, historical paradigm of the Western Front fulcrum. Michael Howard has already suggested

³ On women and the war, see Macmillan (2003) and Grayzel (2003).

⁴ Brittain (1999 [1933]), p. 471.

that two wars broke out in August 1914—a ‘third’ Balkan war between Austria-Hungary, Serbia and Russia and a ‘first’ German war of expansion.⁵ Perhaps we should take this as a starting point for dismantling the idea of the Great War into closely linked, overlapping, component conflicts. There is certainly a good argument to be made that the exit of Russia deserves more attention as the culmination of an actual war in its own right, with all that that entailed—armistice, peace deal and establishing a new postwar order—rather than simply as a significant turning-point in an overall 1914–1918 chronology. Similarly, for Ireland the argument can be made that there are two wars occurring concurrently and interacting—the nationalist conflict with Britain which breaks out in 1916, and has its origins in 1912 and its own July Crisis in the Buckingham Conference of July 1914—and the World War, which has different turning points in Ireland, consisting of 1914 when the Irish nationalist movement split, 1916 when the Somme battle devastated the Irish divisions from North and South, and the conscription crisis of 1917. These two wars interacted and indeed, often recruited from the same population groupings and institutions. For the Balkan region the case can also be made for a ‘long’ First World War that breaks out in 1912 and ends in 1923.

The ongoing historical debate about the nature of ‘total war’ and 1914–1918 has been somewhat nuanced in this volume by the revelation of just how plural the conflict actually was—its totalizing tendencies are shown here to have paradoxically produced diversity, innovation and difference, as much as they also gave rise to certain similarities across wartime societies.⁶ How to historicize this plural nature of the war remains problematic. As Stig Förster has pointed out, the paradox is that understanding the totalizing dynamic of the war requires an equally ‘total history, whereby all the available research methods are required to capture its enormous complexity.’⁷ Yet the very nature of historical writing, by definition, is never ‘total’ and often functions by reducing the diversity of the war to grand narratives. Conversely, perhaps the most simplistic grand narrative of the First World War as epic tragedy that pervades its popular representation to this day is what

⁵ Michael Howard, ‘The First World War Reconsidered’ in Winter, Parker and Habeck, eds (1994), p. 19.

⁶ On ‘total war’ and the First World War see Stig Förster’s introduction in Chicker-ing and Förster, eds (2000), pp. 1–15.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

has allowed the subject to retain public interest—it has a set narrative form that is instantly recognisable and familiar. It is surely a paradox that if the war did mark a break with the pre-1914 era through this ‘tragic narrative,’ which emphasized the end of an ‘idyllic’ prewar era and the loss of a generation, it also served to reinforce a stable sense of unbroken connectedness with the past among subsequent generations by establishing fixed, long-term commemorative patterns that continue to link individuals with 1914–1918 in an immediate and emotional way.

The problem of how to locate this very ‘plural’ war in history is not new. However, it is usually seen in terms of how to situate the conflict in relation to a broader historical trajectory of nineteenth and twentieth century history, as highlighted by David Blackbourn’s idea of the war as marking the end of a ‘long’ German nineteenth century or Eric Hobsbawm’s thesis that the war opened an ‘Age of Extremes,’ a short twentieth century, 1914–1991, rather than in terms of how to reconcile the war’s inherent diversity with its great event status.⁸ More radical still, is the idea that 1914 marked the beginning of a thirty year war or even as Niall Ferguson suggests, a fifty years war, an age of mass killing and racial hatred: ‘in truth the era of truly global conflict began ten years before 1914 and ended eight years after 1945.’⁹ For Stig Förster, the war launched ‘a cycle of wars and crises that concluded only with the end of the Cold War.’¹⁰ Yet arguably none of these interpretations truly captures the plural nature of the 1914–1918 historical phase itself; the continuities and breaks during these four years operate differently at the level of different countries, themes and topics, such as occupation, colonialism or childhood, as revealed in this volume.

First World Wars?

The difficult plural nature of the conflict, in part, helps to explain why certain aspects of the war have been overlooked. For despite all the dynamic new developments in the historiography, a surprising number of older assumptions about the First World War survive. The view that

⁸ Blackbourn (2003); Hobsbawm (1994).

⁹ On this idea of a thirty year war, see: Duménil, Beaupré and Ingrao, eds (2004), p. 14; Ferguson (2007), p. lxxi and Michael Howard, ‘A Thirty Years’ War? The Two World Wars in Historical Perspective,’ *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th ser., vol. 3 (1993), pp. 171–184.

¹⁰ Förster in Chickering and Förster, eds (2000), p. 5.

Europeans in 1914 expected that any coming war would be of short duration has largely remained unchallenged by the new cultural history, despite the fact that recent work has increasingly explored prewar visions of apocalypse and nineteenth century dread about the nature of future warfare.¹¹ Cultural historians also generally tend to accept the description of the First World War as the first industrialized conflict—when Europeans realized that their industrial capacity could be turned into devastating forms of warfare—without examining how this process occurred and how it became such a dominant cultural trope. Yet as Gail Braybon has pointed out

The development of “modern warfare” is an issue for debate amongst recent military historians. It is *not* widely accepted that 1914–1918 was the “first modern war,” or that it was some kind of template for twentieth-century warfare. It has to be viewed in the context of developments in weaponry and tactics during the American Civil War, the German wars, the Japanese-Russian war and, indeed, the Boer war. “Modern war” certainly does not just mean using machine guns, digging trenches or killing thousands of soldiers, as far too many social/cultural historians seem blithely to assume.¹²

There is a need to look at how our paradigmatic view of the war as both ‘modern’ and ‘industrial’ developed in cultural representations at the time and since. Given that most contemporary observers were obsessed with the image of the industrial battlefield and how technology was being harnessed to destructive ends, the absence of any real interrogation of how this cultural image of ‘industrialization’ developed, who promoted it and how it evolved throughout the conflict remains striking. Yet this process of culturally defining and identifying the idea of ‘industrial warfare’ was a crucial aspect of the war. Typical of contemporary comments are those by a German doctor on the Western Front, David George Bantlin who recorded in February 1917 how ‘the British prisoners tell terrible stories about the effects of the flame-throwers. In truth, it is a horrible weapon. What else will humans think of to bring death and destruction?’¹³ We still know too little about how such attitudes and images evolved. Moreover, this question is closely linked

¹¹ Winter (1996); Pick (1996). See also H. G. Wells for an example of prewar fears: Wells (1908).

¹² Braybon, ed. (2003), p. 7.

¹³ Georg David Bantlin, Stabsarzt, Infanteriedivision 26, Diary, 19 February 1917, cited in Hirschfeld et al., eds (2006), p. 193.

to another: how levels of violence fluctuated during the conflict—both chronologically and geographically. As Niall Ferguson has pointed out, it is too easy to assume that an increase in arms equates to an increase in violence—the issue is rather why particular weapons or techniques became acceptable, and how and when during the conflict this dynamic developed.¹⁴ Central to this process was the ‘cycle of violence’ which often evolved around a particular new technology such as gas or submarine warfare and which led to a spiralling usage based on reciprocity. Each of these cycles followed different patterns—cultural historians need to look at this process in more detail, fully engaging with the work of military historians who have often covered these issues from a technical perspective.¹⁵ We also need to consider the urban-rural relationship at the heart of the conflict. In part this work has already begun. The shift in the new historiography has been towards comparatively exploring the heterogeneous nature of the home front—with particular focus on cities and regions.¹⁶ But there is a need to know more about how the relatively new, modern European urban landscape of the early twentieth century responded to the conflict in contrast to rural areas and how the rural-urban relationship evolved. Was this still a predominantly rural war or is it, in certain ways, the first modern, urban conflagration and what can this tell us about the nature of modernization and totalizing warfare? These questions deserve greater attention in order to obtain a better understanding of the relationship between the Great War and the process of European industrialization and modernization.

In addition, the eschatological fears that the war unleashed deserve further attention as it is only by exploring these that it becomes possible to understand the nature of interwar angst. Interwar Europe was not only dominated by fear of the former enemy but also by fear of what further industrialization might produce by way of war methods. As the British Lord Justice, Robert Younger, stated in 1920 in a speech to the conference of the International Law Association

Most of us are convinced that civilisation, as we know it, could not survive such another calamity. If a new world war is to burst upon us again and

¹⁴ Ferguson (2007), p. xxxvi.

¹⁵ The two exceptions are Christian Gienitz's work on the aerial bombardment of towns and Rolf Dieter-Müller's chapter on chemical warfare in Chickering and Förster, eds (2000).

¹⁶ On cities see Winter and Robert, eds (1997); for two recent excellent regional studies see Purseigle (2006) and Ziemann (2007).

be waged with the weapons of destruction made available for combatants by the intervening march and progress of applied science, in thirty, twenty, aye, even in ten years' time, then victors and vanquished, civilian no less than combatant, must perish in the struggle. Our civilisation, a brief episode in the life of the human race, will [...] have reached its apogee and a return to primeval savagery will have begun.¹⁷

Such words highlight how contemporaries understood the war within a framework of *global* modernization—something which the historiography still needs to interrogate further. For another aspect of the conflict that deserves greater attention is the wide range of different geographical areas affected. The First World War is still very much seen in terms of the war on the Western Front. Despite more recent work on Australia, the Middle East, the Baltic States and Russia, the full extent of the war's geographical reach is not reflected in the existing historiography or popular memory, to the extent that the renowned writer Vikram Seth could claim, as recently as 2005, that 'the First World War did not fully deserve this subsequently conferred name, fought as it was mainly in Europe.'¹⁸ The Balkans, India and Russia, for example, remain largely excluded from discussion in debates regarding recent historiographical shifts.¹⁹

In particular, the Russian Revolution and its impact remains marginalized in the recent historiography of the First World War, despite the fact that it was deeply embedded in contemporaries' understanding of events at the time.²⁰ The idea of revolution—both real and imagined—was central to the whole war experience but we still know too little about what kinds of revolutionary dreams, language or utopias evolved and inspired people during the war. This seems a major gap for a conflict whose participants were not only often highly familiar with the language of class revolution, but were also frequently engaged with the rhetoric

¹⁷ The International Law Association, *Report of the Twenty-Ninth Conference Held at the Town Hall, Portsmouth, England, May 27th–31st, 1920*, (London: 1920), p. 248.

¹⁸ Seth (2005), p. 67. Over a million Indians were involved in the war; their history remains overlooked. On German occupation in the Baltic area see Liulevicius (2000). For a wide-ranging and personal assessment of the impact of the war in the Middle East see Robert Fisk (2006). On the memory of Gallipoli in Australia see Macleod (2004).

¹⁹ One recent exception is Alan Kramer's book *Dynamic of Destruction. Culture and Mass Killing in the First World War* (Oxford: 2007).

²⁰ One good example of how the distinction between war history and the history of the revolution in Russia might be overcome is Peter Gattrell's *A Whole Empire Walking. Refugees in Russia during World War I* (Bloomington: 1999).

of national revolution—one need only think of the fact that the conflict was sparked by Gavrilo Princip, a Bosnian Serb seeking to bring the Serb minority in Bosnia-Herzegovina into a greater Serbia. The romantic and utopian rhetoric of national revolution, class revolution and even pacifist or religious revolution was present in this war in a way that raises questions about the relationship of wartime ‘revolution’ to the modernization and industrialization processes discussed above. The rhetoric of wartime revolutionary nationalism, which particularly affected Ireland, the peoples of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and to some extent Ottoman Turkey, was perhaps the logical corollary of the nationalist mobilization tropes used by belligerent states and societies across Europe to harness the nation for war in 1914. Its origins go back to the advance of the nation state ideal in the late nineteenth century—but it also owed a great debt to the social language and utopian assertions about victory that were made by belligerent states and populations during the 1914–1918 period. It is here—in the interaction between wartime revolutionary nationalisms and mobilization for the 1914–1918 total war—that we find one relationship that would go on to feed into fascism in the interwar period. For arguably while the idealized national rhetoric that state belligerents used to mobilize their populations for war had largely been discredited by 1918, the romantic rhetoric of national revolution had not—and if anything had actually gained in strength.

It is for this reason in particular that we need more studies of how the war affected Eastern and South-Eastern Europe—the ideas it sparked, the revolutionary aspirations it encouraged and the disillusionment it brought. In this context we also need to reconsider the impact of the war in terms of contemporaries’ cultural conception of geography and sense of place. How did the war create a new understanding of ‘Eastern’ and ‘Western’ Europe for example? How did it redefine the cultural relationship between the imperial center and the periphery, between Britain and its colonies or France and its overseas possessions? It is clear that it generally led to the abandonment of the old internal European multi-ethnic empire state structure in favor of the nation state model—but how this occurred is still rather unclear. Austria-Hungary and Ottoman Turkey are the two clearest examples of internal European multi-ethnic empires that disintegrated, but the phenomenon also partially appeared in Germany which lost its ethnically non-German areas such as Alsace-Lorraine and large parts of its Polish-populated eastern territories, and the United Kingdom which lost a major component,

Southern Ireland, in the wake of the war. We thus have to ask why *internal* European multi-ethnic Empires largely did not survive the war intact, whereas Europe's overseas *external* empires generally did (with the exception of Germany and the Ottoman Empire).

At the heart of this process are questions about what the war did to citizens' understanding of their own relationship to their state and their expectations of how the state should be structured. How did the war extend literacy and redefine local and regional identity for soldiers who in the French, Serbian, Italian and Russian armies were still largely from a peasant background? How the war impacted upon French soldiers' political understanding has been explored by Len Smith; we still do not know enough about many other armies.²¹ Indeed, as Benjamin Ziemann has contended, 'we still lack a comprehensive social and experiential history of German soldiers between 1914 and 1918.'²² In addition, we lack detailed cultural studies of the multiple wartime institutions that were so crucial to social mobilization. Isabel Hull's recent pioneering study of how a particular institutional culture influenced the German army highlights how fruitful looking at institutional cultures can be—this approach could be adapted to look at a whole array of wartime institutions such as censorship services, foreign offices, schools or police forces.²³ Finally, peace movements have been strangely occluded in recent war history. These also served as a way of redefining the relationship between the citizen and the state. How they operated during the war, their continuities with prewar peace movements such as the International Peace Bureau and postwar movements such as the *Nie Wieder Krieg* campaign in Germany, merits far greater scrutiny. Moreover, any examination of the peace movements has to take into account the wartime violence that sustained them—the peace movements did not operate in a vacuum. They were also a war phenomenon; the direct corollary of wartime brutalization.

And yet, this problematic of the 'plural war' stated, there are three key elements that bring very diverse war experiences together in this volume. The first is that all the contributions contain elements of the new cultural history that provides them with crucial, flexible tools for understanding different phenomena. Though the topics of research

²¹ Smith (1994).

²² Ziemann (2007), p. 2. See also the recent work of Alexander Watson on German soldiers: Watson (2005).

²³ Hull (2005).

are vastly different, the intellectual paradigms used to interpret them here all owe a debt to the existing cultural historiography of the war. Central to this is the idea of 'war cultures'—the concept that societies during the conflict developed a wide range of coping mechanisms that operated in the form of cultural matrices, binding and consolidating wartime group identities.²⁴ This book is informed by the ongoing debate about how these cultures operated—the sheer variety of different ways that populations mobilized is clear here, as is the delicate, interactive dynamic between coercion, cooption and compliance that allowed these cultures to exist. Generally, each of the contributions to this book reveals mechanisms—value mechanisms such as belief in sacrifice, equality or a shared national community, or military mechanisms such as regimental, technical and administrative cultures—that enabled and channelled a collective emotional investment in the conflict, allowing populations to continue fighting and, after the armistice, to remember.²⁵ It was this that allowed the war to reveal what Jay Winter, Geoffrey Parker and Mary Habeck have termed 'the propensity for populations to generate a commitment to a policy that involved unprecedented carnage.'²⁶ It is clear that all of the contributions here to some extent explore the crucial link between 'war cultures' and the 'war values' that they produced, sustained and commemorated.

Second, this volume adopts a wide-ranging, comparative approach as a way of representing the plural nature of the war. While some of the chapters focus on a single country, their position in this collection allows for implicit comparison with other national and regional experiences discussed in the other contributions. In addition, several of the

²⁴ For an excellent definition of the term 'war cultures' see Duménil, Beaupré and Ingrao (2004), pp. 17–18: 'Par "culture de guerre" on entend l'ensemble des pratiques et des représentations des acteurs en temps de conflit, qui diffèrent de celles des temps de paix et qui sont marquées de sceau des multiples expériences de guerre qui variant, elles, en fonction de la classe sociale, du genre, du niveau d'éducation, de la situation géographique. La conjugaison des problématiques relèvent d'un côté, des pratiques et des représentations—l'histoire culturelle—et de l'autre des expériences—Erfahrungsgeschichte—apparaît comme étant l'un des fronts pionniers de l'histoire de la grande guerre. D'une part elle permettait de dégager ce qui relève d'une communauté de destin, d'une civilisation en guerre étroitement lié à l'époque au contexte aux années de conflit transcendant finalement les différences nationales: en somme ce qui fait la spécificité de l'être en guerre. D'autre part la conjonction de ces approches aiderait à dévoiler les différences dans les cultures en guerre en fonction de l'expérience faite ou de facteurs antérieurs ou exogènes au conflit lui-même.'

²⁵ Horne (1997); Audoin-Rouzeau (1997).

²⁶ Winter, Parker and Habeck, eds (2000), Introduction, p. 3.

contributions here adopt an explicitly comparative approach, studying two or more nations or regions, reflecting overall historiographical trends: comparative studies have already revealed significant new ways of understanding the war—as a crusade, as a clash between differing ideals of ‘*civilisation* and *Kultur*’ and as a process of brutalization.²⁷ A comparative overview of the historiographical interpretation of the war throughout the twentieth century by Jay Winter and Antoine Prost now allows historians to assess the multiple historical narratives that developed across different generations and their interaction with myth and memory, thereby assessing how ‘the historical category “the First World War” has been constructed.’²⁸ In addition, two comprehensive encyclopaedias of the war, which provide comparative insights into the conflict, have been published in the past four years and another is due for publication by Larousse.²⁹ Hew Strachan’s multi-volume history of the war also promises to cover the subject through a comparative, international approach.³⁰ The international group of historians attached to the Historial de la Grande Guerre at Péronne, which opened in 1992, have been instrumental in encouraging comparative approaches, as has Klartext Publishers in Essen, working together with Gerhard Hirschfeld, Gerd Krumeich and Irena Renz. Comparative work has also been pioneered by postgraduate researchers, particularly by those involved in the International Society for First World War Studies, whose work is represented in this book, as well as in the two earlier companion volumes in this series.³¹

However, this is not to claim that the comparative approach has fulfilled its potential. It remains too focused on nation states between 1914 and 1918, whereas broader thematic comparison could allow us to surmount chronological boundaries in new and interesting ways. For example, comparison still needs to be more fruitfully applied to exploring the connections between the First and Second World Wars. If we look at some of the themes that dominate Second World War historiography—occupation, race, captivity—these motifs are only now coming to the forefront of First World War studies. Conversely, ‘class,’

²⁷ On the war as a crusade see Audoin-Rouzeau and Becker (2000). On brutalization see Mosse (1990).

²⁸ Winter and Prost (2005), p. 2.

²⁹ Hirschfeld, Krumeich and Renz (2003); Audoin-Rouzeau and Becker (2004).

³⁰ Strachan (2001).

³¹ The authors are indebted to the previous two collections in this series: Macleod and Purseigle, eds (2004) and Purseigle ed. (2005).

such a central phenomenon in the first half of the twentieth century, remains an understudied issue in the recent historiography of both world wars. The representation of the First World War *during* the Second is also a crucial issue. For example, the radical response to Blitzkrieg—and the awe it inspired—can only be understood in the context of societies that had developed an understanding and image of war that was fundamentally based upon 1914–1918 static trench conflict. In sum, there is a need for more ambitious comparative approaches.

Third, the different authors respond to the problematic of the 'plural war' in different ways here by broadly conducting their analysis within four different wartime thematic spaces—combat; civic and national identity; social and moral values; and remembrance. These themes, which overlap in many ways and, indeed, interact across the whole volume, offer one way of responding to the problem outlined above of how to locate the diversity of the war experience within broader interpretations of the conflict as a specific, major historical event. For it is only when the war is to some extent broken down into these thematic definitions that it acquires any kind of loose internal coherence.

Four Thematic Spaces

These four thematic spaces are not arbitrary. They represent core areas of investigation in current First World War studies, as a brief discussion of how the contributions here relate to the existing historiography will illustrate. The first section of this book explores combat in terms of how it was experienced and imagined. The inclusion of the imaginary alongside the experiential is deliberate as the interaction between the two is now a dominant theme in the historiography.³² Wencke Meteling (Chapter 1) examines the factors that created a shared regimental identity within French and German regiments on the Western Front. Her chapter incorporates cultural history questions about mobilization and shared group affiliations into a broader military history study of how regiments operated and how they evolved over the course of the war in two different national armies. In many respects her study applies questions to the French and German armies that have already been

³² See, for example, the discussion in Hirschfeld, Krumeich and Renz (1993), or in Audoin-Rouzeau and Becker (2000).

the subject of work in Britain—illustrating the different trajectories of national historiographies and the value of a comparative approach. In Britain, the concept of the learning curve has been used to explain how armies improved throughout the duration of the conflict and how the lessons learnt at such cost in 1916 and 1917 led to significant advances in military practice.³³ Meteling painstakingly explores whether this was the case for the French and German armies, and reinserts the study of officers into a military combat historiography that has until recently been largely focused on other rank soldiers. While in Britain, a more nuanced picture of the military generals has emerged—few now accept the old idea of generals and officers who were universally cavalier with the lives of their men—this issue largely remains to be explored in Franco-German historiography.

The influence of the new British historiography of the First World War is evident in Edward Madigan's contribution (Chapter 2) which relates to the ongoing debate between historians and literary critics regarding the role of the British 'disenchantment' writers in establishing a particular view of the war as futile and pointless.³⁴ This debate is explored by Madigan who shows how the literary representation of Anglican chaplains in the interwar period was at odds with the appraisals of their role made during the conflict. The juxtaposition of the imagined chaplain that evolved in postwar literary depictions with the real role of chaplains and their behavior at the front highlights the importance of the imaginary in influencing the way that experiences were transformed into cultural norms.

The relationship between the imagined and the experiential is also at the heart of Catriona Pennell's argument (Chapter 3). Pennell looks at how invasion fears developed in south-east England, arguing that in this area an 'imagined' invasion was central to how civilians experienced the opening weeks of the conflict. Here the war's influence on civic identity becomes apparent as local structures proved integral to mobilization and to preparations for combat—a combat envisaged in the light of reports of German atrocities in Belgium and France. Existing *notables* were utilized to organize the population in the event of an evacuation, raising important questions about continuity between

³³ Sheffield (2001); Todman (2005).

³⁴ Braybon (2003), pp. 3–4.

peacetime and wartime civic structures at the local level and about the longer term cultural history of British invasion fears.

This idea of civic identity is developed more explicitly in the second section of this book where the evolution of civic and national spaces during the conflict is examined in four very different contexts: occupied Romania; occupied Brussels; Germany's African colonies; and the relationship between Austria-Hungary and Germany. In her chapter on occupied Romania (Chapter 4), Lisa Mayerhofer highlights the extent to which a form of functional cooperation developed between the occupying powers and the occupied population—a cooperation that was facilitated by Romanian elites. At the heart of the Romanian occupation, Mayerhofer argues, a kind of *modus vivendi* developed that allowed the occupiers to turn the local administrative structures into a support system for their regime. In Belgium, in contrast, Aurore François (Chapter 5) shows how the local administration used the existing legal structures of the juvenile children's court to subvert the occupier's authority and to retain independent power bases within an occupied state. She also reveals how control of the legal system for child protection came to symbolize a wider wartime concern about the moral health of the nation under occupation. Both these contributions present different ways in which occupation impacted on civil society according to different local traditions and administrative structures.

As both Mayerhofer and François's contributions reveal, the very term 'home front,' with its unitary or static connotations, fails to fully take account of the diversity of wartime experience depending on whether a civilian area fell under the control of an occupying power or remained independent. In this sense, it is more useful to consider these experiences in terms of evolving civic and national spaces. This problem of definitions is further illustrated by Daniel Steinbach's contribution (Chapter 6) which highlights the fluid nature of the ideology of *Heimat* that extended far beyond the borders of Germany to play an important role in the mobilization for war in Germany's African colonies. In Steinbach's contribution, the language and values of the German home front do not correspond to the geographical boundaries of the German state but rather correspond to a broader civic or national cultural space. The *Heimat* ideal, based upon constructing a sense of a local collective identity determined by Germanic traditions and values, impacted particularly powerfully upon German settlers in Africa, isolated by the outbreak of the conflict. In a similar light, Jan

Vermeiren's study (Chapter 7) of how the German-Austrian alliance was understood and reformulated at the outbreak of war raises interesting questions about how mobilization led to popular identification with multiple interconnected civic and national spaces which went beyond any one particular state's 'home front.' Vermeiren shows how the relationship between Germany and Austria was popularly acclaimed and reinvented at the outbreak of war. Civic space and national identity were closely linked; the contributions to this book reveal some of the ways that this interaction operated.

Wartime social and moral values were a key component of this interaction and the third section of this collection goes on to focus upon them in greater detail. These contributions draw upon the recent historiography of the war, which has emphasized the study of representations, but they also move beyond it. Taken together they suggest a need to look more closely at the way that societies negotiated a new wartime moral economy, adapting prewar moral, legal and religious norms to create acceptable wartime values which had their own internal logic. Their focus upon previously ignored source material also suggests areas for future research. What emerges here is the sheer diversity of the range of vectors—toys, art, photographs and secret denunciations—that propagated the socially established, moral norms of wartime that were accepted as hegemonic within wartime societies. Toys and children's books functioned as a form of wartime didactic media, as shown in Sonja Müller's contribution (Chapter 8). Her comparative study examines how the conflict was portrayed to children as a lesson in moral norms and reveals how British and German societies framed the war within a series of value messages about duty, sacrifice and patriotism. Sacrifice emerges again as an evolving wartime moral value in the contribution by Claudia Siebrecht (Chapter 9) which explores how German women artists used their art to define a specifically maternal understanding of sacrifice that was a response to male deaths on the battlefield. Here the women artists' own interpretation of wartime moral values, using traditional religious motifs, emerges as a means of dealing with grief—and even as a subversive means of challenging the dominant masculine trope of the soldiers' sacrifice.

Both Müller and Siebrecht's contributions also raise questions about the need for further research into questions of generation and how it functioned within wartime society. While childhood during the war is now the subject of intensive study by Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau and

Manon Pignot among others, the existence of a shared group identity among the elderly or among older adolescents remains to be explored.³⁵ As Sebastian Haffner has pointed out, the war had an enormous impact on shaping the mindsets of teenage boys of his generation.³⁶ This deserves further examination. Similarly, the question of how the war affected the generation of men too old to enlist—the generation of the fathers and grandfathers—and shaped their sense of masculinity is yet to be answered. The question of generation is fundamental to Müller's work on childhood and Siebrecht's exploration of the sense of a generational, wartime identity among mothers as portrayed by German women artists. Siebrecht's paper highlights the extent to which the war gave rise to subcultures and the way that commonplace wartime abstract values such as 'sacrifice' were imbued with particular, specific meaning by different groups within society.

The second two contributions in this section by Joëlle Beurier and François Bouloc look more closely at the dynamic between state intervention and the establishment and control of wartime moral norms. Joëlle Beurier (Chapter 10) explores how war photographs were used in France to convey particular messages about the meaning of the conflict. She shows that, in fact, French censorship of photographs was relatively lenient and that graphic, disturbing images of death on the battlefield did appear in the illustrated press without arousing public outrage. State intervention was minimal, she concludes; the limitations upon public depiction of the war were negotiated by the press and the general public, rather than solely by the state. Beurier argues that this reveals a visual language of death and destruction that was tolerated because it was placed within specific, wartime cultural and moral frameworks. For this reason, she argues pictures of desertion or mutiny were considered far more shocking than images of battlefield death—including photographs of decomposing bodies.

In a similar way, François Bouloc contends in his contribution (Chapter 11) that the image of the war profiteer evolved in conjunction with French civilians' interpretation of the conflict in terms of a war for certain civic Republican values. The profiteer was held up as an example of how those values were being transgressed, a figure who was to be excluded—and in this way, a minority 'enemy within' who

³⁵ Audoin-Rouzeau (1993).

³⁶ Haffner (2002).

served to affirm and consolidate a sense of shared wartime moral norms among the majority. Bouloc applies cultural history methodologies to the wartime economy, looking at how war profits were represented in the media and the different moral values that were placed upon them. He distinguishes between the figure of the unscrupulous wartime profiteer who failed to pay the taxes due on his gains—a focus for public anger and outrage—and those who profited legitimately, after tax, from producing for the war effort, a group he defines as ‘profiteers.’ His contribution highlights the way that French society came to distinguish between different types of war profits and the extent to which public wartime moral values were often transgressed in private. In addition, he reveals how difficult it was for contemporaries to reconcile war profits with the wartime sacrifice made by the soldiers at the front. This was such a sensitive issue that it was constantly being renegotiated. Bouloc shows how state intervention in the form of a tax on war profits became a means for the ordinary citizen to police what they considered acceptable wartime behavior. Again, as in Beurrier’s contribution, this process of negotiation was driven from below rather than above, in the form of denunciations sent to the French revenue authorities calling for named individuals to be punished for breaching wartime moral norms by not paying tax on financial gains resulting from the conflict.

This negotiation of wartime moral values did not end with the armistice of 1918. Indeed, because these new moral norms had been created in response to war, dismantling and adapting them to peace proved extremely difficult. Remembrance became one process through which this dismantling occurred, with varying levels of success. In the final section of this volume, which focuses on remembrance, Vanessa Ther (Chapter 12) shows how in Weimar Germany republicans sought to promote loyalty to the new state by employing a particular republican narrative about what the war had meant. Ultimately however, this attempt failed because of the fact that those who wished to criticize the old regime—by portraying the war as a catastrophe—did not wish to alienate the ordinary soldiers who had fought in the conflict. This meant that the republican narrative could not universally condemn all aspects of the war or wartime values. Ther reveals the complex nature of the memory of the war in Germany, showing that, in fact, the right-wing did not have total control of remembrance in the press and in literature.

While Ther explores the memory of the war in Germany during the period of the revolution and establishment of the Weimar State,

the contribution from Alan Kramer (Chapter 13) goes on to reflect upon German memory of the war over the long term. One of the paradoxes of the history of the war is that the memory of the conflict in Germany—once so deeply divisive and bitter as illustrated by Ther's work—became far less significant in the second half of the twentieth century. Kramer's contribution explores why this was the case and suggests some areas of continuity between the two world wars which require future research. How memory and history interact remains problematic, not least because no consensus exists on the nature of collective remembrance, although it is clear that a belief in a collective 'memory' was important to many historical actors even if no such thing actually existed. However, the self-conscious recognition of the role that collective forms of remembrance, and indeed the belief in a shared collective 'memory,' have played in creating the historical image of 1914–1918 is crucial to any attempt to understand the conflict, as both Ther and Kramer show. For Kramer, the failure of the German left to counteract the right-wing memory of the war in the interwar years had significant consequences, not least of which was the glamorization of war among the generation of those who had been too young to fight in 1914–1918. Kramer contrasts this interwar period with how the memory of the First World War evolved in scholarly debate, rather than public polemic, after 1945, despite a brief resurgence of public emotion over the memory of the war during the period of the Fischer controversy in the 1960s.

Recent public debate is also the subject of the contribution by Dan Todman (Chapter 14), who moves the discussion of remembrance from Germany to Britain, to consider the present understanding of the war in the United Kingdom. He explores how a sense of personal, family history has enabled the war to become a cornerstone of British identity and reflects on the way that the modern media is encouraging younger generations to engage with the memory of the conflict. Todman asks whether British popular interest in the war will survive the disappearance of the generations most immediately affected by 1914–1918. His final assessment is positive, concluding that 'at least for the immediate future, [...] the presence of the First World War in British popular culture seems secure.'³⁷ As the contributions to this book show, this also rings true at an international level, where intense scholarly debate and

³⁷ Todman, Chapter 14.

research into the war continues to thrive. This collection, it is hoped, will advance this process further.

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SECTION I

COMBAT EXPERIENCED AND IMAGINED

CHAPTER ONE

GERMAN AND FRENCH REGIMENTS ON THE
WESTERN FRONT, 1914–1918*

Wencke Meteling

Introduction

For the majority of First World War front line soldiers, the war was understood and experienced at the level of their regiment and below—their battalion, their company and their platoon. They only encountered the division level of army organization sporadically, and rarely interacted with the levels of command above this. An investigation of regiments and their components thus throws light on soldiers as well as on their officers at the level at which they participated jointly in the war. This focus on regiments allows us to resolve one of the most persistent problems in the historiography of the First World War. For years, the historiography has been starkly divided between an older, traditional military history ‘from above’ which focused on officers and a more recent history of the war ‘from below’ that emphasized the experiences of the soldiers. New scholarship has tended to concentrate almost entirely on the soldiers’ perspective and largely ignored that of the officers, as the idea of writing history ‘from above’ became discredited, resulting in a deficit of research on officers. A new study of officers that is not confined to the historiography of the general staffs is long overdue—one that examines officers’ experiences in a similar way to those of ordinary soldiers, using the new methods that have been developed within cultural history—in the interests of an integrated military history.¹

* I would like to thank Benjamin Ziemann and Dennis E. Showalter for their inspiration. This paper is based on my PhD thesis ‘Offiziers- und Regimentskulturen in Deutschland und Frankreich von 1870 bis in die 1920er Jahre’ which is being carried out as part of the *Sonderforschungsbereich 437 ‘Kriegserfahrungen’* at the University of Tübingen. My study focuses upon the regiments of the garrisons of Frankfurt (Oder) and Orléans. They were part of the German 5th Infantry Division and the French

Recent studies of tactics have highlighted the profound transformation of the French army during the First World War—a topic which had long been neglected.² Although it was still firmly rooted in nineteenth century culture at the beginning of the war, under the pressure of industrialized warfare the French army enacted a radical leap into modernity. The *hommes baïonnettes* and *pantalons rouges* of 1914 were worlds apart from the highly mechanized infantry units of summer and autumn 1918. The German army went through a similar transformation, although it entered the war on a technologically more advanced footing. During the course of the war, it adopted a revolutionary tactic known as ‘infiltration,’ involving special ‘storm-troops’ (*Stoßtruppen*).³ As Michael Geyer argues, the German army was ‘definitively and irrevocably catapulted into the twentieth century and into industrial society’ by the increasingly mechanized war culture that developed from 1916 on.⁴

This chapter explores how these fundamental changes in the German and French armies developed at regimental level: what were the motivating factors that drove them; what factors delayed or inhibited change; and what were the consequences of this adaptation to mechanized warfare? Concentrating on several regular infantry regiments (*Linienregimenter*) from Brandenburg and Northern France, this chapter analyzes how these units reacted to the challenges of the Western Front, focusing particularly on the regiments’ officer corps. As far as possible, it relates the results of this investigation to the macro-history of the two armies in the war. Since most military studies of the First World War are limited to either the perspective of the military leadership or the experience of the ordinary soldiers, it is important to start with an outline of how regiments were deployed as cohesive units during the conflict.

9th Infantry Division (reformed in May/June 1915 as the new 125th) respectively. *This chapter was translated from German by Christoph Schmidt-Suprian and Heather Jones.*

¹ See Benjamin Ziemann’s appeal in Ziemann (1997), p. 55, fn. 2. Alexander Watson’s forthcoming study on the German junior officer corps in the First World War is an excellent example of an integral military history. See Watson, ‘Junior Officership in the German Army during the Great War, 1914–1918’ in *War in History*, 14/4 (November 2007). See also Bowman (2003). On the experience of the war see Buschmann and Carl (2001), pp. 11–26.

² Goya (2004); Dougherty (2005); Clayton (2003).

³ Wynne (1940); Gudmundsson (1989); Lupfer (1981). According to Hull (2005), p. 207, the military learning process in the German army did not develop beyond the tactical level.

⁴ Geyer (1984), pp. 98–102.

At the outbreak of war, the destructive potential of the active regiments suddenly became a reality. During peacetime, their purpose had been to defend against internal and external enemies, as well as to mould recruits into devoted subjects of the monarchy (Prussia-Germany) or loyal citizens of the state (France). The outbreak of war transformed the regiments dramatically in terms of their location, their personnel and their function. Peacetime regiments were largely stationary training institutions, located in garrisons which maintained a strong local character. However, after the outbreak of war, regiments were transformed into mobile units that increased in size to approximately 3,000 men (infantry) each, which, at the behest of the division, were moved to fight at various sections of the front or to rest in the rear *Etappe*, the supply and communication zone. Constant fluctuations in personnel accompanied this continual movement between locations. As a result of high casualty rates, increasing technical specialization and army restructuring, the regiments found themselves in a constant state of transformation. Between 1914 and 1918, the regiments experienced three very different phases of the war: first, the war of movement in August and September 1914, marked by all-out offensives that lacked adequate resources, resulting in high casualties; second, stationary trench combat between October 1914 and March 1918, which necessitated industrialized warfare and an increasing specialization of army units along technical and functional lines; finally, the renewed war of movement from March to November 1918, which utilized new doctrines of the offensive, more developed technical skills, and four years' worth of experience. During each phase the regiments had to secure supplies, integrate new arrivals into their units, familiarize them with the latest weapons and modes of combat, and maintain their overall cohesion. This required a great deal of discipline and control.

The first part of this chapter will explore a central problem that the regiments faced during the first, and the initial part of the second, phases of the war: the death of the active officer corps of 1914–15. The second part investigates how the Western Front was used to test tactical and technological innovations, placing regiments under immense pressure to continually adapt. The third part delineates the shift away from the ideal of the aristocratic officer to a more modern concept of leadership. Finally, the last section of the chapter investigates the evolution of regimental morale and *esprit de corps*, looking in particular at the insights this provides for the German army during the last months of the war.

This chapter has used a variety of sources, including military units' war journals, regimental histories, war memoirs, the daily notes and orders of a French regimental commander during the war, the reports of the Reichstag's postwar commission that investigated the causes of the German collapse, and contemporary material found in the impressive *Krieg 1914* collection in the Berlin *Staatsbibliothek*.⁵ In addition, parts of the immense archive of the German army's historical research institute on war (*Kriegsgeschichtliche Forschungsanstalt*) have been consulted in the *Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv* at Freiburg, as well as the rich collection of personal reports by French infantry officers from 1920, housed in the *Service Historique de l'Armée de Terre* at Vincennes.⁶

The Death of the 'Old' Officer Corps

The enormous casualty rates during the first months of the war resulted in a 'terrible loss of officers' (*effroyable consommation de cadres*) in the French and German armies.⁷ The regiments' active officers effectively began to die out.⁸ Beginning with a statistical analysis, the following section will investigate the reasons for the officers' deaths, and examine the difficulty which replacing them posed for the French and German armies.⁹

In total, 45,923 active officers and 226,130 reserve officers served in the German army during the First World War. Almost 25% of active officers and 16% of reserve officers were killed. The Prussian contingent consisted of 22,112 active and 29,230 reserve officers in 1914, supplemented by the promotion of an additional 7,537 officers and 52,181 reserve officers by November 1915. 17% of the active and 9% of the

⁵ The collection 'Krieg 1914' in the Berlin *Staatsbibliothek* (Ost) offers a wide range of sources.

⁶ BA-MA Freiburg [Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv, Freiburg; hereafter BA-MA] RH 61; Otto (1992); S.H.A.T. 1 K T 701. In 1919, the Ministry for War set about gathering information on the war experience in order to pass on the lessons that had been learned. The Ministry wanted to profit from the war experience and integrate it into the new rules of infantry combat (*règlement d'infanterie au combat*). The *Commission d'Expériences de l'Infanterie* at the War Ministry compiled a final report based on a selection of regimental officers' reports forwarded to it by regimental commissions. These reports reveal that many infantry officers came to similar conclusions regarding the war experience.

⁷ S.H.A.T. 1 K T 701 G, *mémoire du lieutenant-colonel Guidon du 169^e R.I.*, p. 2.

⁸ Schöning (1924), p. 108.

⁹ On the social changes in the Prussian-German officer corps in the Great War, see Funck (2001), pp. 137–9.

reserve officers of the Prussian contingent as a whole fell within the first fifteen months of the conflict. In his statement to the postwar Reichstag Commission of Enquiry into the causes of the German collapse, Otto-Ernst Volkmann concluded that 'the active officer corps never recovered from the bloodletting (*Blutverlust*) of the first months of the war.'¹⁰ If measured in proportion to the size of the army, German officer casualties during August and September 1914 were the highest of the entire war. In absolute numbers, they were only surpassed during the German spring offensive of March and April 1918.¹¹ French officer casualties were even more extreme. Of the 195,000 officers who served in 1914–1918, 18.7% died, compared to 17.2% in the German army. Again, the first two years of the war recorded the worst losses.¹² Among the different armed services, the infantry suffered the highest casualties during the war—29% of French infantry officers were reported dead or missing, compared to 10.3% for the cavalry and 9.2% for the artillery.¹³

The high casualties among officers at the beginning of the war cannot simply be attributed to the ferocious firepower of modern weapons, in particular machine guns and artillery. Following this logic, during the course of the war, losses would have grown in proportion to increasingly destructive technological capabilities—yet the opposite was the case. Rather, a traditional military mentality was to blame, which informed military doctrine as well as the behavior of individual officers. Before the war, the doctrine of the offensive was deeply rooted in the German and, especially, the French army.¹⁴ This was reflected, for example, in officer training practices, which preached that willpower was the decisive force in war.¹⁵ The counterpart to the doctrine of the offensive was the 'spirit of the offensive' (*Offensivegeist*) to be practiced by the officer and his men on the ground. Such attitudes were based upon the belief that an army's aggressiveness was the decisive factor in the outcome of a

¹⁰ Volkmann (1929), p. 34: 'Von dem Blutverlust dieser ersten Kriegsmonate hat sich das aktive Offizierkorps nie mehr erholt.' Figures according to Altrock (1921), p. 60.

¹¹ Sanitätsbericht (1934), p. 132, tables 130–3.

¹² Figures according to Jauffret (1989), pp. 241, 244; Sanitätsbericht (1934), p. 242. On the problem of accurately calculating the casualty figures see Maurin (1982), pp. 437–8.

¹³ Figures according to Goya (2004), p. 436. 80% of all French officers who fell in the war were in the infantry—see Jauffret (1989), p. 244. For the German army see Altrock (1921), p. 53.

¹⁴ Keegan (1999), p. 162; Snyder (1984).

¹⁵ Ulrich and Ziemann (1997), pp. 134–5.

battle.¹⁶ The never ending casualty lists of the first weeks and months of the war revealed the consequences of this mentality.

The French army's all-out offensives (*offensives à outrance*) had particularly devastating results.¹⁷ French junior officers frequently complained that the generals' orders to attack in October 1914 served no purpose other than to give 'the appearance of doing something' (*de paraître agir*). The generals' 'philosophy of the will' (*volontarisme*) was concerned with personal prestige and career—for which the soldiers paid with pointless casualties. Referring to the nonsensical award of commands to veteran general staff officers, a battalion commander commented: 'the placement of individuals was prioritized over the placement of machine guns.'¹⁸ The French command continually ordered offensives, which were often badly prepared, hampered by insufficient artillery support, inadequate liaison between the armed services and only superficial defensive measures. These resulted in minimal territorial gains at the cost of enormous casualties. The French high command reacted to the failures of the generals with large-scale transfers and dismissals. By December 1914, 162 brigade generals had been relieved of their command.¹⁹ This was intended to bring an end to the prewar system of promotion which had proved so inadequate. It is important to note, however, that not all orders successfully passed through the long chain of command to be carried out by the troops: as Jean Norton Cru pointed out, 'The war has taught us nicely how to circumvent an order. If orders had always been carried out literally, the entire French army would have been slaughtered by August 1915.'²⁰

In addition to the doctrine of the offensive, the regimental officers' 'spirit of the offensive' took its toll during the first weeks of the war. War memoirs, field reports and regimental histories reveal countless examples of outdated notions about courage and valor among German and French junior officers. As a French commander of a reserve battalion quipped after the war: 'many thought that courage consisted in presenting themselves as a target. It is always necessary to point out

¹⁶ Smith, Audoin-Rouzeau and Becker (2003), p. 20; see also a comprehensive treatment in Goya (2004), ch. 2, 5, 7.

¹⁷ On the casualty figures of 1914 see Keegan (1999), p. 135.

¹⁸ S.H.A.T. 1 K T 701, mémoire du chef de bataillon Creskens du 27^e R.I., pp. 9, 13; E observations du chef de bataillon de réserve Courtiau du 23^e R.I., p. 25: 'On sacrifiait le placement des mitrailleuses au placement des individus.'

¹⁹ Goya (2004), p. 178; Keegan (1999), p. 89.

²⁰ Cru (1933), p. 24.

that war is about killing and not about being killed.’²¹ The regiments’ respective ‘baptisms of fire’ effectively illustrate this ‘well-schooled eager recklessness’ (*anerzogene frische Draufgehen*):²²

Even before the fight had started, his Royal Highness Prince Joachim Albrecht and the head of the machine gun company rode ahead on reconnaissance, bafflingly exposing themselves to the enemy’s fire, without dismounting. The regimental staff were in the firing line at the front throughout the fight. [...] The impulse to “get at the enemy regardless of personal safety” showed up everywhere. This led to many transgressions on 18 August 1914—but what else could you expect from the *Leibgrenadiere* after 43 years of peace!²³

The Prinz Carl von Preußen Infantry Regiment (*Grenadier-Regiment 12*) paid for its baptism of fire with a battalion commander, a battalion adjutant, three company and six platoon commanders. There are clear parallels between the impetuous conduct of the French and German regiments in their first experience of battle. The regimental history of the 131st Infantry Regiment (IR) records for 22 August 1914: ‘the crude assaults by IR 131 [...] have cut deeply into its ranks.’ On a single day, 21 December, the 2nd Company lost all of its officers—‘a *fourrier* was left in command by the end of the battle.’²⁴

The loss of officers in 1914–15 hit the French army harder than the German. This was due to a failed officer policy before 1914, above all,

²¹ S.H.A.T. 1 K T 701 E, observations du chef de bataillon de réserve Courtiau du 23^e R.I., p. 3. ‘Beaucoup ont pensé que le courage consistait à s’exhiber en cible. Il faudra toujours enseigner que la guerre consiste à tuer et non à être tué.’

²² Schönfeldt, von (1924), p. 25.

²³ Schöning (1924), pp. 50–1: ‘Schon vor Beginn des Gefechts hatten Seine Königliche Hoheit Prinz Joachim Albrecht und mit ihm der Chef der M.-G.-K. [Maschinengewehrkompanie], zu Erkundungszwecken vorgeritten, unverständigerweise sich dem Feuer des Feindes ausgesetzt, ohne abzusetzen. Der Regimentsstab war während des ganzen Gefechtes vorne im Feuer. [...] Überall trat der Drang zutage “ran an den Feind und drauf ohne Rücksicht gegen sich selbst.” Es ist in dieser Beziehung am 18. August 1914 vielfach gesündigt worden. Aber wie könnte es anders sein bei Leibgrenadiern nach einer Friedenszeit von 43 Jahren!’ Similarly, *Ibid.*, pp. 56–7. Leibregiment cannot be translated. Formally, it was not part of the Prussian Guard, although the king accorded the same honors to it, which was why he gave it the title ‘Leib.’ The full name of the regiment is: Königlich-preußisches Leib-Grenadier-Regiment König Friedrich Wilhelm III. (1. Brandenburgisches) Nr. 8. It was either called das ‘Leibregiment’ or die ‘Leigrenadiere.’

²⁴ *Historique du 131^e* (1920), pp. 6; see also p. 7 on the repetition of this fate two months later: ‘La 2^e Compagnie [...] se couvre de gloire, mais bientôt tous ses Officiers sont tués.’

deficiencies in training and promotions.²⁵ Even before the slaughter of 1914, the French army suffered from a shortage of active and reserve infantry officers, as well as *sous-officiers*.²⁶ Those officers which it did have were often not of a high quality. As noted in 1910 in a confidential report by the Ministry for War, the promotion system (*avancement*) was 'in crisis' because incapable officers continued to be promoted, even though this was against regulations.²⁷ A French reserve battalion commander wrote the following regarding these poor conditions: 'Before the war, sick or tired officers easily obtained commissions in southern garrisons. In fact, entire regiments have been badly staffed.' According to his observations, over the course of the war, the quality of the officer corps had continued to deteriorate: 'The officers increasingly lacked prestige, schooling and discipline.'²⁸ An internal survey by the *Commandants de Région* for the French Ministry for War in November 1914 showed that an appallingly large number of officers in the depots were incapable of taking over a field command and were not even suitable as instructional officers.²⁹ This led to a shortfall of officers, which was compounded by the fact that French companies had traditionally been led by fewer officers and NCOs than German ones, resulting in fewer men being available to make up the shortfall.³⁰ The heavy casualties of 1914 thus dramatically brought the French army's officer problems to a head.

Because of its acute lack of officers in 1915, the German army temporarily lowered the barriers to promotion and used crash courses to rapidly create lieutenants out of extremely young recruits. The

²⁵ S.H.A.T. 1 K T 701, mémoire du chef de bataillon Creskens du 27^e R.I., p. 19; Goya (2004), ch. III.

²⁶ S.H.A.T. 7 N 20, Personnel Officiers. Divers. Note pour le Ministre de la Guerre, 6 mai 1912.

²⁷ S.H.A.T. 7 N 20, Personnel Officiers. Divers. Ministère de la Guerre, Circulaire au sujet du rajeunissement des cadres, 30 septembre 1910, p. 1.

²⁸ S.H.A.T. 1 K T 701 E, observations du chef de bataillon de réserve Courtiau du 23^e R.I., pp. 1, 25: 'Avant la guerre, les officiers malades, fatigués, obtenaient aisément d'être envoyés dans les garnisons du Midi. De fait, des régiments tout entiers ont été mal encadrés.' '[L]es cadres ont manqué de plus en plus de prestige, d'instruction et de discipline.' On the disregard for the *régiments du Midi* see: *Un caractère de soldat. Le capitaine Pierre de Saint-Jouan*, ed. G. de Grandmaison (Plon: 1921), p. 95, quoted in Cru (1929), p. 546.

²⁹ S.H.A.T. 7 N 156, Personnel. Officiers fatigués et officiers inaptes, Circulaire du Ministre de la Guerre (confidentiel), 16 novembre 1914.

³⁰ The officer-man ratio was 9,5% in French companies, compared to 13% in German ones. See Goya (2004), p. 122.

peacetime tradition of recruiting exclusively from socially 'desirable' groups, however, was soon reinstated. As an alternative measure to deal with the high officer casualty rates, NCOs were invested as so-called sergeant lieutenants (*Feldwebelleutnants*), who could then be promoted to full officers if they distinguished themselves in battle. In practice, however, such promotions were exceptional. The main requirement for selection as an officer remained the completion of secondary education (*Einjährig-Freiwilligenzeugnis*). Preserving the social homogeneity of the officer corps thus remained more important than military performance.³¹ The military cabinet decided in favor of the 'aristocratic leadership principle' in the conflict between retaining peacetime traditions and what Ernst-Otto Volkmann termed the 'urgent demands of this war that makes a mockery of all peacetime experiences.'³² This caused tension in the German army: young inexperienced war lieutenants selected on the basis of class were bitterly resented by many NCOs.³³ In contrast, in the French army NCOs could be promoted to officers; however, the NCO corps was consequently perceived as inferior. In addition, old frictions remained between the different officer groups in terms of social background and rank, for example between the *brevetés* who were commissioned officers and the *sortis du rang* who had been promoted from the ordinary ranks.³⁴

The internal structure of the regimental officer corps changed radically during the first half of the war. Due to high casualties and the increasing transfer of officers to adjutant positions or higher staff positions, the active officer corps gradually disappeared from front line troop units. In the German case, by 1916, these troops were led by reserve officers and young inexperienced bourgeois lieutenants appointed during the war, who held nearly all the commanding positions in companies.³⁵ In French regiments, this task was shared by reserve officers and former NCOs. In the end, active officers of peacetime standing were only to

³¹ Deist (1991), pp. 54–5.

³² Summary in the memorandum by Volkmann (1929), p. 42; see further: pp. 36–7, 40–2.

³³ *Kreuzzeitung*, 18 Jan. 1919, quoted in: Bundesarchiv Lichterfelde [BArchiv], Reichslandbund Pressarchiv R 8034 II/7007, p. 189.

³⁴ Jauffret (1989), pp. 238, 241, 246.

³⁵ Hauptmann z.D. Paschke 'Das deutsche Offizierkorps und die Neuordnung der Verhältnisse in Deutschland,' *Der Tag*, 29 January 1919, quoted in: BArch R 8034 II/7008, pp. 32–34. By the beginning of 1918, the quota stipulated that merely one out of five officers serving in infantry regiments at the front was to be an active officer. See Volkmann (1929), p. 111, Anlage 1.

be found in command of battalions. In the *Prinz-Carl-Grenadier-Regiment* seventeen officers had been killed and twenty-six wounded by 15 September 1914.³⁶ By 1917, none of the company leaders and commanders of January 1916 remained in their positions. In January 1917, battalion commander Captain von Freyhold was the last remaining officer of the active peacetime corps.³⁷ Active officer losses for the *Leibgrenadiere* amounted altogether to a third of the peacetime contingent, the *Prinz-Carl-Grenadier-Regiment* lost half of its peacetime active officers and a third of its reserve officers of 1914.³⁸ The lower an officer's rank, the greater was his risk of being killed.³⁹ The disappearance of active officers is revealed by reserve captain Walter Bloem's comment on the replacements announced for his battalion: 'among them are several aspirant officers and even a real live lieutenant!'⁴⁰

The losses among the active officer corps were perceived as an acute problem in 1914–15, particularly because they could not be easily replaced. As long as there were enough fresh troops available and a breakthrough was believed to be imminent, the military leadership treated losses among ordinary soldiers as a secondary problem compared to the lack of officers and materiel. As the long duration of the war became clear, however, this attitude would change.

The Western Front as a Site of Experimentation

In their field reports, French infantry officers depict the Western Front as a site of constant experimentation.⁴¹ The dominant image of stagnant trench warfare hides the high degree of flexibility that combatants showed in adapting to the demands of the Western Front. There was a continual, dynamic process of change occurring, as both combatants and technology evolved. This evolution developed in terms of a 'front dialectic,' a permanent interaction between 'challenge and response'

³⁶ Schönfeldt, von (1924), p. 33.

³⁷ BA-MA Freiburg PH 10 II/38, Entwurf von Ernst Wisselinck 'Vor 40 Jahren,' p. 1.

³⁸ Schöning (1924), pp. 321–3 (Friedensrangliste), 42 (Kriegsrangliste), 5–7 (Ehrenliste): in total, 111 officers of the active Leibgrenadier-Regiment, and 29 regiment officers in other units, as well as 4,352 NCOs, *Grenadiere* and *Füsiliere*; Schönfeldt, von (1924), pp. 194–196 (Rangliste).

³⁹ Schöning (1924), pp. 321–3.

⁴⁰ Bloem (1918), p. 332.

⁴¹ S.H.A.T. 1 K T 701.

that occurred between combatants of both sides requiring them to continually adapt to deal with new technologies and modes of trench warfare. But a whole range of psychological beliefs and limitations, in particular, the desire of front troops for stability and continuity, impeded change.⁴² The rapid development of technology and materiel as well as tactical shifts meant that the value of previous regimental experiences of fighting continually became obsolete. Troops were thus forced to live totally within the present.⁴³ As any mistake resulted in immediate bloodshed, success or failure manifested itself in terms of life or death—in an immediate *sanction du feu*.⁴⁴

French officers and their men found the battlefield learning curve particularly difficult, as they were always one step behind their German opponents and their tactics. In addition, the GQG and the French generals enforced doctrines more rigidly than their German counterparts, as the German army was less centralised and more flexible.⁴⁵ ‘Let us face up to the truth. Our present victory allows us, without false shame and without fear of demeaning ourselves, to say what we are all thinking.’ With these words Maurice Gamelin opened a lecture to officers in 1919, in which he recalled the naiveté and the blunders of the French army at the beginning of the war—for example, recalling how the general staff had often stood in full view on high ground.⁴⁶ In his war memoirs, Walter Bloem describes a similar scene, when the *Prinz-Carl-Grenadier-Regiment* advanced: ‘[...] suddenly the regimental staff cantered by on horseback, overtook the head of the cavalry and advanced casually—up at the very front!—towards the darkness of the forest.’⁴⁷ This kind of naiveté and recklessness was soon replaced by what Gamelin called

⁴² Goya (2004), pp. 143, 220.

⁴³ Bloem (1916), pp. 242–3; Showalter (2000), pp. 90–1: ‘[...] the pell-mell adjustment to mass warfare in 1915–16—a process of desperate improvisation that left no time to provide anything other than the most rudimentary training in anything to anyone.’

⁴⁴ S.H.A.T. 1 K T 701 mémoire du chef de bataillon Creskens du 27^e R.I., p. 19.

⁴⁵ Goya (2004), pp. 231–70, 371–413; Doughty (2005). On the German army’s ability to make tactical innovations, see Gudmundsson (1989), pp. 172–7.

⁴⁶ S.H.A.T. 1 K 224, Fonds Gamelin, carton 34, La Grande Guerre, p. 11. ‘Sachons regarder les vérités en face; notre victoire actuelle nous permet de le faire sans fausse honte et, sans crainte de nous diminuer, de dire ce que nous pensons tous.’

⁴⁷ Bloem (1916), pp. 213–14: ‘[...] da trabte der Regimentsstab an mir vorbei, überholte die Kavalleriespitze, ritt gemächlich voran—ganz vorn! dem dunkel sich auftürmenden Wald entgegen.’

‘the real shock of the hard realities of battle.’⁴⁸ The *Leibgrenadiere* went through this experience on 6 September 1914:

For the first time in this war we realised that we lived in the era of industrial warfare. [...] Between 3 and 8 o’clock in the evening, the regiment, especially [battalions] II. and I., spread out along the most advanced position, withstood the heaviest artillery fire steadfastly. No-one dared digging in since no such order had been issued—and we wanted to reach Paris! Trenches were not dug until nightfall, after the relevant order had come in.⁴⁹

From 1915 on, the troops increasingly distrusted the maxim of unconditional attack and its passive counterpart, the ‘phobia of losing ground,’ replacing it with a new maxim: the avoidance of unnecessary losses.⁵⁰

In 1914–15 the order ‘resume the attack and take the trench, whatever the costs,’ became the leitmotif of the French army. Deputy Sergeant (*Vizefeldwebel*) Steffens of the *Leibgrenadier-Regiment* was stunned as he watched a hopeless onslaught by French infantry columns against his company’s front sector, the notorious Lorette Heights near Arras: ‘Really, that they still find the courage and energy for this, that they actually find the strength to advance even with an hurrah, as is happening, I can barely comprehend—and this not only once, but again and again.’⁵¹ In their field reports, the French infantry officers condemned the futile attacks as ‘an abuse of [the notion of] “whatever the costs” (*abus du “coûte que coûte”*).’⁵² This abuse was the result of an outdated career strategy adopted by commanding officers, who sought to make a name for themselves through their troops’ bold attacks. Consequently,

⁴⁸ S.H.A.T. 1 K 224, Fonds Gamelin, carton 34, La Grande Guerre, p. 12.

⁴⁹ Schöning (1924), p. 71: ‘Zum erstenmal in diesem Kriege kam es einem zum Bewußtsein, daß wir im Zeitalter des Materialkrieges standen. [...] Das Regiment, besonders II. und I. [Bataillon] in vorderster Linie entfaltet, hielt von 3 bis 8 Uhr abends im schwersten Artilleriefeuer standhaft aus. Einzugraben wagte sich niemand, denn es war ja nicht befohlen. Und wir wollten doch nach Paris! Erst zur Nacht, als der Befehl dazu ergangen war, wurde geschanzt.’

⁵⁰ Goya (2004), p. 221.

⁵¹ BA-MA Freiburg MSg2/4134, Tagebuch des Vize-Feldwebels Steffens 5. Compagnie Leib-Grenadier-Regiment Nr. 8, 27.6.1915: ‘Wahrlich, daß sie dazu noch Mut u. Kraft finden, ja, daß sie sogar noch die Kraft finden, selbst mit Hurra vorzugehen, wie es geschieht, ist mir kaum faßbar. Und das nicht nur einmal, sondern immer u. immer wieder.’

⁵² S.H.A.T. 1 K T 701 C, rapport résumant les principales observations recueillies par les officiers pendant la campagne, 16c B.C.P., par le chef de bataillon Clarion, commandant, p. 11; mémoire du chef de bataillon Creskens du 27^e R.I., p. 7.

entire regiments fell victim to the doctrine of the unconditional offensive and the troops lost faith in the general military leadership and in their own commanders.⁵³

During this phase of the war a crucial concept was missing—the idea of measuring the gains an attack yielded against the manpower it had cost (*notion du rendement*). As battalion commander Creskens observed astutely: ‘Yet this question of manpower was to dominate the war.’⁵⁴ In spite of, or perhaps because of the mechanical mass killing at the front, the life of the soldiers gained in importance. In the long term, the question of manpower resources emerged as a key limiting factor. Of the one million French infantrymen killed in the war, over half fell between August 1914 and November 1915, so that by the end of 1915 the army became concerned about using the infantry more sparingly.⁵⁵ The failed double offensives in Champagne and in the Artois in September 1915 also highlighted the failure of the ‘shock doctrine’ of all-out offensives.⁵⁶

The French high command’s subsequent shift to prioritize firepower, and its abandonment of shock attacks in favor of larger scale mass offensives, was a change that occurred in all belligerent armies in the Great War. Men and materiel, mass and technology had to be recalibrated in order to achieve a higher degree of synergy—a process which started with the infantry in 1915.⁵⁷ Attacks that did not take account of the terrain, the strength of the enemy and the available resources were a thorn in the side of many company and battalion commanders who were no longer willing to take responsibility for high and, in their view, unnecessary casualties in their units. Based on an idiosyncratic mixture of moral scruples and rational-economic thinking, French front line officers came to regard the preservation of their own troops as the most important criterion for action.⁵⁸ The new leitmotif of the French military leadership was that ‘one cannot fight industrial firepower

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁵⁴ S.H.A.T. 1 K T 701, mémoire du chef de bataillon Creskens du 27^e R.I., p. 9: ‘Cette question des effectifs devait pourtant dominer la guerre.’

⁵⁵ Goya (2004), pp. 278, 219.

⁵⁶ Keegan calls the year 1915 ‘a bitter lesson for the French.’ Keegan (1999), p. 203. On the reasons for the failure of the Allied offensives, see *Ibid.*, p. 192.

⁵⁷ Showalter (2000), pp. 79–85.

⁵⁸ On the process of negotiation that existed between officers and soldiers with regard to the ‘proportionality’ of casualties see Smith (1994).

[matériel] with men.⁵⁹ It was a conclusion that the infantry had already long worked out for themselves. This shift by the high command had ground-breaking consequences for the organization of the army and, specifically, for the division of labor between artillery and infantry. The battle between man and war matériel would, from now on, be decided using more effective artillery firepower.

An important step towards minimizing the losses of one's own side was the realization that extended defensive positions were essential.⁶⁰ Initially, the construction and organization of the German trench systems was far superior to the French, even if German soldiers complained about having to dig.⁶¹ French officers and soldiers held out even longer against carrying out such manual work, deeming it dishonorable.⁶² As Creskens recalled: 'While the Germans organized themselves, and dug in in order to lose fewer men, we only thought of attacking, with ridiculously disproportionate means.'⁶³ Similarly, Gamelin remarked with caustic wit:

The idea of organizing any kind of defense aroused an almost innate repugnance; digging into the earth was believed to be a dishonorable gesture for loyal fighters who in their heart of hearts wanted to offer themselves up to danger with their chests exposed. It was an instinctive thing, which seemed to have passed down into our age of machines and merciless economic warfare from the reckless chivalry of Agincourt or the elaborate graces of Fontenoy.⁶⁴

⁵⁹ See the instruction of 8 January 1916 on 'combat offensif de petites unités' in Goya (2004), p. 262. S.H.A.T. 1 K T 701 G, mémoire du lieutenant-colonel Guidon, du 169^e R.I., p. 3: 'On ne lutte pas avec des hommes contre du matériel'; see also *Ibid.*, rapport d'ensemble.

⁶⁰ On the culturally conditioned differences between the German, French and British trench systems see Keegan (1999), pp. 176–82.

⁶¹ Bloem (1916), p. 225.

⁶² S.H.A.T. 1 K T 701 E, observations du chef de bataillon de réserve Courtiau du 23^e R.I., pp. 2–3.

⁶³ S.H.A.T. 1 K T 701, mémoire du chef de bataillon Creskens du 27^e R.I., p. 7: 'Alors que les Allemands s'organisaient, creusaient la terre pour perdre moins d'hommes, nous ne songions qu'à attaquer avec des moyens ridiculement disproportionnés.' Digging trenches formed part of the prewar training in the German army. See Keegan (1999), pp. 122–3.

⁶⁴ S.H.A.T. 1 K 224, Fonds Gamelin, carton 34, La Grande Guerre, p. 12: 'Il y avait presque une repugnance innée à l'égard de toute organisation défensive; à croire que le geste de creuser la terre eût été un deshonneur pour un loyal combattant, ayant à cœur de s'offrir au danger, la poitrine ouverte. C'était comme une survivance instinctive, dans notre siècle de machines et de lutttes économiques sans merci, des folies chevaleresques d'Azincourt ou des grâces ratinées de Fontenoy.'

Contemporary military thought, moreover, actually mistrusted trenches because they allegedly undermined the soldiers' willingness to attack.⁶⁵ Until January/February 1915, when the French army set fixed front line positions for each company, French trench defenses frequently disintegrated into chaos after several rotations of troops.⁶⁶

Cooperation between infantry and artillery only improved very slowly, partly because of inadequate methods of communication. One of the key characteristics of the First World War was the enormous discrepancy between the massive destructive firepower available and the underdeveloped state of communication technology.⁶⁷ This posed a particular problem for the infantry, who were unable to direct their artillery's fire during battle. The commander of the French 131st IR did not even have a direct telephone link to the artillery until February 1915.⁶⁸

Another impediment to artillery-infantry cooperation was the French infantry and artillery officers' mutual lack of understanding about the 'neighboring service' (*arme voisine*), due to their separate schooling before the war. In hindsight, many infantry officers regretted the inadequate use they had made of machine guns due to lack of knowledge, and also due to the fact that the machine gun was not seen as a prestigious weapon.⁶⁹ In the first months of the war, the command of a machine gun unit was not well regarded—this lasted until the machine gun became known as the 'noble weapon' (*arme noble*). In contrast, the *Leibgrenadier-Regiment* had transferred their best NCOs and troops to their machine gun companies as soon as they had been introduced in 1913.⁷⁰

The increasingly mechanized nature of warfare, particularly from 1916, expanded its destructive potential to hitherto unimagined dimensions. The most visible expression of this was the battle of the Somme, which eclipsed everything that went before in terms of technological and material investment. However, the 'scientific management of battle' (*conduite scientifique de la bataille*), did not lead to a breakthrough for the Allies. At the end of 1916, Nivelle decided to adopt an operational

⁶⁵ Schöning (1924), p. 102; Schönfeldt, von (1924), pp. 33–4.

⁶⁶ S.H.A.T. 25 N 123–8, carnet d'ordres du Colonel cdt. le 131^e (19 févr.–6 mars 1915), Colonel cdt. le 131^e au Colonel cdt. la 18^e Brigade, 16/2/1915, p. 66.

⁶⁷ Keegan (1999), p. 316.

⁶⁸ S.H.A.T. 25 N 123–9, carnet d'ordres du Colonel cdt. le 131^e (22 févr.–6 mars 1915), pp. 33–4.

⁶⁹ S.H.A.T. 1 K T 701.

⁷⁰ Schöning (1924), p. 83.

level the assault tactics that had led to the reconquest of Verdun, and in spring 1917, began an enormous offensive at the Aisne. This return to the 'shock doctrine' proved disastrous for the French infantry. In the face of superior German defenses, French morale, particularly their motivation to attack, collapsed. It was not until summer 1918 that the French infantry was once again able for a major offensive. The bitterness of the front troops towards the army leadership is understandable given that the front troops had long abandoned faith in badly prepared offensives.

After this major crisis for the French army and French society, Nivelle's successor, Pétain, consistently applied the principle of proportionality. He abstained from any further all-out offensives, and intensified the exchange of information about military experiences between the army leadership and the front line troops. Under his leadership the French army prioritized the defensive for the first time. At the turn of 1917/1918, Pétain oversaw the extension of French defensive lines to the rear of the front, modelled on the German system of deep defense. Small scale attacks with limited objectives, meticulously planned, and preceded by intensive artillery bombardment, were carried out to restore the shaken trust of the infantry. Such 'total planning' (*planification à outrance*), however, precluded the use of the element of surprise and the infantry became dependent on the artillery, losing its freedom of maneuver.⁷¹

The German army abandoned the traditional fixation on territorial gains in favor of more flexible defensive and offensive tactics, earlier than the French army. From 1916, German manpower reserves were increasingly stretched, despite the measures taken by the third OHL (*Oberste Heeresleitung*—Supreme Army Command). In reaction to the Allies' superior firepower, certain German front units had formed 'storm-troops' (*Stoßtruppen*) and storm battalions from volunteers. Their tactics—elastic, in-depth defense and rapid, successive counter attacks—soon became the model for the German infantry.⁷² The third OHL under Ludendorff evaluated the experiences gained from the German defense during the battle of the Somme and issued instructions on 1 December 1916 for an army training programme on 'Principles for conducting defensive

⁷¹ Smith (1994), p. 215; Goya (2004), pp. 266–7, 371–5, 394.

⁷² 'Grundsätze für die Führung der Abwehrschlacht im Stellungskriege' in Gudmundsson (1989), pp. 77–8; BA-MA Freiburg PH 10 II/585, Übungspläne des Grenadier-Regiments 12, Juni/Juli 1916.

battles in trench warfare.’ The foremost principle was to preserve the strength of one’s own side, to wear down the enemy and to increase the deployment of machines.⁷³ The firepower of the German infantry was greatly increased in 1916, with each company receiving six light machine guns and six mortars, and with a trench mortar section added to each regiment. During the winter of 1916–17, the German army universally adopted storm-troop tactics. Although thinning out front line defenses and extending the depth of the front had originally been pioneered by the French, the French high command had failed to systematically apply this method.

For the German regiments, these innovations paid off during the defense against the Nivelle Offensive in spring 1917. ‘No crises during the defense and considerably fewer losses,’ concluded the *Prinz-Carl-Grenadier-Regiment*.⁷⁴ During 1918, the regiment lost only a third of the number of men that it had lost in 1916.⁷⁵ Thanks to the optimized use of armaments and tactics the regiment had become more competent and, as a result, more self-confident. Its learning process had once again kept it up to date with the technical-industrial development of the war.

The tactical revolution that occurred first in the German army, and later in the French, consisted of decentralizing the command to small self-contained fighting units, as well as establishing close cooperation between the different branches of the armed services, along with an in-depth division of the battlefield. The old axiom ‘lost ground is lost honor’ was history by 1918. The new trend was described as the development: ‘from trenches to a fortified landscape.’⁷⁶ The German army utilized the principles of elastic in-depth defense during the massive spring offensive of 1918. The training of ‘storm-divisions,’ including the 5th Division, followed a new directive of 1 January 1918, entitled ‘The attack in trench warfare.’ Small, specialized, mobile storm-troops, commanded by NCOs or ordinary soldiers, operated independently, aggressively and flexibly, making use of the depth of the front. They were supported by firepower from machine gun, grenade, mortar and

⁷³ Borgert (1979), pp. 427–84, 512–3.

⁷⁴ BA-MA Freiburg PH 10 II/38, Entwurf von Ernst Wisselinck ‘Vor 40 Jahren,’ p. 1; see also PH 8 I/6 Wisselinck, Tätigkeit des Regiments in der Zeit vom 19.4. bis 3.5.1917.

⁷⁵ BA-MA Freiburg PH 10 II/38, Entwurf von Ernst Wisselinck ‘Vor 40 Jahren,’ pp. 1–2.

⁷⁶ Bloem (1940), p. 246.

flamethrower units, which were meant to follow behind them as closely as possible, as well as by the artillery.⁷⁷ The Allies christened this German approach ‘infiltration tactics.’ Indeed, this system of combined mobile fighting units was the most significant innovation in infantry battles in the twentieth century.⁷⁸ The increased importance of technical weapons in this system was reflected in the soldiers’ language. The *Leibgrenadiere* gave their new artillery battery ‘the worthy name of “*Leibbatterie*”’ and the *Prinz-Carl-Grenadier* mortar unit was nicknamed ‘mortar dogs.’⁷⁹

The German army taught the French army a hard lesson about the tactical solution to the deadlock of the Western Front—the use of infiltration tactics and combined mobile fighting units. In contrast to the French, however, the Germans lacked the industrial resources necessary to fully advance their mechanization and motorization. The initial successes of the spring offensive in 1918 could not hide the fact that the German army could no longer afford to lose materiel, let alone manpower.

From the Ideal of the Aristocratic Officer to Modern Military Leadership

Industrialized warfare had profound effects on the role and self-perception of officers. While their transition from a social stratum (*Stand*) to a profession had already begun by the end of the nineteenth century, the First World War catapulted officers unceremoniously into modernity.⁸⁰ Their changing function coincided with an almost complete generational change at the front. From 1915/1916 a very young, bourgeois officer generation stepped into the boots of the peacetime active officers to serve at the front. Under the pressures of industrialized mass warfare, a new type of officer ideal developed among the German and French regiments: that of the modern leader.

Michael Geyer has delineated the changing function of the German officer corps during the war in several convincing theses. Categorizing the officer corps into a four part system, he identified ‘supervision’

⁷⁷ Schönfeldt, von (1924), pp. 151–2; Schöning (1924), p. 284.

⁷⁸ Lupfer (1981), pp. XIII, XIV, 55–8; Gudmundsson (1989); BA-MA-Freiburg RH 61/51836 Anweisungen Ludendorffs für Angriff und Abwehr, Febr.–Nov. 1918; Borgert (1979); Goya (2004), pp. 382–6.

⁷⁹ Schöning (1924), p. 289; Bloem (1940), p. 315.

⁸⁰ Deist (1991), pp. 51–6; for a thorough treatment see Funck’s forthcoming study (2008).

and 'management' groups occupying the higher levels of command, supported by a lower level of 'tactical' and 'technical' experts. The functional authority of war technocrats and weapons experts continually gained ground over the traditional 'heroic' authority of commanding and tactical officers. This was promoted by the third OHL's cult of mechanization and efficiency, which sidelined Wilhelmine aristocratic military culture, emphasizing technical prowess and expertise as the basis for commanding, rather than personality. Performance and efficiency were now more important than lineage or monarchism. Ultimately, two very different types of officer came to dominate the war effort: the general staff officer in the *Etappe*, who acted as a technocrat, directing and organizing the military use of violence, and the front officer who was seen as a war hero.⁸¹ Regimental officers up to the level of company commander clearly belonged to the latter type, whereas regimental and battalion staffs were increasingly located away from the front. The changed role of officers was directly linked to that of the soldiers. Since soldiers no longer advanced in fixed columns or firing lines within ear-shot of an officer, operating instead as independent fighters, weapons experts and 'techno-warriors,' the officer lost direct control over his men, and concomitantly, the traditional training practice of drill also decreased in importance.⁸²

The former regimental commander of the *Leibgrenadiere* after the war could hardly believe how 'in the days of August [1914] everyone still attacked blindly, assured of victory, and ran with a hurrah into their ruin.'⁸³ Once again, the loss of officers and troops was crucial to changing officers' attitudes and behavior. What was once considered courageous and heroic now seemed wrong in the light of the experiences of 1914–15, even foolhardy. 'It was such God-damned idiocy on our part to jump up and shoot while standing!' company commander Bloem fumed angrily at himself and his men. The surviving officers of the *Prinz-Carl-Grenadier-Regiment* considered that their baptism of fire had been a catastrophe and a grave defeat because of the huge losses it entailed. 'The battalion is a heap of ruins—my beautiful, proud battalion!'

⁸¹ Geyer (1990); Geyer (1984), pp. 99–102; Deist (1991), pp. 52–6.

⁸² Showalter (2000), p. 87; Bloem (1940), p. 283: 'Der Frontsoldat von 1918 war nicht nur Infanterist, er mußte als MG-Schütze, im Nachrichtenwesen, als Pionier und auf anderen Gebieten bewandert sein.'

⁸³ BA-MA Freiburg N 36/10, Privater Schriftwechsel Friedrich Wilhelm von Hahnke, Brief vom 2.4.1922, p. 71: wie in 'den Augusttagen [1914] Alles noch siegestaumelnd blind vorwärts stürmte und mit Hurrah in das Verderben hinein rannte.'

Major von Kleist exclaimed upon seeing the bedraggled remnants of his battalion.⁸⁴ It was only during the corps commander's speech of thanks, which evoked the traditional litany of values of Brandenburg regiments, that the defeat was transformed into a hard-won, brave victory. For the rest of the war, the regiment would commemorate the 'Day of Tertre' as the 'Regiment's Day of Honor.'⁸⁵

Grenadiere! [...] you have fought like devils. Your *märkisch* [Brandenburger] daring struck hellish respect into your enemies' bones so that they ran away in fear before you like skinned sheep. [...] True, you have sustained terrible losses, but you have fastened a victory to the famous flags of the regiment, which is a worthy addition to your fathers' immortal, glorious deed at Spichern [1870]. Word of this will soon reach the ears of your highest Commander-in-Chief, and he will be proud of his Brandenburg *Grenadiere!*⁸⁶

The discrepancy between personal experience and official praise for supposedly glorious and victorious deeds emerged from the beginning of the war and increased as the conflict continued. Walter Bloem commented on the first letters received from home: 'much of what they reported mocked the heart cruelly.'⁸⁷ In official rhetoric—whether in reports from home, military communiqués, army and divisional orders, accolades, or superiors' eulogies—the traditional motifs of heroism were kept alive.⁸⁸ To a certain degree, such public praise did serve to compensate for the reality of the very different, subjective war experience. Overall, however, the officers' and soldiers' personal experiences at the front gradually eroded outdated heroic ideals, as manifested in regimental histories and war memoirs. The front taught company and

⁸⁴ Quoted in Bloem (1916), pp. 144–5: 'So ein gottverfluchter Blödsinn aber auch von uns, aufzuspringen und stehend zu schießen!' 'Das Bataillon ist ein Trümmerhaufen—mein schönes, stolzes Bataillon!'

⁸⁵ Schönfeldt, von (1924), p. 26.

⁸⁶ Quoted in Bloem (1916), pp. 175–6: 'Grenadiere! [...] ihr habt Euch wie die Teufel geschlagen. Ihr habt dem Feinde einen solchen Höllenrespekt vor eurem märkischen Draufgängertum in die Knochen gejagt, daß er ausgerissen ist wie Schafleder. [...] Ihr habt dabei ja fürchterliche Verluste gehabt, aber ihr habt einen Sieg an die altherühmten Fahnen eures Regiments gefesselt, der sich der unvergänglichen Ruhmestat eurer Väter bei Spichern [1870] würdig zur Seite stellt. Kunde dessen wird ja bald zu Eures Allerhöchsten Kriegsherrn Ohren dringen, und er wird stolz sein auf seine brandenburgischen Grenadiere!'

⁸⁷ Bloem (1916), p. 323: 'vieles, was sie meldeten, griff mit grausamem Hohn ans Herz.'

⁸⁸ On the language and content of the French army's accolades see Maurin (1982), pp. 512–6.

battalion commanders the following lesson in particular: 'send the others ahead and stay back yourself—this must be understood.'⁸⁹

Heroism and leadership were visibly redefined during the war. The self-sacrificing heroism of the nineteenth century officer, the 'audacious spirit of attack' ('*kühner Angriffsgeist*'), became irrelevant. The new, more sober ideal was to practice a form of measured leadership, focusing on the ratio between the damage inflicted upon the enemy (the numbers killed or captured and the amount of materiel or land taken) and the losses avoided by one's own troops. This analysis was based on an idea of net outcomes (*notion du rendement*) which had only been marginally present in 1870. The French officers defined their new objective as 'the maximum effect at minimum cost'—whereas in 1870 high casualties had still signified bravery (*bravoure*) and pluck (*cran*).⁹⁰

French infantry officers were unanimous and strikingly objective in their descriptions of the role of the front officer, based on their own war experiences. The leader needed above all to have the ability to coolly assess the material and moral resources at his disposal. It was dangerous to underestimate the enemy, to think that material inferiority could be compensated by moral superiority: 'Bravery is essential for success—and therefore it should not be wasted. It must be realized that material which is destroyed can be replaced, whereas every man who falls is irreplaceable.' Thus, each officer needed to develop a strong 'sense of the possible' (*le sens des possibilités*), which necessitated 'above all knowing his troops.'⁹¹

Numerous experiences had taught the officers what happened when troops were not properly informed or tactically and materially badly prepared before going into action: panic, chaos, and high losses. 'An officer has considerable influence on the pluck [*cran*] of his men.'⁹² In every situation, he had to bolster their hope that they would 'muddle through.'⁹³ This duty intensified the demands on the officer and his responsibility for his troops. Numerous French reports described the relationship between an officer and his men: 'There are no safe troops—only

⁸⁹ Bloem (1916), p. 147.

⁹⁰ S.H.A.T. 1 K T 701, dépôt du 66^e R.I., observations faites par les officiers: 'le maximum d'effets avec le minimum de pertes.'

⁹¹ S.H.A.T. 1 K T 701, mémoire du chef de bataillon Creskens du 27^e R.I., p. 27: 'par-dessus tout la connaissance de la troupe.'

⁹² S.H.A.T. 1 K T 701, rapport, 16^e B.C.P., p. 12: 'Un chef peut beaucoup sur le *cran* [sic] de sa troupe.'

⁹³ *Ibid.*

troops at hand'; 'troops are only ever as good as their officer'; 'the value of the troops reflects the value of their officers'; 'the officer gets the troops that he deserves.'⁹⁴ For French officers, the physical preservation of their troops proved to be only one aspect of warfare; they considered upholding the soldiers' morale equally, or even more, important. The experience of the mutinies of 1917 had forced the military leadership and individual officers to recognise the importance of morale.⁹⁵ They concluded that officers owed their men an explanation for their actions. In addition, they had to be able to read the soldiers' 'spiritual state' (*état d'âme*) and win them over.⁹⁶ This insight was a necessary concession to the division of responsibilities in the modern people's war. It signified an acceptance of the ordinary soldier as citizen.⁹⁷ In practical terms, however, it also proved successful in a war where the basic principle of command and obey was not only insufficient, but often had dysfunctional effects. In its final report, the Commission on the Experiences of the Infantry (*Commission d'Expériences de l'Infanterie*) stated: 'the officer must take the pulse of his troops' by trying to read their thoughts and wishes; 'to achieve this, he must love his troops.'⁹⁸

In postwar Germany, the politicized debate about the lost war, the hatred of officers in the army, as well as the revolution impeded a dispassionate examination of the wartime role of German officers.⁹⁹ Nevertheless, the postwar writings of German front officers clearly show that they had largely drawn the same conclusions from the war as the French officers. 'The fighting troops had to be taken seriously and could not be lied to,' stated one postwar publication, since the soldiers would 'instantly realize if they had been misled as soon as they engaged the enemy.'¹⁰⁰ The shared experience of wartime ordeals brought officers

⁹⁴ S.H.A.T. 1 K T 701 G, mémoire du lieutenant-colonel Guidon du 169^e R.I., p. 4; rapport d'ensemble, p. 18; E observations du chef de bataillon de réserve Courtiau du 23^e R.I., p. 28; observations, dépôt du 66^e R.I.

⁹⁵ Smith (1994; 1995); Pedroncini (1967). According to Smith, the soldiers succeeded in re-negotiating 'authority relations' with their officers. Modern forms of leadership also resulted from this process.

⁹⁶ S.H.A.T. 1 K T 701, mémoire du chef de bataillon Creskens du 27^e R.I., p. 16.

⁹⁷ On the political dimension of the officer-soldier relationship during the mutinies see Smith (1995).

⁹⁸ S.H.A.T. 1 K T 701, rapport, 16^e B.C.P., p. 13.

⁹⁹ Kantorowicz (1919); Hobohm (1926), p. 17.

¹⁰⁰ *Der Weg* (1920), pp. 14–5: 'Man mußte die kämpfende Truppe als voll urteilsfähig nehmen und durfte sie nicht belügen.'

and soldiers closer together, creating a comradely relationship.¹⁰¹ Significantly, the soldiers clearly preferred the active peacetime officers over the reserve officers and the young 'war lieutenants.' While the soldiers remained 'bitter towards that part of the officer corps that had treated them badly,' they praised 'the impeccable behavior of the majority of active officers.'¹⁰² According to soldiers' complaints, reserve officers and 'war lieutenants' were considered to have breached their 'duty of care' more often than active officers, and, due to their youth, their inexperience, or their inflated sense of authority, they were less respected than the professional officers of the peacetime army. From autumn 1916, there were increasing signs of abuse of troops by their superior officers in the field army. Up to this point, such complaints had been limited to the reserve army. The third OHL appealed to the—obviously negligent—commanders, ordering that: 'The longer the duration of the war, the greater the need for superior officers to care for their subordinates.'¹⁰³ The duty of care, one of the core elements of the aristocratic officer ideal, also emerged as central to modern military leadership in industrialized warfare.

Morale, Esprit de Corps, and the Culture of Competence

In order to explain how the armies of the First World War continued to fight for over four years, most historians point either to 'coercion' or to 'consent.'¹⁰⁴ The armies applied coercion through military discipline. In contrast, consent stemmed from the participants' self-motivation, in

¹⁰¹ Bloem (1916), p. 196; Siwinna (1915b), p. 44.

¹⁰² BA-MA Freiburg RH 61/51833, Stimmung im deutschen Heer 1918. Schreiben des Deutschen Werkmeister-Verbandes an Ludendorff vom 12. August 1918; MSg1/1280 Mobilmachung und Einsatz des Regts. von Oberst Ernst von Reuter in den ersten Kriegstagen des Ersten Weltkrieges. Niederschrift des Kompaniechefs der 3. Kompanie, pp. 1–3; Lehmann-Russbüldt (1922), p. 7; Ziemann (1997), pp. 157–8, 161. The misconduct of young 'war lieutenants' can be deduced *ex negativo* from the contemporary self-help literature. See Siwinna (1915a).

¹⁰³ BA-MA Freiburg RH 61/51507, Entwicklung der Stimmung im Heer im Winter 1916/17: 'Je länger der Krieg dauert, desto größer muß die Fürsorge des Vorgesetzten und seine persönliche Anteilnahme für seine Untergebenen sein.' Forschungsarbeit von Obkircher, 1936.

¹⁰⁴ See especially the controversy between the *école de la contrainte* and the *école du consentement* in recent French historiography.

particular, their patriotism. A sense of *esprit de corps* was a further factor in generating consent. This *esprit de corps* will be investigated more closely in the following section, as it was specific to regiments and their members—it remained an exception at division level. In the German army in 1918, as Dennis Showalter convincingly argues, morale was not so much sustained by coercion or consent, but by a ‘culture of competence and a technology of everyday.’ Without these, an army forfeited its morale and fighting power.¹⁰⁵

According to the veterans, regiments distinguished themselves from other components of the army through their *esprit de corps*. In 1914, the regimental community to some extent replaced that of the village. Soldiers, NCOs and officers created a shared group identity, a new parochial spirit (*esprit de clocher*) focused on the troops’ flag. As Jules Marin points out in his study of French soldiers from the Languedoc in the First World War: ‘For most of the soldiers, it’s the regiment that counts.’¹⁰⁶ This was most characteristic of the British regiments, due to the peculiarities of the British regimental system; yet in the continental armies, too, the *esprit de corps* played an important role. Primarily an ideological construct, it was invoked by army commanders, officers and NCOs in order to create cohesion.¹⁰⁷ Beyond its ideological content—unique character of the regiment, community of heroes, honor, etc.—the *esprit de corps* had practical uses, facilitating the coming together in the military hierarchy of men with diverse social and political origins, by creating a feeling of comradeship. This was most often expressed using the term ‘family,’ which was customarily applied to regiments, battalions and companies.¹⁰⁸ The term ‘family’ was also often literally appropriate: war volunteer Kurt Knopfe left no stone unturned to get transferred from the more prestigious *Leibregiment* to his preferred regiment, the *Prinz-Carl-Grenadier-Regiment*, where his brother also served. In March 1916, he wrote contentedly: ‘I really like it now, since I moved

¹⁰⁵ Showalter (2000), p. 82.

¹⁰⁶ Maurin (1982), pp. 600–6: ‘Pour la plupart des combattants, c’est le régiment qui compte.’

¹⁰⁷ French (2005), pp. 259–89; Bowman (2003), pp. 21–6, 31; Keegan (1976); Weston (1986).

¹⁰⁸ S.H.A.T. 1 K 224 fonds Gamelin, carton 29: correspondence, Letter from a *poilu* to Madame Gamelin, 25.9.1917: ‘Certainement je me sens un peu seul mais le Bataillon est pour moi une grande famille [...]’

to the 12th, which was definitely not the case while I was in the 8th.¹⁰⁹ The soldiers' integration into their company could bring about substantial advantages. French company commanders had to ensure that soldiers whose family situation entitled them to special treatment were kept away from the foremost front line. The colonel of the 131st IR sharply reprimanded one of his battalion commanders for not listing a father of four who was entitled to a safe post in the supply column: 'The commander of the unit must know all those soldiers of his unit whose family backgrounds are particularly noteworthy.'¹¹⁰

A number of factors undermined the *esprit de corps* during the war. The most significant was the continual change of personnel. Due to injuries and deaths, transfers and reassignments, the active peacetime officers and NCOs disappeared in 1915–16 from their original regiments. They had been the primary bearers of the *esprit de corps*. Officers who were passed fit to return to service were often not allowed to return to their original regiments, despite their explicit wishes, and petitions signed by their former soldiers, and were sent to reserve formations instead. Walter Bloem describes the disappointment this caused officers:

[The cruel necessities] cut through a bond that we had hoped would endure through trial and death to victory or downfall: the bond between us and our regiments. We felt inalienably tied to them; active officers felt this more than the reserve officers did. [...] We had become an integral part of our regiment, sharing in its glory as well as in the suffering and death of its lost members, taking part in that mysterious atmosphere, that unity of emotions and aspirations, which forges a fighting unit out of grown men. [...] And we were to lose all that!¹¹¹

The extent to which the 'old' NCOs had internalized the *esprit de corps* can be seen in a diary entry by deputy sergeant (*Vizefeldwebel*) Steffens

¹⁰⁹ BA-MA Freiburg, PH 10 II/263, Feldbriefe des Grenadiers Knopfe, Brief vom 26.3.1916.

¹¹⁰ S.H.A.T. 25 N 123–19 carnet d'ordres du Colonel cdt. le 131^e (25 oct.–3 déc. 1917), p. 23: 'Le Cdt. de Cie. doit connaître tous les militaires de sa Cie. dont les situations familiales sont particulièrement intéressantes.'

¹¹¹ Bloem W. (1918) pp. 8 and 10: '[Die grausamen Notwendigkeiten] zerrissen ein Band, das in Not und Tod, so hatten wir gehofft, bis zu Sieg oder Untergang halten sollte: das Band zwischen uns und unseren Regimentern. Mit ihnen hatten wir, der aktive Offizier natürlich noch in weit höherem Maße als der des Beurlaubtenstandes, uns unlösbar verbunden gefühlt. [...] Wir waren ein Stück unseres Regiments geworden, hatten Anteil an seinem Ruhm, Anteil an dem Leiden und Sterben seiner Dahingeschiedenen, Anteil an jener geheimnisvollen Atmosphäre und Gemeinsamkeit des Fühlens und Wollens, welche aus reifen Männern eine Kampfeinheit schmiedet [...]. Und das alles sollten wir nun verlieren!'

from the *Leib-Grenadier-Regiment*, following repeated French attacks on the front sector held by his regiment on 27 September 1915: 'NCO Wellhansen is shouting into my ear "They will soon realize that there are *Leibgrenadiere* here"; "indeed they will," I reply [...].'¹¹²

The recruitment of replacements from the same home depot was crucial to maintaining the *esprit de corps*. As early as 1915, however, recruits started to be drawn from a variety of depots, which led over the course of the war to a thorough mix of personnel within units.¹¹³ According to the statistics of two Southern French 'subdivisions,' mixing was highest between different infantry regiments (*mixage inter-régimentaire*), easily exceeding exchanges between the armed services.¹¹⁴ As a result, local and regional solidarities (*les solidarités de naissance*) within units were ruptured, even in those units which affected the soldiers the most: the company and the platoon. The regimental community-in-arms was thus replaced during the war by a different solidarity, based upon a stronger national orientation—the community of the front soldiers, the French *solidarité combattante* or German *Frontkameradschaft*.¹¹⁵ The regimental community was, to a certain degree, dependent on a continuity of personnel and a regional identity, which had all but disappeared by 1918, as only a few soldiers and NCOs and hardly any officers were still serving in the same regiment to which they had belonged in 1914.¹¹⁶

After the war, French infantry officers carefully studied the destructive impact which changes in personnel had upon the *esprit de corps*. They found that during the war the crucial importance of the *esprit de corps* had become increasingly clear, but that it had suffered greatly because of the indifferent way in which reserves were haphazardly distributed among the regiments, with the frequent result that injured officers and

¹¹² BA-MA Freiburg MSg2/4134, Tagebuch Steffens, 27.9.1915: 'Die werden doch endlich merken, daß Leibgrenadiere hier sind, schreit mir Unteroffizier Wellhansen ins Ohr, ich denke auch sage ich [...].'

¹¹³ Ziemann (1997), pp. 57–75; Maurin (1982), pp. 393–435. Maurin sees the 'brassage des hommes,' the intermixing of personnel, as the greatest factor in the destruction of the *esprit de corps* (p. 606). On the likely motives as to why the French army chose to mix troops from different regional backgrounds in its units, see pp. 410–3.

¹¹⁴ Maurin (1982), pp. 395–401. For Béziers, 80% of soldiers changed their regular IR at least once; 20% changed from one branch of the army to another; for Mende, the percentages were 86% and 14% respectively. See also Smith (1995), p. 181 fn. 5; Ziemann (1997), p. 68.

¹¹⁵ Maurin (1982), p. 434.

¹¹⁶ BA-MA Freiburg RH 61/50675, Erinnerungsblätter des Infanterie-Regiments von Alvensleben Nr. 52, Denkschrift des Majors a.D. Reymann, Jan. 1923, p. 251.

troops ended up in a different unit to their original one: 'they left units where they had established mutual ties of trust with comrades and commanders, thereby diminishing the strength of their original unit, without any benefit to their new one.'¹¹⁷ Experience showed that it was imperative that officers and soldiers, when returning to the front, be reintegrated into their old company: 'This is a matter of morale and of the greatest significance in terms of the cohesion and the spirit of the unit.'¹¹⁸ They had to be sent to a company of the same battalion or, at the very least, to a battalion of the same regiment.

Transfers into a different battalion were also used as a form of punishment (*Strafversetzung*). In severe cases, the 'victim' of this punishment was sent to a 'neighboring' regiment, as happened in the *Prinz-Carl-Grenadier-Regiment*. A very popular captain was sentenced to be exchanged for a reserve captain from a sister regiment, IR 52:

a measure taken by our commanding general, his Excellency Baron von Lüttwitz, which the troops found hard to understand. You don't need to punitively transfer a Knight of the Order *Pour-le-Mérite*, just because in the early hours of the morning he let two lieutenants push him up a steep hill in a pram.¹¹⁹

When this captain died several months later, many members of his former regiment were quick to pay their last respects in person at his coffin.

In fact, if stripped of its ideological component, the cult of the front hero, *Frontkameradschaft* (front line community) was essentially a set of close, practical ties created by the specific situation of wartime co-dependency. As the emphasis shifted to more independent, small, tactical fighting units, *Frontkameradschaft* increased in importance, as the technical savvy and experience of individual 'techno-warriors' became integral to the survival of the group. The inverse was also true: new,

¹¹⁷ S.H.A.T. 1 K T 701 H, observations faites par les officiers du 89^e Régiment d'Infanterie, Colonel Henneton, commandant: 'les unités, où ils avaient laissé des camarades et des chefs avec lesquels des liens de confiance réciproques s'étaient créés ont eu ainsi leur force diminuée sans profit pour les autres corps.'

¹¹⁸ S.H.A.T. 1 K T 701, rapport d'ensemble, 17: 'C'est une mesure d'ordre moral de la plus haute importance au point de vue de la cohésion et de l'esprit de l'unité [...]'

¹¹⁹ BA-MA Freiburg PH 10 II/38, Entwurf von Ernst Wisselinck 'Vor 40 Jahren,' pp. 1–2: 'eine für die Truppe schwer verständliche Maßnahme unseres Kommandierenden Generals, Exz. Frhr. v. Lüttwitz. Einen Ritter des Ordens Pour-le-Mérite braucht man nicht strafzuversetzen, bloß weil er sich in vorgerückter Stunde von zwei Leutnants in einem Kinderwagen einen steilen Berg hinaufschieben ließ.'

inexperienced and insufficiently trained replacements represented a risk for the group. After the war, *Frontkameradschaft* was rarely sustained. Even the postwar regimental associations merely reflected an ideological solidarity, rather than the former organic front line community.¹²⁰

As the war went on, the front experience, with its ‘blood and mud,’ was increasingly restricted to the lower classes, just as the ‘risk of violent death’ came to epitomize twentieth century social inequalities.¹²¹ During the First World War, certain groups were removed from the dangers of the front because of occupational status or age, and thus were spared violent injury and death, working instead in agriculture, armaments, army staff jobs or *Etappe* positions. In trench warfare, the magic line that determined exposure to danger or relative safety ran through each regiment, with regiment and battalion staffs located on the safe side, and company commanders, their officers, NCOs and soldiers exposed to danger.¹²² If the term ‘front fighter’ was defined by the danger of dying, as Norton Cru asserts, then a regiment was an amalgamation of a majority of real ‘front fighters’ and a privileged minority which did not merit the term. This impression was exacerbated by the fact that other aspects of the regimental war experience such as food, accommodation, leave and pay were also differentiated according to social and military hierarchies.¹²³ While faced with the difficulties of surviving in a front line trench, a sense of front community may well have bound soldiers to their officers, right up to company commander level; however, once rotated out of the line, class differentiations re-emerged, angering soldiers who were struck by the contrast between the shared community of the front line and *Etappe* social hierarchies.¹²⁴ Soldiers increasingly perceived social inequalities as an injustice.¹²⁵

The high rate of casualties was an additional factor that impacted negatively on the *esprit de corps*. Each regiment had certain key personalities with whom the whole unit identified. Their death—or departure due

¹²⁰ See also Prost (1977), pp. 27–8: ‘elle s’inscrit dans la suite d’une condition, non d’une unité.’

¹²¹ *Der Weg* (1920), p. 6; Ziemann (2002), p. 742 (‘Gefahr des gewaltsamen Todes’).

¹²² Paschke ‘Das deutsche Offizierkorps,’ p. 34. Yet Jauffret (1989), p. 230, argues: ‘[1] univers de l’officier, jusqu’au grade de colonel, c’est celui de la tranchée.’

¹²³ Cru (1933), pp. 14–5.

¹²⁴ Lehmann-Russbüldt (1922), pp. 8–9.

¹²⁵ On the social inequalities in the army see Hobohm (1929); Volkmann (1929); BA-MA Freiburg RH 61/50507, *Entwicklung der Stimmung im Heer*, pp. 18–32.

to other causes—was a major blow to a regiment's sense of community. In some cases the regiment commander was one such personality. As one of the 'custodians of military culture' in peacetime, he symbolized the identity and cohesion of the unit.¹²⁶ During war, he served as the center of command and communications, and directed all the regiment's administrative requirements.¹²⁷ Popular lieutenant-colonels were called 'uncle' by the soldiers and were difficult to replace.¹²⁸ This was also true for the 'old' battalion, company and platoon commanders. When the commander of the 12th Company of the *Leib-Grenadier-Regiment* was killed, his soldiers showed how devoted they were to him by composing a *Nibelungen* obituary, lauding him as their 'Siegfried.'¹²⁹ Bloem described a very popular regiment adjutant as 'the spine of the regiment.'¹³⁰ In a similar way, particular soldiers could also act as guarantors for the cohesion of the unit.

Regiments operated within a certain pain threshold, which was not simply measurable by casualty numbers, but rather was defined in terms of 'what was bearable by flesh and blood.'¹³¹ According to John Keegan, armies reached breaking point, and their morale collapsed, when the total number of casualties exceeded the original number in the infantry divisions in 1914. This suggested to the individual soldier that the chance of being killed was greater than that of surviving the war.¹³² For regiments, however, the absolute casualty figures seem to have been less decisive than the way in which these casualties occurred—the rhythms and patterns of danger they revealed.¹³³ Combat was the most extreme endurance test. Ever since the industrial battles at Verdun and the Somme in 1916, attacking had threatened to destroy troop cohesion.¹³⁴ This increased the importance of implementing new survival strategies, including longer training intervals. The *Prinz-Carl-Grenadier-Regiment* escaped annihilation under the rolling barrages at Verdun in 1916, thanks to the consistently 'deep' deployment of its battalions—whereas

¹²⁶ Geyer (1990), p. 193.

¹²⁷ S.H.A.T. 25 N 123–19, carnets d'ordres du Colonel cdt. le 131^e.

¹²⁸ Lehmann-Russbüldt (1922), p. 7.

¹²⁹ Schöning (1924), p. 110.

¹³⁰ Bloem (1916), p. 287.

¹³¹ Keegan (1999), p. 401.

¹³² *Ibid.*, pp. 401, 345–6. Keegan's thesis is based on a comparison of the 'breaking points' of the French, Italian and British (5th) armies. He established differences in 'the extent of the psychological trauma and its containment.'

¹³³ Ziemann (1997), p. 106.

¹³⁴ Ziemann (1998), p. 414.

at the beginning of trench warfare other regiments had been wiped out because they had held out *en masse* in the front line.¹³⁵ The regiments of the 5th Division served at nearly all the ‘hot spots’ on the Western Front and clearly suffered, enduring over 100% casualties—with more men killed or wounded than had originally been present at the outbreak of war. Enhanced competence in weapons and tactics, supported by training phases of several weeks duration, however, enabled the 5th Division regiments to withstand the hardships of trench warfare. Even during the spring offensive of 1918, they went on fighting to the last, despite horrendous losses.¹³⁶

The period between March and November 1918, covering the German spring offensive, the subsequent Allied counter offensives and the armistice was the greatest endurance test for the morale of the German army.¹³⁷ The third OHL’s determination to risk everything in the offensive in the West, in effect amounted to a ‘decision for self-destruction.’¹³⁸ The choice of an offensive, instead of a strategic defense, was central to the loss of a culture of competence in the German army. In the following months, the German army hemorrhaged men and materiel, as well as competence and technology, compared to their enemies. By November 1918, the German army stood at only half its March strength.

The regiments of the 5th Division participated in the St Quentin offensive in March and in the Soissons offensive in May. Initially, thorough preparations and the high motivation of the soldiers led to spectacular successes. In only two weeks, the German storm-divisions gained more ground than the Allies had taken in three and a half years of war. Then the offensive faltered. Any further advance was prevented by ‘the lack of reserves and the difficulty of transporting the necessary supplies, through terrain that had been devastated by the battle of the Somme, to the exhausted troops who were fighting at the front.’¹³⁹ The troops received the ludicrous order to rest, of all things,

¹³⁵ BA-MA Freiburg PH 10 II/263, Feldbriefe des Grenadiers Knopfe, Brief vom 30.4.1916.

¹³⁶ ‘As formations, nevertheless [...], they retained their esprit de corps.’ Keegan (1999), p. 392, referring to the regiments of the German ‘storm-divisions.’

¹³⁷ Deist (1986, 1992); Strachan (1996).

¹³⁸ Hull (2005), p. 299.

¹³⁹ Bloem (1940), p. 259: ‘Der Mangel an Reserven und die Schwierigkeit, die vorn kämpfende stark mitgenommene Truppe durch das verheerte Gelände der Sommeschlacht mit dem Nötigsten zu versorgen.’

on the Somme—‘the rawest area of the raw zone.’ It was at this point that the 12th *Grenadier-Regiment* witnessed for the first time how soldiers returning from the front shouted out comments that ‘indicated poor morale among the troops.’¹⁴⁰ During their ‘break’ in April and May, they received combat training in ‘group breaching tactics,’ which concentrated on how to combat individual machine gun nests: ‘The men welcomed this tactic, as this meant finally abandoning closed firing lines which had always caused extensive casualties.’¹⁴¹ Nevertheless, during the Soissons offensive the same pattern of failure was repeated:

At first: great successes, extraordinary feats by the troops, heavy losses, but nevertheless a rapid advance. Then the tired troops came up against fresh enemy units and the offensive came to a stop. [...] everything necessary to continue our own attacks was lacking, above all fresh troops. [...] For the men it was utterly depressing to know this: what use is it if we fight until we are bled dry; there are no troops to take advantage of our victory.¹⁴²

Tactics alone, no matter how sophisticated, could not achieve an operative breakthrough. The insurmountable operational problem for the German army was that their enemies were able to constantly transport new troops to the front, using railways and motorized columns.¹⁴³ The German soldiers’ widespread hope that the war would soon end turned to disillusionment. Senior commanders complained that ‘the troops no longer attack[ed].’¹⁴⁴ This situation developed because attacks were inadequately prepared. Conditions at the front made a mockery of the OHL’s bland situation reports, which were suffused with the dogma of optimism, then ruling in the General Staff: ‘The completely exhausted, weakened troops were still reported as ready for battle—until they fell

¹⁴⁰ Schönfeldt, von (1924), p. 166.

¹⁴¹ Bloem (1940), p. 263: ‘Von der Truppe wurde diese Taktik sehr begrüßt, da man mit ihr endlich von den geschlossenen Schützenlinien abging, eine Kampfweise, die stets mit erheblichen Verlusten verbunden war.’

¹⁴² Schönfeldt, von (1924), p. 174: ‘Zuerst große Anfangserfolge, außerordentliche Leistungen der Truppe, schwere Verluste, aber doch flottes Vorgehen. Dann stießen die ermüdeten Truppen auf einen frischen Gegner, und die Offensive kam zum Stillstand. [...] zum Fortsetzen des eigenen Angriffs fehlte es an allem, vor allen Dingen an frischen Truppen. [...] Für die Truppe war es entschieden sehr niederziehend, zu wissen: Wenn wir auch kämpfen bis zum Weißbluten, was nützt es: es sind doch keine Truppen da, die unseren Sieg ausnutzen können.’

¹⁴³ Gudmundsson (1989), p. 178; Schoenaich (1924), p. 12; Bloem (1940), p. 278.

¹⁴⁴ *Der Weg zur Wahrheit. Führertränen und Führerhaß im Krieg. Von einem Frontoffizier* (Berlin: 1920), p. 11.

to pieces.’¹⁴⁵ The soldiers sensed the anxiety of the high command after the failed offensives. With increasingly vague aims, the preparations for the different offensives went from bad to worse—until the last offensive failed completely and undermined the soldiers’ faith in their leadership.¹⁴⁶

On 18 July, and on 8–9 and 21–22 August 1918, the German army suffered three great defeats, which inaugurated a phase of defensive battles and withdrawal.¹⁴⁷ The breakdown of their army’s culture of competence became clear to the regiments of the 5th Division. In comparison, their own *esprit de corps* and morale remained intact for a surprisingly long time. On 21 July, the helplessness of the higher command centers became all too obvious, with the hastily organized attachment of the regiments and their component units to other units, according to orders that changed by the hour, often dictated by panic.¹⁴⁸ As the battlefield situation became increasingly hopeless, the directives given to the troops became more ruthless. At the same time, the bureaucratic challenges spiralled beyond control. The lower the level of command, the less time was given to execute an order, so that front troops received commands at the last minute.¹⁴⁹ The battalion commanders of IR 52 and the *Leibregiment* protested several times in writing and by telephone, against the order for the 5th Division to launch a counter attack on 23 July—yet in vain, as ‘the objections do not convince and are too late anyway.’¹⁵⁰ The attack promptly failed.¹⁵¹ The storm divisions were a shadow of their former selves: many regiments were dissolved and distributed among other troop detachments. Three companies of the disbanded Reserve IR 35 were used to bolster the 12th *Grenadier-Regiment* in mid-August: ‘The three companies tried hard to do their best, but they remained alien elements [...]. It was certainly not a happy solution.’¹⁵² By the summer, the front troops were exhausted, verminous, without any prospect of rest, and the reserve

¹⁴⁵ *Der Weg* (1920), pp. 11–2.

¹⁴⁶ *Der Weg* (1920), pp. 10–9; Hull (2005), pp. 304–9.

¹⁴⁷ Köster (1921).

¹⁴⁸ BA-MA Freiburg PH 8 I/112 KTB 10. Infanteriebrigade, 21.7.1918.

¹⁴⁹ BA-MA Freiburg RH 61/51507, Entwicklung der Stimmung im Heer, pp. 11–2.

¹⁵⁰ BA-MA Freiburg PH 8 I/112 KTB 10. Infanteriebrigade, 23.7.1918, p. 9.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 10; KTB II/Gren. 8, 23.7.1918, p. 28; KTB Stab/I.R. 52, p. 43.

¹⁵² Schönfeldt, von (1924), p. 180: ‘Die drei Kompanien bemühten sich, voll und ganz ihre Schuldigkeit zu tun, blieben aber doch Fremdkörper [...]. Glücklicherweise war die Lösung entschieden nicht.’

troops were barely trained. There was a shortage of commanders at battalion, company and platoon level—in other words the army was short of those personalities who decisively influenced the troops. Morale now sank dramatically.¹⁵³

The entire front swayed, as if drunk—the entire front. We needed replacements: no-one came. Comrades went to the field hospital; despite open wounds they were passed fit for further active service. [...] Nothing came. [...] And the “higher echelons,” formerly so talkative, kept quiet; they mixed up the divisions. The cold face of the catastrophe was visible in the whole mess of mad orders.¹⁵⁴

In mid-September, an attack supported by tanks for the first time broke through the lines of the *Prinz-Carl-Grenadier-Regiment*. The units became completely disordered; the regiment was long due to be relieved.¹⁵⁵ Scarcely two weeks later, the regiment suffered its worst crisis of the entire war. The division ordered its *I. Battalion*, together with *I. Battalions Leibregiment* and IR 52 to remain behind to hold the line on their own, without any support or communication, even though a major attack was expected. The enemy's barrage began shortly afterwards, annihilating the *I. Battalion Prinz-Carl-Grenadier-Regiment*. An attempt was later made to reconstitute it, but it had lost its identity. Of the *I. Battalion Leibregiment*, no-one was left, apart from two deputy sergeants, an NCO and seven men.¹⁵⁶ The morale of the surviving troops of those three battalions temporarily collapsed in this situation; their battalion log books also ended abruptly. A passage in the regimental history of the *Prinz-Carl-Grenadier-Regiment* reveals that by the end of October the troops, despite being battered from the battles of withdrawal and defense, ‘now made a good impression again. They have visibly physically recovered. Their spirit has significantly improved, following the

¹⁵³ BA-MA Freiburg RH 61/51833, Stimmung im deutschen Heer 1918; PH 8 I/267 KTB Reserve-Infanterie-Regiment 52, Okt./Nov. 1918.

¹⁵⁴ Vetter (1919), p. 9: ‘Die ganze Front wankte, wie trunken. Die ganze Front. Wir brauchten Ersatz. Es kam keiner. Kameraden gingen ins Lazarett. Mit offenen Wunden wurden sie wieder kv [kriegsverwendungsfähig]. ... Material. Es kam nichts. ... Und das sonst, früher, so redselige ‘Oben’—es blieb stumm, es warf die Divisionen durcheinander. Die Katastrophe zeigte ihr kaltes Gesicht durch den Wust irre gewordener Befehle hindurch.’

¹⁵⁵ Schönfeldt, von (1924), p. 182.

¹⁵⁶ Schönfeldt, von (1924), pp. 184–187; Bloem (1949), pp. 301–2; Schöning (1924), p. 310.

successful defense of their positions.¹⁵⁷ In the last days of the war, the strength of IR 52's battalions shrank through casualties, illness and 'shirkers,' so that companies had to be amalgamated. The following statement illustrates the extent to which everyday combat technology was deteriorating: 'troops of the L.M.G. 10th [Company] sacrifice their last sip of coffee from their field bottle in order to cool their [machine] guns and keep them working.'¹⁵⁸

It appears that up until the very end of the war, the combat motivation of front line units was more stable than Wilhelm Deist's thesis suggests. Deist argued that there was a 'hidden military strike' in the German army from summer 1918 on.¹⁵⁹ This thesis was a reaction to the national-conservative claim that the German army had marched back home in 'orderly rows' and it has been largely accepted in recent historiography. This chapter is intended to direct historical research in the opposite direction, by contending that it is necessary to explain further why the utterly battered regiments of German storm divisions continued fighting until the end of the war—despite the impact of disintegration and destruction.¹⁶⁰ Weighed against the mistakes of the military leadership, the catastrophic lack of materiel and reserves, as well as the operational superiority of their enemies, the morale of the German front units proved extremely durable. In the end the outcome of the war was decided by strategy. In the summer and autumn of 1918, the German army had nothing to offer against the resource-rich Allied armies, with their enormously effective use of the 'combined services' paradigm (*champ de bataille interarme*)—combined, synchronized attacks by all armed services using highly technical, motorized and well provisioned troops.

¹⁵⁷ Schönfeldt, von (1924), p. 187: 'Sie hatte sich körperlich sichtlich erholt. Ihr Geist war durch das erfolgreiche Halten der Stellung erheblich gehoben worden.'

¹⁵⁸ BA-MA Freiburg RH 61/50675 Erinnerungsblätter des Infanterie-Regiments von Alvensleben Nr. 52, Denkschrift des Majors a.D. Reymann, Januar 1923, pp. 259, 265: 'Mannschaften der L.M.G. der 10. [Kompanie] opfern ihren letzten Schluck Kaffee aus der Feldflasche, um ihre Gewehre zu kühlen u. dadurch gebrauchsfähig zu erhalten.'

¹⁵⁹ Deist (1986, 1992).

¹⁶⁰ For a revision of Deist's thesis, see also the forthcoming study by Alex Watson: *The Chances of Survival: Personal Risk Assessment and Attitudes to Death among German und British Soldiers in The Great War, 1914–1918* (PhD thesis, Cambridge University).

Conclusion

In the First World War, French and German infantry regiments had to radically adapt to the demands of industrialized warfare. They were forced to constantly improvise, to utilize weapons that were barely tested, and to develop the new techniques they had gleaned at great cost during battle and in the short training intervals. From the beginning, this was an extreme learning curve. In this way, the war accelerated the prewar trend towards military professionalism and enforced standardization across the different armies.

During the first half of the war, the composition, function and mentality of the regimental officer corps changed fundamentally. By 1916 nearly all active peacetime officers had disappeared from front service. They were replaced by a younger generation of officers, who were of bourgeois, rather than aristocratic, origins. Long before their army commanders, front officers abandoned the traditional spirit of the offensive, which had led to exorbitant losses in 1914–15, especially in the French army, in order to secure the survival of their troops. French front officers described this bloody learning process as an ‘experience dearly acquired’ and as ‘painful.’¹⁶¹ Industrialized warfare required that front officers exhibit tactical and technical weaponry expertise, as well as pragmatism and openness towards their troops, instead of a blind faith in victory or aristocratic heroism. In the assessment of the German soldiers, the ‘old’ active officers fared much better at their task than the ‘war lieutenants’ that succeeded them. Indeed the hatred of officers was not actually directed at those professional officers who had been trained in the peacetime army. This throws an unusually positive light on the officership of the royal Prussian army, which has normally been perceived negatively in German historiography. Further research will have to examine whether the third OHL’s cult of machines and efficiency really inaugurated the end of the Wilhelmine Prussian military tradition in 1916—or whether this tradition did not prove more adaptable at the front than its political legacy implies.¹⁶²

When the German and French regiments returned to their garrisons after four and a half years of warfare, they had little in common

¹⁶¹ S.H.A.T. 1 K T 701, chef de bataillon cdt. le I/46 R.I: ‘expérience chèrement acquise,’ ‘douloureuses expériences.’

¹⁶² See Geyer (1984), pp. 98–102.

with their counterparts of August 1914, other than their designated names and flags. Hardly any of the officers, NCOs and soldiers, who had marched out with their regiment in August 1914, still remained in place to be demobilized at their home depot after the armistice. In this regard, the regiments resembled a skeleton. Yet it was during the postwar period that the ideological veneration of the regimental community increased in Germany, peaking after the Versailles Treaty had disbanded the old regiments. Former regiment officers, who during the war had only served in their regiment for a short period, now formed veterans' clubs to act as the keepers of the 'holy grail'—the 'old spirit' of the defunct regiments and the Prussian army.¹⁶³

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 7 N 156 Personnel
 25 N 123 131^e régiment d'infanterie: ordres du colonel, rapports de patrouilles (août 1914–déc. 1917)
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 PH 10 II Leib-Grenadier-Regiment Prinz Friedrich Karl (1. Brandenburgisches) Nr. 8; Grenadier-Regiment Prinz Friedrich Carl (2. Brandenburgisches) Nr. 12
 RH 61 Kriegsgeschichtliche Forschungsanstalt des Heeres

¹⁶³ See BA-MA Freiburg PH 10 II, Personalpapiere ehemaliger Offiziere Grenadier Regt. 12, Satzung des Offiziervereins, Dezember 1919; Brandenburgisches Landeshauptarchiv (BLHA) Pr. Br. Rep 37 Neuhardenberg, Nr. 1894/13: Bericht über die Versammlung des Vereins ehemaliger Offiziere des Ulanen-Regiments Kaiser Alexander II. von Rußland (1. Brdb.) Nr. 3 am 20.12.1919.

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CHAPTER TWO

HIDDEN COURAGE: POSTWAR LITERATURE AND ANGLICAN ARMY CHAPLAINS ON THE WESTERN FRONT, 1914–1918

Edward Madigan

For Anglican Regimental Chaplains we had little respect. If they had shown one-tenth the courage, endurance, and other human qualities that the regimental doctors showed, we agreed, the British Expeditionary Force might well have started a religious revival.¹

Robert Graves was perhaps the most scathing postwar critic of the Anglican army chaplains who served with the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) during the Great War, but he was by no means the only one. The memoirs of Siegfried Sassoon, C. E. Montague and Guy Chapman, the fiction of C. R. Benstead and the lexicographical writing of John Brophy and Eric Partridge all present Anglican chaplains in a mediocre light. They are portrayed as being, at best, well-meaning but out-of-touch, and, at worst, cowardly and hypocritical. Yet in his fifth dispatch, Field Marshall Sir John French wrote that he could not ‘speak too highly of the devoted manner in which all chaplains, whether with troops in the trenches or in attendance of the sick and wounded in casualty-clearing stations [...] have worked throughout the campaign.’² When introduced to a senior chaplain on a visit to the Headquarters of the Chaplains’ Department, French’s successor, Douglas Haig, famously said ‘a good chaplain is as valuable as a good general.’³ First World War generals, however, are a much-maligned group themselves and remain, despite recent revisionist scholarship, highly controversial.⁴ The memoirs of veterans like Graves and Sassoon,

¹ Graves (1960), p. 197.

² Winniffrith (1917), p. 87.

³ Blackburne (1932), p. 115.

⁴ See especially Gary Sheffield, *Forgotten Victory* (2001), Brian Bond, *The Unquiet Western Front* (2002) and Dan Todman, *The First World War: Myth and Memory* (2006).

on the other hand, have become classics of twentieth century literature and continue to be reprinted.

As no scholarly study has yet examined Anglican chaplains as a group, the negative picture put forward by a handful of memoirists has become the received knowledge concerning their performance on the Western Front. Using personal narrative material and statistical information relating to a representative group of Anglican chaplains, this chapter will contrast the postwar image of the Anglican padre with the realities of his war performance. It will be seen that the negative picture posited by postwar writers, while possibly rooted in real experiences, is unrepresentative and far from complete, and that Anglican chaplains played a significant, valuable and often valued role in the BEF from 1914 to 1918.⁵

The Postwar Criticism

Robert Graves

Robert Graves' *Goodbye to All That* was first published in 1929, the year that also saw the publication of Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* and the first English translations of Ernst Jünger's *Storm of Steel* and Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front*. *Goodbye to All That* does not begin and end with Graves' war experience; events from the author's childhood, adolescence, and postwar adulthood are also included in the narrative, but his time spent in the Royal Welch Fusiliers emerges as the defining formative experience of his young life. Graves' encounter with war was traumatic and indeed the writing of *Goodbye to All That* was a conscious attempt to deal with this trauma, putting it behind him by literally saying 'goodbye' to it.⁶ In view of this, it is perhaps understandable that the narrative is often quite bitter in tone, and that those individuals or groups who are deemed to have made a

⁵ 'Anglican' in this context will refer to all clergymen of the world-wide Anglican Communion. This encompasses not only the clergy of the Church of England but also those of the Episcopal Anglican Church in Scotland, the Church of Ireland and Anglicans from the Dominions and colonies. As the Anglican Church in Wales was not formally disestablished until 1920, Welsh Anglican clergymen were members of the Church of England during the period in question.

⁶ Seymour-Smith (1995), p. 67.

bad episode worse are exposed. The civilian clergy, the Northcliffe Press, profiteers and Welsh special reservists all come in for harsh criticism. Graves saves his most biting invective, however, for the Anglican army chaplains he encountered on the Western Front.

In the excerpt quoted above Anglican chaplains are portrayed as lacking in courage and endurance, particularly by comparison with the other prominent non-combatant officers—the regimental doctors. These weaknesses, according to Graves, meant that the chaplains commanded little respect from junior combatant officers. To support this, he insists that the Anglicans hardly ever appeared in the front line, being under orders (he does not say from whom) not to get mixed up in the fighting: ‘Soldiers could hardly respect a chaplain who obeyed these orders, and yet not one in fifty seemed sorry to obey them.’ Referring to the chaplain attached to his own battalion, Graves remarks that: ‘Occasionally, on a quiet day in a quiet sector, the chaplain would make a daring afternoon visit to the support line and distribute a few cigarettes, before hurrying back.’⁷ Graves goes on to heap praise on Roman Catholic padres who never ‘failed to do all that was expected of [them] and more’ and suggests that they were braver, generally more competent and certainly more popular than their Anglican counterparts, who were ‘remarkably out of touch with their troops.’⁸

Graves clearly disliked the chaplain attached to his own unit and viewed Anglican chaplains generally with great disdain. Importantly, he identifies a reluctance to expose themselves to the same dangers as combatant troops as their greatest shortcoming, and even suggests (perhaps a little sarcastically) that had these chaplains displayed greater courage, the BEF might well have fostered a religious revival. Graves’ main charge against the Anglican chaplains, then, is that of cowardice (or at least hesitancy) in the face of danger. He insists, moreover, that, as a result of this cowardice, soldiers had little or no respect for them. It is significant also that Graves contrasts the shameful conduct of the Anglican padres with the exemplary conduct of the Roman Catholics. He was not the only writer to make this distinction.

⁷ Graves (1960), p. 197.

⁸ *Ibid.*

Guy Chapman

Guy Chapman's *A Passionate Prodigality* was first published in 1933. This candid, and often wonderfully written, memoir focuses solely on Chapman's war experience, opening with his arrival in France in 1915 and closing with his cruelly anti-climactic arrival in Germany as part of the Army of Occupation four years later. In common with Graves, Chapman singles out Anglican chaplains for particular criticism, contrasting them unfavorably with Roman Catholics. He also refers to orders that specifically prohibited Anglican chaplains from accompanying combat troops to the front line although, unlike Graves, he accepts that many Anglicans ignored these orders and went anyway: 'The Church of Rome, experienced in propaganda, sent its priests into the line. The Church of England forbade theirs forward of Brigade Headquarters, and though many, realising the fatal blunder of such an order, came just the same, the publication of that injunction had its effect.'⁹ What really condemned Anglican padres in Chapman's eyes, however, was their jovial demeanour which he saw as a reflection of an absence of the spiritual serenity, which he felt was possessed by the Roman Catholics:

These Catholic priests impressed one. Leeson never dropped a word of religion in my hearing; but one felt a serenity and certitude streaming from him such as was not possessed by our bluff Anglicans. Already there was a growing dislike of this latter. They had nothing to offer but the consolation the next man could give you, and a less fortifying one. The Church of Rome sent a man into action mentally and spiritually cleaned. The Church of England could only offer you a cigarette.¹⁰

Like Graves, then, Chapman viewed Catholic chaplains as superior to their Anglican counterparts, but whereas Graves' criticism focuses on their lack of courage, Chapman highlights their 'bluff' manner and their inability to console the officers and men in their charge, suggesting that they had no special expertise or vocation that set them apart from combatant officers. Chapman saw this lack of professional purpose as a very grave flaw and as an extension of the generally unprofessional culture of the Kitchener armies which so shocked him when he volunteered in 1915. This very inadequacy was analyzed at length by another veteran, Charles Edward Montague.

⁹ Chapman (1965), p. 117.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

C. E. Montague

C. E. Montague's *Disenchantment* was first published in 1922 and brought together a series of articles that had appeared in the *Manchester Guardian* over the previous two years. Montague was later linked by contemporary critics such as Cyril Falls and F. J. Harvey-Darton with a school of writers that included Graves and Chapman but also Edmund Blunden and Siegfried Sassoon, whose work has become known as the 'Literature of Disenchantment'.¹¹ This link is somewhat misleading; when war broke out in 1914 most of the other members of this so-called school were in their late teens or twenties, while Montague was an established middle-aged writer.¹² When he volunteered in 1915 he was 47 years old; he had published several books, and had been on the staff of the *Manchester Guardian* for over twenty years. As a result, *Disenchantment* comes across as the work of a man who came to maturity in late Victorian England and was subsequently very much engaged with Edwardian society and culture. So while the war had a profound effect on Montague, it cannot be said to have been a particularly *formative* event in his life. Also, as an experienced journalist with an inquisitive, analytical mind, Montague was equipped to try and make sense of events as they occurred. On being demobilized in 1919, he returned to the *Guardian* and immediately began publishing controversial articles on the war and its consequences. Thus his interpretation of the European war appeared in print almost a decade before the memoirs of Graves and Chapman. Despite this, Montague's book shares a number of obvious similarities with their work. In common with them, Montague was a veteran who had experienced a profoundly disillusioning encounter with the realities of war. As a result, his writing reflects a similar sense of disenchantment and is highly critical of certain individuals and groups that he felt behaved less than honorably during the course of the conflict, including the army chaplains attached to the BEF.

Montague's lofty, slightly pompous, *belles-lettres* style may jar with modern readers but, possibly because of his maturity and journalistic skill, his portrayal of the BEF chaplains is subtler and more nuanced than those of his literary successors, and, as a result, perhaps all the

¹¹ Falls (1989), p. 108; Harvey-Darton (1931), pp. 142, 144.

¹² Grievess (1997), p. 36. Grievess argues that the perceived link between Montague and the disenchanted writers whose work was published in the late 1920s is due, at least in part, to the 'captivating simplicity of the title' of *Disenchantment*.

more damning. He is careful to concede that the Army Chaplains' Department was made up of a very diverse group of personalities and that a great variety of different clerical 'types' were represented in their number. He provides a vivid sketch of these types, contrasting the 'saintly' Anglican padre, T. B. Hardy, with an anonymous chaplain who was visibly drunk in a fashionable restaurant in Amiens on 'one of the worst days of the Battle of the Somme.' But a paradigmatic type emerges. Montague describes him thus:

And there was, in great force, the large, healthy, pleasant young curate not severely importuned by a vocation, the ex-athlete, the prop and stay of village cricket clubs, the good fellow whom the desires of parents, the gaiety of his youth at the university, and the whole drift of things about him had shepherded unresistingly into the open door of the Church. Sudden, unhoped-for, the war had bought him the chance of escape back to an almost solely physical life, like his own happy youth of rude health, only better...¹³

Although Montague does not mention this directly, the representative chaplain he describes here, with his background of village cricket clubs, university and 'the Church,' appears to belong to the Church of England. He later points out, however, that this chaplain 'had his counterpart in all the churches,' making it clear that his caustic commentary applies to padres of all denominations, not just the Anglicans.¹⁴ Montague's narrative, then, unlike those of Graves and Chapman, avoids idealizing Roman Catholics. In common with Chapman, however, he views an absence of serenity as a major flaw. In the passage quoted above, he depicts the typical young curate at the front as being 'not severely importuned by a vocation.' He goes on to suggest that such curates had drifted into the Church without much reflection and that when the war came they saw it as an adventure that would free them from their mundane lives in unchallenging parishes. He takes this characterization further when he outlines what he views as the chaplains' most critical shortcomings:

He seemed to be only too much afraid of having it thought that he was anything more than one of themselves. He had, with a vengeance, "no clerical nonsense about him." The vigour with which he threw off the parson and put on the man and brother did not always strike the original

¹³ Montague (1940), p. 86.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

men and brothers as it was intended. Your virilist chaplain was apt to overdo, to their mind, his jolly implied disclaimers of any compromising connection with kingdoms not of this world. For one thing, he was, for the taste of people versed in carnage, a shade too fussily bloodthirsty. Nobody made such a point of aping your little trench affectations of callousness; nobody else was so anxious to keep you assured that the blood of the enemy smelt as good to his nose as it could to any of yours.¹⁵

As far as Montague was concerned, chaplains were too bellicose, too worldly, and too anxious to downplay their role as clergymen to command the genuine respect of officers and men. This absence of respect meant that the chaplains were unable to seize what Montague viewed as a real opportunity for bringing about a spiritual revival. The chapter in which the above commentary appears is entitled 'The Sheep That Were Not Fed' (suggestive of a missed opportunity) and Montague ends it by writing: 'in his own way, the army chaplain, too, became a tributary brook feeding the general reservoir of disappointment and mistrust that was steadily filled by the surface drainage of all the higher ground of our British social landscape under the dirty weather of the war.'¹⁶ By maintaining that chaplains contributed to the disenchantment of others, Montague implies that they experienced little disenchantment themselves, that they were somehow outside the war, which was really only properly experienced by combatants.

Siegfried Sassoon

Siegfried Sassoon's trilogy of memoirs was published between 1928 and 1936. Sassoon, or his fictional alter-ego George Sherston, was clearly more well-disposed toward the Church and clergy than Montague, Chapman or Graves, the Church of England being very much part of the rural prewar landscape that Sassoon occasionally idealized at the front. Sassoon's father was Jewish but he had been given a conventional Anglican upbringing by his mother and before the war he had moved in circles in which the Church retained a degree of influence. In *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man*, he writes affectionately of the Rector of Hoadley, whom he refers to as an 'old friend' and in *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer* he quotes from a letter he received from his battalion quartermaster, Joe Cottrill, while convalescing in Sussex. The letter tells of the death

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

of a chaplain who is described as ‘absolutely indifferent to danger.’¹⁷ Elsewhere in *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer*, however, chaplains are portrayed as ineffectual. While waiting for attention in a dressing station after being wounded at Arras, Sherston recalls listening to ‘an emotional padre who was painfully aware that he could do nothing except stand about and feel sympathetic. The consolations of the Church of England weren’t much in demand at an Advanced Dressing Station.’¹⁸ Sassoon did not write about chaplains in the same scathing manner as some of his contemporaries but his work arguably perpetuates the same padre stereotypes as their more derisive material. Curiously, the one Roman Catholic padre that Sassoon refers to is an alcoholic who is incapable of organizing the officers’ mess—a man who would presumably have fallen short of the idealized image of the Catholic padre presented by Graves and Chapman.

C. R. Benstead

The aforementioned authors all claimed to have played a direct or peripheral role in the events they described, and to have been writing from memory, their books being marketed as memoirs. What is perhaps the most overtly negative portrayal of an Anglican army chaplain by a postwar writer is to be found, not in the pages of a memoir, however, but in those of a novel—Charles Richard Benstead’s *Retreat, A Story of 1918*, which was first published in 1930. Benstead served as a subaltern with the Royal Garrison Artillery on the Western Front, winning the Military Cross in 1917, and played cricket for England in the early 1920s, before gaining a commission in the Royal Navy.¹⁹ He was serving as a Lieutenant Commander in the Navy when he wrote his controversial war novel. On its publication, the book was praised in the press for its ‘vivid impressions of the victorious retreat of the 5th Army.’²⁰ Yet this epic retreat really only serves as a background to the central event of the novel—the humiliating downfall of the Reverend Eliot Pethwick Warne.

¹⁷ Sassoon (1999), p. 299 and (2000), p. 195.

¹⁸ Sassoon (1999), p. 173.

¹⁹ War Office File—National Archives—C. R. Benstead, WO 339/66179.

²⁰ E. B. Osborn, as quoted in an advertisement for the novel, *The Times*, 17 January 1930.

Warne is a narrow-minded, introspective and overly-sensitive Anglican army chaplain who has just been attached to a brigade of the Royal Artillery. He arrives at Brigade Headquarters at the worst conceivable time: one o'clock in the morning of the 21st of March 1918, just five hours before Ludendorff launches his massive spring offensive. The opening chapters of the book record Warne's horror at the indifference of the officers and men to his position as a chaplain and to religion in general. He is treated by turns with amusement, resentment and outright contempt. The officers mostly feel uncomfortable in his presence and generally view him as a burden, while the other ranks see him as something of a joke. As the narrative unfolds, the padre's feelings of inadequacy, disillusionment, and self-loathing increase, and he finds it impossible to get to grips with his new environment, even after the German offensive has ground to a halt. By the end of the book a mere month has passed, but Rev. Warne has suffered a complete nervous breakdown and died of an unspecified nervous illness (which is aggravated by a dose of Spanish flu).

The text of the novel essentially consists of a series of humiliating defeats, each passage exposing some fundamental flaw in the chaplain's character. The most prominent of these flaws are snobbery, cowardice and a growing mental instability. In addition, unlike Montague's chaplains, who were too worldly, Benstead's fictional chaplain is portrayed as being not worldly enough. Having come from the sheltered country parish of Bidderwell in rural Cambridgeshire, he is wholly unsuited to work with a front line brigade. He is disgusted by the ignorance and coarse manners of the working-class troops he encounters but also curiously envies them as they appear to have definite tasks to perform. While idly observing a truck driver, he reflects: 'That man is probably a motor mechanic by trade, a man of little or no education. Yet he has a definite job. He is serving his King, and indirectly his God. I, on the other hand, with all my education can do neither.'²¹ This, and other passages, paint a picture of a man who feels useless and unwanted—someone who has no clear role in the Army. This theme of the uselessness of clergymen at the front is central to the narrative. Rather than view their padre as an integral part of their unit, the junior artillery officers see him as an awkward burden. On learning that a new chaplain has been posted to the brigade, the Adjutant, Captain

²¹ Benstead (1930), p. 87.

Cheyne, remarks angrily: ‘Oh hell! Here’s another bloody parson!’²² Much later, in the aftermath of Warne’s ignominious demise, the brigade doctor, O’Reilly, expounds on the absolute futility, as he sees it, of having chaplains in the field:

I used to think that nobody was indispensable in this world: some merely did the job better than others. But I’m not sure that it applies to parsons with the BEF—unless you invert it and say that no parson is really necessary out here; some merely less unnecessary than others.²³

Rev. Warne appears especially pathetic because the other characters in the book are portrayed as competent, stoical and brave, and his weaknesses are thus magnified by their strengths. This recalls the way Graves and Chapman highlighted the faults of Anglican chaplains by contrasting them with figures that were, in their view, far more worthy of praise, such as regimental doctors and Catholic padres. In brief, if one were to take Eliot Warne as an accurate fictional representation of Anglican army chaplains attached to the BEF, one would have to accept that most of them were ineffectual, cowardly and unwanted.

John Brophy and Eric Partridge

The final major example of postwar ‘bad press’ directed at army chaplains comes from a lexicon compiled by two former infantry privates, John Brophy and Eric Partridge. John Brophy came from a lower middle-class Liverpool background and was a fourteen year old schoolboy when war broke out. In a quixotic act of rebellion, he ran away from home in November 1914 and lied about his age in order to enlist in the King’s Liverpool Regiment. His deception was never detected and he served throughout the war on the Western Front. When he was demobilized in 1919 he was not yet eighteen and walked with a limp brought on by trench foot.²⁴ Eric Partridge was born on New Zealand’s North Island in 1894. His family immigrated to Brisbane, Australia when he was thirteen. In 1914, he interrupted his studies at the University of Queensland to enlist in the Australian infantry and saw service as a private, both at Gallipoli and on the Western Front. The paths of the two authors crossed in London in the 1920s while

²² *Ibid.*, p. 11.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 312.

²⁴ *The Times*, John Brophy—Obituary, 15 November 1965.

Partridge was running a small publishing house. Brophy had written a number of articles on soldiers' songs and Partridge was becoming a keen lexicographer. They agreed to collaborate on a lexicon of soldiers' songs and speech and the result, *Songs and Slang of the British Soldier: 1914–1918*, was published in 1930. It was printed in two further editions over the next eighteen months and an enlarged, and ultimately very popular, edition was published under the title *The Long Trail* in 1965. The book provides an exhaustive and often fascinating account of soldiers' slang and contains a wealth of etymological material. The entry for the term 'padre' not only reinforces the view of chaplains expressed in the memoirs but also gives an informative explanation of the origins of the word and its usage in the British Army:

PADRE: Chaplain—An accredited priest or minister wearing military uniform. From the Portuguese and Spanish *Padre*—Father, priest. Perhaps a survival from the Peninsular War, more probably originated in Gibraltar. A chaplain had few definite duties: he could make himself useful or he could be slack. In general it may be said that all Roman Catholic *padres* were respected because they came into the line and because they lacked the haw-haw voice. Church of England and Nonconformist *padres* could be roughly divided into three classes: (1) The man-of-the-world who swore and over drank; despised and disliked; (2) The earnest but ineffectual; despised but tolerated; (3) The spiritual but determined who made himself useful as a first-aid man and distributor of cigarettes; this sort was respected as a person, but not as a parson. Men would even say, "A pity old So-and-so's a padre; he's not a bad sort."²⁵

Again, Roman Catholic *padres* are portrayed as more willing to experience danger than their Protestant counterparts. Anglican and Nonconformist *padres* are divided into the despised and the useful. No indication is given as to what proportion of chaplains fell into the first two negative categories but the tone of the paragraph is generally critical and the impression given is that, as a group, *padres* were not particularly popular. An important distinction between the above paragraph and the work of the other postwar critics is that it was written by men who had served in the ranks and who were purporting to express the views of the ordinary soldier. Significantly, it is the only one of the six examples to refer to the class background of chaplains.

²⁵ Brophy and Partridge (1930), p. 148. Interestingly, in the much revised 1965 edition, entitled *The Long Trail*, the authors gave a different historical explanation for the use of the word by British soldiers: 'This word was adopted by the Army from the Portuguese in India during the eighteenth century.' Brophy and Partridge (1965), p. 161.

Roman Catholics are deemed to be superior to Protestants not simply because they were prepared to enter the front line but also because they 'lacked the haw-haw voice.' Catholic padres, in other words, were more popular because they were less overtly upper class than other chaplains.

The writings of Montague, Graves, Chapman, Sassoon, Benstead, and Brophy and Partridge were all well received from a commercial point of view and widely read.²⁶ Importantly, Graves and Sassoon continue to be popular. *Goodbye to All That* is still in print and until recently was one of the more popular books on the curriculum for A-Level English in the United Kingdom. Even more significantly, in this context, academics continue to cite these authors and take their portrayal of Anglican chaplains at face value.²⁷ These writers all viewed chaplains in different ways but their commentaries collectively present an overwhelmingly negative image of the Anglican chaplains attached to the BEF on the Western Front.

Yet how accurate is this portrayal? Does it constitute a complete picture of the war record of Anglican army chaplains? And would all relevant sources concur with the judgements of these literary commentators?

The Anglican War Record

When war broke out in 1914, 66 chaplains of different denominations accompanied the Expeditionary Force to France. Most of these chaplains were Anglican but the most senior of them was one Dr. Simms, a Northern Irish Presbyterian.²⁸ In July 1915, however, Bishop Llewellyn Gwynne of Khartoum, who had been serving in France as a 4th class chaplain since October 1914, was appointed to the position of Deputy Chaplain-General. From this point on, the administration of the Chaplains' Department in France and Belgium was divided along denominational lines, with Simms acting as head of the Nonconformist

²⁶ All six texts, with the exception of *A Passionate Prodigality*, were printed in several editions.

²⁷ See Schweitzer (2005), p. 173; Holmes (2005), pp. 508, 514; Loudon (1996), p. 47; Johnstone and Hagerty (1996), pp. 107, 112; Fuller (1990), p. 156; Leonard (1986), p. 38.

²⁸ Edmonds (1932), p. 134.

and Roman Catholic padres and Gwynne seeing to the administration and pastoral care of the Anglicans.

Towards the end of 1916, Bishop Gwynne began compiling a series of files on the chaplains serving under him, and entering them into a large, bound war-book.²⁹ The completed book, which is now housed in the Church Mission Society Archives at the University of Birmingham, contains the files of 723 Anglican chaplains who served in France and Belgium between 1914 and 1918. Some of the files give little more than the name of the chaplain and the unit to which he was attached. Most entries, however, contain a considerable amount of pre-service biographical information along with comments relating to individual performance as a CF (Chaplain to the Forces). In February 1916 the number of Anglican chaplains serving on the Western Front numbered 460.³⁰ By the Armistice, the figure had reached 878.³¹ Wastage in the form of death, illness, capture and retirement, and the replacements for these losses notwithstanding, the 723 chaplains in Gwynne's book can be considered a more than reasonably representative group. By examining these files in conjunction with the personal data contained in Crockford's Clerical Directory, the War Office files housed in the National Archives at Kew, and the wealth of personal narrative material that survives from the period, one can gain a nuanced insight into the wartime experience and, importantly, the war performance or record, of precisely the group that Graves and the other postwar writers criticized so strongly.

Cowardice and the Anglican Army Chaplain

One of the most striking pieces of data revealed in Bishop Gwynne's war-book is that a significant number of Anglican chaplains were recommended for (and, in most cases, received) awards for gallantry or meritorious service. As detailed in Table 2.1, 199 of the 723 chaplains in the book won a military award of some kind. This constitutes 27.5 per cent of the whole, or slightly over one in four.

²⁹ Hereafter referred to as Gwynne's war-book.

³⁰ Davidson Papers, Lambeth, vol. 344, f. 88.

³¹ *Statistics of the Military Effort* (1922).

Table 2.1 A breakdown of the 233 Awards received by 199 Anglican Army Chaplains as recorded in the Deputy-Chaplain General's files³²

Military Cross	Distinguished Service Order	Mentioned in Dispatches	Victoria Cross	Total Awards
121	26	81	2	233

The medal most commonly awarded to Anglican chaplains on the Western Front was the Military Cross, or M.C., which was instituted in December 1914 as an award for gallantry for (combatant and non-combatant) officers of the rank of captain and below. Robert Graves' greatest criticism of the Anglican chaplains was that they lacked courage. Indeed, with the exception of Sassoon, all of the authors mentioned above suggest that chaplains were unwilling to share the dangers endured by combatant officers and men. The fact that a chaplain received an award for gallantry does not in itself indicate that he was a brave man. What it does irrefutably indicate is that the recipient was exposed to enemy fire, and that his conduct while under fire was considered by his commanding officer to be in some way exemplary.

Moreover, as the recommendations for these awards are often recorded in the file of the individual chaplain, a clear insight into what exactly the award was being granted for can be gained. The picture that emerges is in stark contrast to that painted by the postwar critics. Reproduced below are three typical examples:

³² Compiled from the war-book in Gwynne Papers, C.M.S. Archive, University of Birmingham, Acc 18/21. As can be seen from the discrepancy between the total number of awards and the total number of chaplains, twenty Anglican padres received two or more different awards. W. H. Miller, for example, was awarded the C.M.G. and the Military Cross as well as being mentioned in dispatches. T. B. Hardy, a former school-master who was over 50 when he received his temporary commission, was awarded the Distinguished Service Order, the Military Cross and the Victoria Cross before being killed at the front in April 1918. It should also be pointed out that nine of the chaplains who were awarded Military Crosses were also later awarded bars (i.e. they won the Cross twice). J. Thom, who graduated from Trinity College, Dublin, received two bars to his cross, making him one of only a comparatively small number of men who were so honored in the British Army during the war. A total of three Anglican chaplains were also awarded the Order of St. Michael and St. George, (or C.M.G.), which is a British award for chivalry that was first instituted in April 1918. It was awarded to very high ranking officers such as Major-Generals, Brigadier-Generals and Colonels and to Senior Chaplains who nominally held these ranks.

Best, J. K.

Captain Best has been Chaplain of the Battalion for over a year and has from the first held an almost unique position in the estimation of the men. His absolute fearlessness under fire and complete disregard for danger is a by-word among them and many instances of his great courage and fine example under fire can be quoted both on the Somme and Hebuterne and in the Oppy sector during May and June 1917. On many occasions he has tended the wounded under very heavy shell fire.³³

Burnaby, Rev. H. B. F.

For gallant, self-sacrificing work... His bright and cheery way of looking at life, and his power of putting heart in the men during trying times and of consoling the wounded, has done much to enhance the fighting value of the Brigade. His own personal gallantry under fire is most inspiring. On many occasions under the heaviest fire I have never known him flinch or fail to quietly carry out his duties with the utmost disregard of personal danger.³⁴

Tyndall, E. D.

Has shown a complete disregard of danger and a supreme devotion to duty. After the attack by this Battalion on May 23rd 1917 at Oppy, he helped the Medical Officer in every possible way, assisting to carry in wounded men under shell fire and exhibiting a fine example of great bravery. His example of courage and cheerful performance of all duties under the most trying conditions in the trenches as well as out of the line sets a very high standard and greatly aids the moral[e] of the Battalion.³⁵

In addition to providing evidence that commanding officers often viewed their padres not as ineffectual, but as valuable assets to their units, these recommendations, and dozens like them, shed light on the controversial issue of Anglican chaplains and front line service. Graves and Chapman were correct in maintaining that orders prohibited chaplains from accompanying their units into battle and from visiting the front line trenches. Yet these orders were not issued by the Church of England, as both writers suggest, but by the military authorities and, at least in 1914, applied not just to Anglicans but to chaplains of all denominations. As early as the summer of 1915, however, chaplains increasingly found their movements unrestricted by the authorities, and by the beginning of the following year chaplains of all denominations

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 190.

³⁴ Gwynne's war-book, p. 26.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

were allowed a degree of freedom in their movements which would have been unthinkable for combatant officers.

During the opening phase of the war, chaplains were ordered by their military superiors to stay with the battalion stores or at Brigade Headquarters, while their divisions were in the line.³⁶ They were rarely, if ever, allowed in the front line trenches and were forbidden from accompanying their units during engagements. Initially, then, if a chaplain wanted to share all the dangers that his men experienced, he had to go against army orders. The reasons given for this restriction were twofold: firstly, when the absolute priority of the Army was to stem the German advance, chaplains, as non-combatants, simply performed no obvious military function at the front. Secondly, it was felt that wounded chaplains would occupy the energies of stretcher-bearers whose essential task was to carry wounded soldiers, and additionally that the sight of a severely wounded or dead chaplain would have a demoralizing effect on front line troops.³⁷

Due, however, to the campaigning of junior chaplains and an increased consideration of the long-term morale of the troops on the part of the military authorities in 1915, chaplains of all denominations were soon allowed to accompany their men practically everywhere they went and often acquitted themselves well in the front line.³⁸ The attitude of many commanding officers with regard to the role of the padre changed accordingly and, by June 1916, the role chaplains were to play in the upcoming Somme offensive was made clear in an order circulated by the Adjutant-General. The order was made in response to a directive issued by the Commander of the Fourth Army that no chaplain was to proceed further than the advanced dressing stations. The Adjutant-General's order countermanded this and officially allowed chaplains full freedom of movement:

Some doubt appears to exist as to the position chaplains should occupy during active operations. It is considered that, provided their presence in no way hampers the operations in progress or in contemplation, no restrictions should be placed on their movements, and that chaplains should be encouraged to go where the Senior Chaplains... of divisions

³⁶ Edmonds (1932), p. 136.

³⁷ Smyth (1968), p. 165.

³⁸ Chaplain Neville Talbot was particularly active in this capacity. See Brabant (1949), pp. 59–60.

decide that their services can be most advantageously employed, and where they can be of most use to the troops.³⁹

The order applied to padres of all denominations and officially sanctioned the practice of chaplains accompanying their units during engagements. In some divisions chaplains had already done this from the earliest days of the war, but the official order gave their case more force and helped make the sight of a padre in the front line more common.

The change in attitude of the military authorities during the first eighteen months of the war is evidenced by the testimonies of several chaplains. Frank Russell Barry, who won the D.S.O. as a senior chaplain, gives a typically articulate account of it:

When the Padres first went out with the BEE, the army had little idea what to do with them. In battle, they were left behind at the base and were not allowed to go up to the fighting front. What on earth, it was asked, could they do up there? A colonel would say "No work for you today, padre," meaning by that, no corpses for burial. The chaplains' job was to take church parades, on such rare occasions as these were practicable, to run entertainments, to help in censoring letters, and in general to act as welfare officers, thereby helping to keep up morale.⁴⁰

By the time the new temporary chaplains started arriving in force late in 1915 and 1916, however, Barry claims that:

[A]ll this was changed, chaplains were allowed to move freely everywhere and when the units "went up" we went with them... We would give Holy Communion in the dugouts, minister to the wounded and dying, share, so far as we might in what the troops endured. We did what we could to serve them in Christ's name... and they understood that this was why we were doing it.⁴¹

The chaplains themselves were the first to realize that their ability to exert any kind of influence on combatants would be greatly compromised unless they were seen to willingly expose themselves to the same dangers as junior officers and men. An Australian padre serving on the Western Front insisted that:

The influence of a chaplain over the men depends on one thing—his obvious physical bravery. Everyone can value courage, for all know the

³⁹ Edmonds (1932), p. 137.

⁴⁰ Barry (1970), p. 60.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

meaning of fear. All things may be forgiven to the chaplain who shows himself prepared to share their dangers; nothing can mitigate the failure of the man who is not.⁴²

As with officers, privates and NCOs were far more inclined to take a chaplain seriously if he appeared willing to share the dangers and discomforts that they commonly experienced. In the official history of the Army Chaplains' Department, John Smyth maintained that a soldier would rather have listened to an indifferent discourse from a padre who had been with him in the trenches than a brilliant one from a padre who had 'remained at the back.'⁴³ G. H. Studdert Kennedy, a graduate of Trinity College, Dublin who was awarded the M.C. in 1917, had a very keen understanding of the need for chaplains to be willing to accompany their men, and lead them by example, in the most dangerous circumstances. He expressed his views in an informal interview he had with a newly commissioned 4th class chaplain in Rouen in 1917. The new padre had just arrived in France and was anxious to know what advice an experienced chaplain could give him. Kennedy later remembered telling him:

"Live with the men; go everywhere they go. Make up your mind you will share all their risks, and more, if you can do any good. The line is the key to the whole business. Work in the very front, and they will listen to you; but if you stay behind, you're wasting your time. Men will forgive you anything but lack of courage and devotion." ... I said the more padres died in battle doing Christian deeds the better.⁴⁴

The willingness of Anglican chaplains to expose themselves to danger is clearly evidenced by the number of deaths they suffered as a group. The chaplain who received these words of advice, T. B. Hardy, went on to become the most highly-decorated British non-combatant of the war, winning the Victoria Cross, before finally dying of wounds sustained at the front in 1918. In his 1940 book, *The Army Chaplain*, a former Great War padre, P. Middleton-Brumwell, claimed that 'in comparison with their numbers' army chaplains (of all denominations and in all theaters) suffered more deaths than 'any other unit in the Army.'⁴⁵ In a recent article on chaplains' deaths, Peter Howson, himself a former padre,

⁴² Rev. Kenneth Anderson, as cited by Smyth (1968), p. 166.

⁴³ Smyth (1968), p. 166.

⁴⁴ G. H. Studdert Kennedy, cited in Purcell (1962), p. 118.

⁴⁵ Middleton Brumwell (1940), p. 38.

writes that we should be slow to take such grandiose claims at face value.⁴⁶ The fact remains, however, that over 170 chaplains died during the war and that the majority of these were Anglican. It is difficult to get a precise figure for deaths of Anglican chaplains as sources differ as to the total number.⁴⁷ Yet if the 723 chaplains in Bishop Gwynne's war-book are taken as a sample, 42, or 5.8 per cent, were killed or died on active service, while a further 58, or 8 per cent, were wounded but survived. In *The Great War and the British People*, Jay Winter gives an overall estimate for deaths of British Army soldiers of between 11.8 and 12.4 per cent of all mobilized combatant and non-combatant officers and men. The figure for officers alone, according to Winter, is higher still, at 15.2 per cent.⁴⁸ A comparison of the figure for the chaplains in Gwynne's war-book with these overall totals thus reveals that while Anglican chaplains clearly died at the front, their death rate was about half that of the army overall, and approximately a third of the rate for officers, with whom they might most obviously be compared. Yet in the context of the postwar literary criticism, much of which suggests that Anglican chaplains were unwilling to expose themselves to danger, and given the fact that all chaplains were non-combatants, the more than three dozen chaplains from the survey group who were killed or died at the front must still be considered a significant number.

In contrast to what their postwar critics suggest, then, Anglican army chaplains were willing to expose themselves to the dangers of trench warfare and to enter the maelstrom of battle with the men to whom they were trying to minister. It is important to emphasize, however, that, unlike combatant officers and men, army chaplains were able to exercise a level of control over the amount of time they spent in the front line and were not usually obliged by orders to be in the trenches. There is also evidence to suggest that Anglican chaplains had a certain amount of influence over the decision, made ultimately by the Deputy Chaplain-General, as to where exactly they were posted.

⁴⁶ Howson (2005), p. 37. For another insightful deconstruction of statistics relating to chaplains' deaths see Schweitzer (2005), pp. 171–172.

⁴⁷ The preface to the 1920 edition of *Crockford's Clerical Directory* gives a figure of 112 Anglican deaths; a hard-bound publication from 1920 entitled *Roll of the Army Chaplains who gave their lives in the Great War* lists 118 chaplains; in April 1919 the Army Chaplains' Department sent a memo to Lambeth Palace that recorded 100 chaplains as having died during the conflict, while John Smyth gave a figure of 88 in the official history of the Department, *In This Sign Conquer*.

⁴⁸ Winter (1985), pp. 72, 91.

Most Anglican padres who served in France and Belgium had a brief interview with Bishop Gwynne, or one of his subordinates, at the H.Q. of the Chaplains' Department at St. Omer before going on to join their units. The interviewer's impressions of the new chaplain were often recorded and the words 'ready to go anywhere' or 'would like to go to front' appear numerous times beside the names of individuals in the war-book. In two instances, however, the phrase 'not keen on the front' is written beside a chaplain's name where the chaplains in question appear to have expressed a desire to avoid front line service. In both of these cases the men were posted to base hospitals (Havre and Rouen respectively).⁴⁹ It should be emphasized that this seems to have been a rare occurrence. That it happened at all, however, is noteworthy. A combatant officer newly arrived on the Western Front would have been most unlikely to tell a superior that he wanted to avoid getting mixed up in the fighting!

In addition, and this may go some way toward explaining the harsh tone of the postwar criticism outlined above, chaplains (of all denominations) signed only a short, temporary contract on gaining a commission. When a civilian enlisted or gained a commission he was expected to serve for the well-known 'three years or the duration.' A clergyman who gained a temporary commission as an army chaplain, on the other hand, undertook to serve for just one year. Most chaplains renewed their contracts when the year was up, and many did serve for the duration, but the fact that they had a choice caused some controversy. It should also be remembered that when conscription was introduced early in 1916, clergymen and ministers of all denominations were exempted from compulsory military service and, despite initial indications to the contrary, were ultimately excluded from the amended Manpower Bill in 1918. Clergymen, then, occupied a somewhat privileged position in Britain during the conflict. This set priests and ministers apart from ordinary civilians after 1916 and attracted a great deal of criticism in the secular and religious press as well as in parliament.⁵⁰ Anglican chaplains were painfully aware of this privileged status, of the criticism it invited, and of the charge that the Church of England, in particular,

⁴⁹ Gwynne's war-book, pp. 162, 318.

⁵⁰ For examples of parliamentary criticism of the privileged status of civilian clergy with regard to military service see *The Times*, House of Commons Report, 21 January 1916. For an example of strident journalistic criticism see 'Bishops Beware' by Horatio Bottomley, *Sunday Pictorial*, 28 November 1915.

was not doing all it could for the war effort. Some chaplains were so conscious of the degree to which the privileged status of the clergy militated against their influence at the front that they began to openly criticize the Church of England leadership for accepting a situation in which clergy were exempt from military service.⁵¹ Indeed, awareness of public criticism of the Church may account for the insistence on the part of many Anglican padres that they be seen to experience all the dangers of front line service, and for Studdert Kennedy's assertion that the more padres who died in battle, the better.

Respect and the Anglican Army Chaplain

The fortunes of the Army Chaplains' Department improved considerably during the first eighteen months of the war. By 1916, the number of official chaplains had risen substantially and they were now an increasingly common sight in the trenches. This was in part the result of a growing perception among military officials that there was a vital link between the work of the chaplain and troop morale. Douglas Haig, in particular, felt chaplains had an important role to play in interpreting British ideals (and war aims) for officers and men—thereby strengthening their resolve to defeat the enemy. As David Englander has written, Haig saw the role of the British chaplain as akin to that of a political commissar.⁵² This is not to suggest that Haig, a devoutly religious commander, was not also mindful of the spiritual dimension of the chaplains' role. He enjoyed a close relationship with a Presbyterian chaplain named Duncan, deriving great inspiration from his weekly sermons.⁵³ This personal admiration for his own padre tended to make Haig well-disposed towards, and supportive of, chaplains in general. On 28 June 1916, a mere four days before the launch of the Somme offensive, Haig wrote to King George V expressing great satisfaction with the work of the British padres:

⁵¹ See especially the 'memorial' (or petition) written by Tom Pym, a senior chaplain who had been serving since 1914, and signed by 96 BEF padres which was sent to Lambeth in July 1917. The memorial was highly critical of the hierarchy's position on the clergy and military service, Davidson Papers, vol. 340, f. 231.

⁵² Englander (1997), p. 140.

⁵³ For a personal account of the close relationship between Haig and Duncan see Duncan (1966).

Everywhere I found the troops in great spirits and full of confidence of [sic] their ability to smash the enemy when the moment for action arrives. Several officers have said to me that they have never known troops in such enthusiastic spirits. We must, I think, in fairness give a good deal of credit for this to the parsons. I have insisted on them preaching about the cause for which we are all fighting and encouraging the men to play their part. Some parsons too that were no use have been sent home. But, taken as a whole, they have done well and have been a very great help to us commanders.⁵⁴

Haig was not alone in his support for the clergy in uniform. Other senior figures were similarly religious and well-disposed toward chaplains. Senior Chaplain Harry Blackburne enjoyed a good relationship with Generals Horne and Monro, and both Rawlinson and General Butler had given him a good deal of support when he was attached to the First Army in 1915.⁵⁵ General Herbert Plumer was also supportive of the work of the Chaplains' Department and facilitated the establishment of the chaplains' school at St. Omer. As John Bourne, co-editor of the Haig diaries, has argued:

Strong religious faith was common among senior military commanders, including Byng, Hubert Gough, Grierson, Horne, Plumer and Rawlinson. [...] all these men believed that religion was an important source of personal and Army morale, took an intimate interest in Army chaplaincy and supported the Church of England's National Mission.⁵⁶

The interest and support of these senior figures allowed for an evolution in the role of the chaplain to occur in the BEF during the war that allowed chaplains the freedom of movement, and the official sanction, to work in all parts of the line.

The commanding officers of front line brigades, who constituted the middle level of command in the BEF, also came to value and appreciate the work carried out by chaplains, but often for different reasons to those of Haig and the other generals. Haig linked the chaplains' value to the army with their official duties as priests and ministers in uniform, which included addressing the troops through sermons. The brigade and battalion commanders, on the other hand, tended to view chaplains as being of most value when they performed unofficial, not

⁵⁴ Douglas Haig, 28 June 1916, from excerpt reproduced in Davidson Papers, vol. 344, p. 146.

⁵⁵ Blackburne (1955), p. 51; Blackburne (1932), p. 63.

⁵⁶ Sheffield and Bourne (2005), p. 13.

directly spiritual, duties. Such duties included the organization of canteens, entertainments and sports in the rear and the projection of a positive, optimistic demeanor while in the front line. The presence of an outwardly cheerful padre in the trenches was felt to have a generally positive effect on troop morale. This point is quite well illustrated in the recommendations for awards by repeated references to the personal cheerfulness of chaplains and their endeavours to encourage the troops in times of stress. The following two examples, which recommend chaplains for M.C.s, draw a direct link between the chaplain's demeanor and troop morale:

Gillenders, Rev. R.

For gallantry and devotion to duty during operations April 2–24, 1917. Did good work in following up in attack and tending wounded and bringing in dead under fire. Indefatigable in efforts and showed utmost cheerfulness in trying conditions. Before he was wounded Sept. 21, 1917, he was continually amongst the men cheering them up.⁵⁷

Hazledine, Rev. F. J.

For consistent and conspicuous devotion to duty. Constantly with the men in the trenches. By his unflagging energy and cheerfulness set a fine example to all. Immediately after the attack in Metz-en-Couture he went around cheering and encouraging the men. His sturdy optimism and splendid example under all conditions were beyond praise.⁵⁸

It seems clear that elements of the high and mid-level command on the Western Front viewed chaplains (of all denominations) as capable of having a potentially positive effect on troop morale, and 'valued' them in this capacity. Something that is far more difficult to ascertain, however, is whether the troops themselves valued chaplains, or viewed them as instrumental in maintaining their often high levels of morale.

Graves, Chapman, Montague, Benstead, Brophy and Partridge all represented Anglican chaplains as men who were generally unpopular and out of touch with the troops, and who commanded little or no respect. The primary narrative material relating to chaplains reveals an extremely wide range of attitudes. Some officers and men, in their contemporary correspondence and diaries, concur with the negative image posited by the postwar critics. In addition, the absence of any reference to chaplains in many contemporary sources and memoirs

⁵⁷ Gwynne's war-book, p. 61.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

indicates a strong element of indifference to the clergy in uniform. A considerable number of contemporary personal narratives, however, suggest that many British officers and men held their Anglican chaplains in extremely high regard. Significantly, it is the padres that are present at times of danger who receive the most praise. The following is an excerpt from the war diary of Pte. A. Surfleet; the chaplain he refers to was an Anglican named Lynn:

The "C. of E." chap we had was one of the finest types I have ever known. He was always with us...at play, in the trenches, at celebrations and even "over the top." He was a most devout man, utterly unafraid and yet as unlike the "tub thumping" parson as you could imagine. He gets less than his share of mention in the diary but "higher authorities" recognised his superlative worth with an M.C. and Bar. I feel sure a good many got comfort and courage from these padres.⁵⁹

Officers could be equally effusive in their praise of regimental chaplains. The Rev. Noel Mellish was the curate of St. Paul's in Deptford when he received a temporary commission as an army chaplain. In France, he was posted to the Third Division and soon won the respect and admiration of both officers and men. Captain William Bell was so moved by what he viewed as Mellish's heroism at the front that he felt compelled to write to the chaplain's mother expressing his high esteem for her son:

I feel I cannot let this opportunity pass of telling you what a splendid man your son Noel is. During the recent operations at St. Eloi, in which my Battalion unfortunately lost heavily, he did the work of ten men in dressing and helping wounded men, he is a most modest and unassuming man, and would probably say he "was only doing his job," but I was there, I know the splendid work he did. Many a man owes his life to your son and we are proud of him. The men of the Battalion love him and swear by "our Padre."⁶⁰

Mellish was awarded the Victoria Cross in April 1916 for his conduct during this episode at St. Eloi, becoming one of only two chaplains on the Western Front who were honored in this way. As mentioned above, not all the accounts that refer to Anglican chaplains portray them in such a positive light. Enough positive accounts survive, however, to

⁵⁹ Pte. A. Surfleet, unpublished war diary, p. 3, Imperial War Museum (IWM) Archives.

⁶⁰ Capt. W. Bell, in a letter to the mother of Rev. Noel Mellish, the Battalion Chaplain, IWM pp/mcr/269.

suggest that the many Anglican chaplains who were prepared to enter the front line often commanded considerable respect and admiration among combatants.

The Absence of a Religious Revival

Graves and Montague both claimed that the potential for a spiritual revival was not realized owing to the poor relationship that chaplains had with soldiers. In the opening months of the war there was a good deal of rhetoric in public and private Church of England circles about the opportunities for a spiritual or religious revival presented by the war. It was argued that the men most ‘up against’ the realities of the war, the soldiers, would be the most amenable to attempts to get them to come back into the religious fold of the Church. The army chaplains, as the Church representatives who would be interacting with these soldiers, were seen as being ideally placed to spearhead the expected revival. The soldier-journalist Donald Hankey, who wrote for the *Spectator* until his death at the front in 1916, summed up this phenomenon rather succinctly:

There has been a great deal of talk since the war began of “the Church’s opportunity.” It is one of those vague phrases, which are the delight of the man who has no responsibility in the matter and the despair of those who have. It suggests that “somebody ought to do something” and in this case the “somebody” darkly hinted at is obviously the unfortunate chaplain.⁶¹

On arriving in France and Belgium, however, Anglican chaplains came to realize that despite the fact that an estimated 70 per cent of British soldiers were said to belong to the Church of England only a fraction of this figure were genuinely interested in the kind of conventional, organized religion they had been trained to administer. In spite of this, many Anglican chaplains succeeded in finding a place for themselves in the army and, as we have seen, won the respect and admiration of combatants. Importantly, however, this respect and admiration was rarely extended to the church that the chaplains represented. Soldiers often liked their chaplains as individual personalities but were consistently slow to respond to their attempts to steer them towards the

⁶¹ Hankey (1916), p. 18.

institution of the Church of England. An interesting example of this is the case of the celebrated V.C. winner T. B. Hardy. When Hardy died of wounds in October 1918, he was eulogised by the officers and men of his unit who clearly held him in very high regard. Yet despite the respect which combatants had for him, Hardy had encountered very low attendances at the voluntary prayer services he used to regularly hold behind the lines.⁶²

While many Anglican chaplains were respected and well-liked by combatants, then, this was often in spite of, not because of, their status as priests and representatives of the established Church. As Brophy and Partridge indicated, those chaplains who were respected found they were respected as men, not as priests.⁶³ This precise issue was deconstructed in an essay written by an Anglican chaplain in 1917:

The admiration of the men for many but by no means all, of their chaplains will not affect their attitude towards the church. If they find a parson they admire they too often think of him as a good fellow *in spite* of being a parson: an exception which proves the rule. They see that the Church as a whole stands for keeping things as they are, or even for remodelling them after a medieval pattern: that the clergy as a whole are opposed to all changes within and without the Church: that the ecclesiastical parties are unable to agree amongst themselves about any single thing except the refusal to allow any changes to be made in the formularities [sic] of the Church and the refusal to countenance independence of mind in any individual priest.⁶⁴

This suggests that some chaplains suspected that the image of the Church was unattractive to soldiers and that Anglicanism could be a difficult instrument with which to guide men, particularly young men who lived and died at the front. In 1918 Neville Talbot, who, since his arrival in France in 1914, had insisted on sharing the dangers of trench life with combatants, wrote that he felt like he was ‘peddling unmarketable C. of E. goods.’⁶⁵ Conversions to, or rediscoveries of, the Anglican faith definitely occurred on the Western Front and Bishop Gwynne frequently presided over the Confirmation of reasonably large groups of combatants. No en-masse return to the Church ever took place, however, and, although atheism was rare, most soldiers remained

⁶² Raw (1988), p. 34.

⁶³ Brophy and Partridge (1930), p. 148.

⁶⁴ C. H. Mathews, in Macnutt (1917), p. 166.

⁶⁵ Talbot (1918), p. 112.

indifferent to the institutional religion of the Anglican Church. This cannot simply be 'blamed' on Anglican chaplains *pace* Montague and Graves, however, and was due to complex factors, including the conduct of the civilian Church leadership and clergy, and the very nature of Anglicanism itself.

Catholics versus Protestants

Robert Graves and Guy Chapman both commented very favorably on Roman Catholic chaplains and clearly admired their work. Other sources corroborate this praise and Catholic chaplains certainly appear to have enjoyed a good reputation during the war years.⁶⁶ Both Neville Talbot and his brother Edward, also a chaplain and M.C. winner, felt that Roman Catholicism was clearer in its teaching and that its spirituality was 'more suited to the needs of the average soldier' than that of the Anglican Church.⁶⁷ This admiration for the Catholic religion, if not the Catholic Church, was shared by a number of High-Church (or Anglo-Catholic) Anglicans including Oswin Creighton, Julian Bickersteth, and the controversial but celebrated author Robert Keable, who resigned Holy Orders after the war.⁶⁸ Although the claim that Roman Catholic chaplains were somehow braver than their Anglican counterparts is unfounded, there is some evidence to suggest that Catholic padres perhaps had fewer obstacles to overcome in their ministry.

Alan Wilkinson has argued that as Catholic chaplains 'almost wholly came from a working class background,' it was easier for them to relate to and influence the men of their units.⁶⁹ At least one other commentator has taken this line but there is little evidence to suggest that this was the case.⁷⁰ Some Catholic chaplains came from humble origins but many others did not. Yet, while Catholic clergymen were not necessarily drawn from the working classes, the Catholic ministry was not as exclusive as the traditional Anglican ministry; there was far less emphasis on social grooming and, importantly, Catholic priests were

⁶⁶ See especially Nelson (1974), p. 167, and Rogers (1956), p. 108.

⁶⁷ Wilkinson (1978), p. 144.

⁶⁸ Creighton (1920), p. 199; Bickersteth (1996), p. 210; biographical note in Keable (1939), p. vi.

⁶⁹ Wilkinson (1978), p. 134.

⁷⁰ Holmes (2005), p. 506.

not popularly associated with the ruling elite in the way that Anglican clergymen were. In addition, as many of the Roman Catholic padres who served in the British Army were Irish, Brophy and Partridge were almost certainly correct in their assertion that Catholic padres 'lacked the haw-haw voice.' The social factors that often made it difficult for Anglican chaplains to establish a rapport with Anglican troops did not, therefore, work against Catholic chaplains in the same way.⁷¹

The Anglican ministry had gradually become less exclusive in the decades before the war, but a candidate for ordination was still generally expected to possess a university degree. The Churches of England and Ireland, in particular, had a tradition of ordaining priests who had gained their degrees in one of the older, more established seats of learning—Oxford, Cambridge, Dublin University and Durham. A survey of the educational backgrounds of the chaplains in Gwynne's files suggests that Anglican chaplains attached to the BEF tended to come from the more privileged classes. Of the 666 chaplains in the group who were educated in Britain or Ireland, 410, or just over sixty per cent, had graduated from Oxbridge colleges, 72 were Durham alumni, while 64 had graduated from Trinity College Dublin. Chaplains generally downplayed their military rank and encouraged men to refer to them as 'padre' rather than 'captain,' but in the case of Anglicans, their social and educational background placed them clearly among the officer class. Combatant officers could break down social barriers and win men's respect through feats of leadership, soldiering and bravery. Chaplains generally had less opportunity for this but, as we have seen, they were repeatedly decorated for bravery.

A key advantage Catholics may have had over Anglicans was the fact that Catholic troops were generally predisposed to treat a Catholic priest with at least some reverence while this was not necessarily the case when it came to interaction between Anglican chaplains and troops. In the prewar world the Catholic priest was still a figure that exerted considerable influence over Catholic communities in Britain and Ireland.⁷² For the men of the English industrial working classes that were nominal members of the Established Church, on the other hand, the Anglican priest had ceased, by 1914, to be an influential figure. F. R.

⁷¹ For a more in-depth comparative examination of the experiences of Roman Catholic and Anglican chaplains see Madigan (2006), pp. 180–186.

⁷² Macmahon (1981), p. 280.

Barry recalled being shocked on encountering, in France, the gulf that had developed between the workers and the Church:

We found ourselves called to serve a mass of men under intense moral and physical strain, to whom most of what we had been taught to preach seemed almost totally irrelevant. The war revealed to us for the first time and with a very heart-searching shock what we ought to have known long before—the results of the industrial revolution in the alienation of the workers, who were now the armies, from the life of the Church.⁷³

Conclusion: Why the Myth?

The postwar authors portrayed Anglican chaplains as ineffectual, cowardly, out of touch and unprofessional. This overwhelmingly negative representation is a myth. Myths, however, do not materialize of their own accord. What remains to be done is to look briefly at some of the reasons for the origin and perpetuation of this myth.

To begin with, there were undoubtedly Anglican chaplains attached to the BEF who were cowardly and ineffectual and who simply served no useful purpose, either spiritual or secular, at the front. Such chaplains, however, appear to have been few in number. Gwynne and his staff kept a strict and close eye on the men in their charge and did not hesitate to transfer a chaplain back to Britain if he proved unfit for overseas service. Despite this, one negative incident involving one chaplain could turn a man, and by extension his comrades, against the entire department. Officers as well as men judged padres by their experiences and could be quite unforgiving in their judgements of non-combatants with little or no training. In addition, rumor played a key role at the front, and once a negative reputation had been gained it was difficult to shake off. This was as true for staff officers as it was for chaplains. The orders that prevented chaplains from entering the front line that were in place early in the war clearly did a great deal of damage. Even though some chaplains disregarded these orders from the outset, and they were soon rescinded, the belief persisted in certain quarters that Anglicans, in particular, were barred from the trenches.⁷⁴ Chapman, then, was correct to assert that the 'publication of that injunction had

⁷³ Barry (1970), p. 78.

⁷⁴ Wilkinson (1978), p. 131.

its effect,' but was mistaken in his belief that the order had come from the Church. This mistaken belief allowed a myth to develop that Anglican chaplains did not experience the horrors of trench warfare. This, coupled with the fact that they were representatives of the Church of England, which was unfaltering and outspoken in its support for the war, relegated chaplains to the level of staff officers, civilian profiteers, and 'white-feather' girls in the minds of the more disillusioned and anti-establishment of the war writers.

In addition, the privileged status of the civilian clergy and of army chaplains themselves caused inevitable resentment among officers who enjoyed no such protection. In Robert Keable's semi-autobiographical novel *Simon Called Peter* the protagonist, an Anglican padre, constantly hears combatant officers jokingly remark: 'I shall have to be a chaplain in the next war.'⁷⁵ What these officers were implying was that padres somehow 'had it easy' by comparison with combatants. There is a definite element of truth in this. Chaplains were not usually obliged to expose themselves to danger and, even when chaplains did enter the trenches and go forward during engagements, they were never required to kill the enemy. Chaplains also exercised independent control over their own movements; combatant officers did not. C. E. Montague spent just three weeks in the front line.⁷⁶ Graves, Chapman, Sassoon, Benstead, Brophy and Partridge, on the other hand, all experienced sustained exposure to the dangers of front line service. Three of them won Military Crosses and at least four were wounded; Graves and Chapman being severely injured. It is perhaps understandable that men who had been so harshly tested had little time for a group of chaplains who, in their view, escaped the worst of the Western Front.

The story of Anglican chaplains on the Western Front is a complex one and, as Montague pointed out, the Army Chaplains' Department was made up of a very diverse group of personalities with presumably varying degrees of ability and competence. Yet the picture that emerges from a closer examination of the primary material is not that of a gang of cowardly, irrelevant and ineffectual amateurs, but rather of a group of conscientious and committed men who, in many cases, struggled against the odds to make a difference in the lives of combatants.

⁷⁵ Keable (1939), p. 128.

⁷⁶ Grievs (1997), p. 45.

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CHAPTER THREE

‘THE GERMANS HAVE LANDED!’: INVASION FEARS IN THE SOUTH-EAST OF ENGLAND, AUGUST TO DECEMBER 1914

Catriona Pennell

Introduction

On the morning of 4 August 1914, Germany invaded neutral Belgium. The biggest invasion force of modern times—consisting of one million men (five armies made up of sixteen corps)—had violated both French and Belgian territory.¹ Attempts at resistance met with brutal force. Within days the Allied press were reporting atrocities, some exaggerated and some later to be proved as accurate, committed by the German troops against innocent civilians.² These included rape, pillage, the deliberate destruction of buildings, the use of women and children as human shields and mass executions. In total, around 6,500 Belgian and French civilians perished between August and October 1914; the majority between 5 and 31 August.³

As Sophie de Schaepdrijver outlines, the invasion of Belgium immediately became ‘*the* burning international question.’⁴ It provided a neat and compact framework for both camps to rationalize the conflict: ‘justifications of the invasion implicitly endorsed the view of Germany’s conduct of the war as self-defense; condemnations of it contained assumptions of Germany’s war guilt.’⁵ For Britain in particular, ‘Brave Little Belgium’ became shorthand for the moral issues of the war. Although historians debate whether Britain would have entered the war without a German invasion of Belgium, the latter made entry inevitable and did so on terms that maximized support for what was perceived as

¹ Showalter (1998), p. 40.

² See Horne and Kramer (2001).

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 1, 9–86, 435–439.

⁴ Schaepdrijver (1999), p. 267.

⁵ *Ibid.*

a moral crusade. As the war progressed, ‘the small state was elevated to the status of living embodiment of the right-against-might values that the West was ostensibly fighting for.’⁶

The British coastal town of Southend-on-Sea, Essex is situated less than one hundred miles away from Ostend. What was the impact of the German invasion of Belgium on the residents of the British east coast? The focus on Belgium in British propaganda (or ‘high culture’) has perhaps meant that a simpler inquiry—that of geography and localities—has been overlooked. Although we are now aware that the invading German army was halted at the battle of the Marne in early September 1914 and began retreating in October, which resulted in the stalemate of the trenches, contemporaries were not.⁷ How did the German invasion of Belgium permeate into the minds of local people residing along Britain’s vulnerable east coast? In what way did this affect their responses to the outbreak of war in the first five months of the conflict in 1914?

The primary reaction of the Essex population between August and December 1914 was a fear of invasion by a German army. This chapter seeks to examine this singular reaction in its multiple manifestations in order to argue that for the people of Essex invasion was more than simply an abstract fear. It became an imagined reality in the form of detailed plans, evacuation routes and home defense measures. This reality even filtered into the remembrance of war in Essex, in the form of a plaque commemorating the invasion plans of 1914–18. For the majority of people in the South-East it was not a matter of if, but when, the Germans would land.

After considering the prewar history of invasion fears and government plans for national defense at the beginning of the war, I shall examine how invasion was imagined in Essex during the first five months of the conflict and how preparations to counter it were made. I shall conclude with some reflections on how we can understand this phenomenon, and, more importantly, how this evidence goes some way towards challenging the long-held belief that the British population reacted to the outbreak of the First World War with unabated enthusiasm.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 268.

⁷ Horne and Kramer (2001), p. 1.

Invasion and the British Government before 1914

Apprehension regarding the potential invasion of Britain climaxed in the decade before 1914, as increased German naval construction and the volatile atmosphere created by the Moroccan crisis of 1905 convinced Britain that Germany posed the greatest threat to European peace. Such fears also spawned a new apocalyptical vision, entailing a failure of the Royal Navy to maintain its 'Command of the Sea' and a subsequent occupation of Britain by Prussian 'huns' who specialized in violating and murdering defenseless women.⁸ By 1906, pressure for a re-examination of the invasion issue led to an investigation by the Committee of Imperial Defence (CID). A final report and analysis was presented to the cabinet on 22 October 1908. It concluded that:

no major invasion seemed practical as long as naval supremacy was maintained. Conversely, if dominance in the North Sea was forfeited, then capitulation to the enemy would become inevitable, even if a significant home defence force existed. The report therefore recommended that home defence should be of adequate strength both to repel minor raids and to assure that any enemy invasion army would be of such a colossal size that it could not possibly successfully elude the British fleet.⁹

Disagreements occurred about precisely the size of the invading army; it was finally decided that two of the six British Expeditionary Force (BEF) divisions would stay at home to repel any enemy attack.¹⁰

A final prewar invasion alarm occurred in 1913, precipitated largely by the development of new naval armaments and the political stirrings of personalities such as *The Times*' influential Military Correspondent Lieutenant-Colonel Charles à Court Repington. This controversy provoked another CID subcommittee investigation. The report that it produced in essence reaffirmed the decision of the 1908 hearings and retained the plan to deploy two BEF divisions for home defense.¹¹

⁸ Ryan (1980), p. 8.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹⁰ Williamson (1969), p. 98.

¹¹ Ryan (1980), p. 11.

Invasion in Popular Culture

Although these discussions and investigations failed to achieve the propagandists' objective of enforcing conscription, they had a significant impact on British popular imagination.¹² Parallel to the discussions about the potential for invasion within government circles, such scares 'captured press headlines, engendered graphic and harrowing works of fiction, and induced a state of near paranoia concerning the vulnerability of Britain's defensive preparations.'¹³ According to John Gooch, 'one word could send a *frisson* of terror coursing down the middle class spine—invasion.'¹⁴ Since the mid-1800s there had been an increasing awareness of the vulnerability of England to attack from across the Channel. But it was a piece of writing by Sir George Chesney that appeared in *Blackwood's Magazine* in May 1871 entitled 'The Battle of Dorking' that placed the possibility truly in the minds of contemporaries. It caused such dismay amongst an already nervous public that Gladstone felt it necessary to make a speech against its 'alarmism.'¹⁵ The story foretold the destruction of the Channel Fleet by a secret device and the subsequent landing of 200,000 Prussians.¹⁶

Over the next thirty years this template was imitated by a myriad of writers, such as Erskine Childers and William Le Queux; its popularity owing to the fact that invasion had now entered official discourse with debates ranging from the construction of the Channel Tunnel in 1882–3 to Alfred Harmsworth's electoral campaign based on 'The Siege of Portsmouth' in 1895.¹⁷ In his annotated bibliography of fiction based in an 'imaginary future period,' I. F. Clarke records a total of 317 texts published in the United Kingdom between 1871 and 1914. Notably, thirty-one percent of such publications were concerned with war and/or invasion on British soil.¹⁸

Alarmist as these stories were, and manipulative in their desire to promote a political manifesto and boost sales, there can be no doubt that they expressed the fears of many Edwardians. The growth of German imperialism, the international disputes with France and later with

¹² See also Adams and Poirier (1987), ch. 3.

¹³ Ryan (1980), p. 8.

¹⁴ Gooch (1981), p. 36.

¹⁵ Clarke (1961), p. 24.

¹⁶ Gooch (1981), p. 36.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 36–7.

¹⁸ Clarke (1961), pp. 23–60.

Germany, and the decision to abandon the traditional policy of isolation were all factors that helped to encourage an expectation of war in Britain. Indicative of the pre-1914 popular mindset is the fact that the possibility of invasion could not be ridiculed. P. G. Wodehouse's story, *The Swoop! Or, how Clarence saved England*, was a failure. He attempted to subvert the seriousness of a German invasion with comedy in which the news of a German landing reaches a complacent nation in the *Stop Press* column of the newspapers and the British ignore the charging infantry, only noticing them in order to complain about the crowds. This farcical tale was unable to defuse people's fears about a possible German invasion and the rumors of spies active throughout the country.¹⁹

Government Invasion Policy at the Outbreak of War

Despite the aforementioned prewar conclusions of the CID, in the autumn of 1914 the British military authorities were extremely agitated over the possibility of invasion. Fundamentally, as Howard Moon reveals, 'roughly half of the British Government documents dealing with invasion during the 52 months of the First World War originate...between September 15th and December 1st 1914.'²⁰ Logically, whilst the war was still one of movement, home defense was a key issue for the British government.

Prewar plans, political personalities and the fluid and unpredictable nature of war all contributed to this ten week flurry of activity and tension over the best way to defend Britain from a German invasion. When war with Germany broke out in August 1914, the exhaustive preparations and recommendations made by the authorities were put into action: the fleet was mobilized, spies were arrested, the home defense army alerted, the coastal defenses activated, and strategic objectives placed under guard. The strategic planners of the CID watched the home defense situation evolve along previously anticipated paths. For the first two months of the war, the problem of overseas attack could be handled within the context of prewar CID studies.²¹

¹⁹ Clarke (1965), pp. 114–5.

²⁰ Moon (1968), p. 535.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 483–9.

However, by early October 1914, two factors emerged which would disrupt this calm continuity: the German advance towards and along the Channel coast during October, which modified the strategic situation beyond any of the contingencies forecast by the CID, and the appointment of Field Marshal Kitchener as the new Secretary of State for War. Like a 'poor untamed bull in a china shop,' he distrusted organization and sabotaged systems.²² Established plans to engage the invader in the interior of England and retreat slowly towards London and the Central Force were jettisoned, although they were based on thirty years of staff work. Kitchener reverted to the policy of 'meet them on the beaches,' although his troops were of mediocre quality.²³

Unsurprisingly, these disruptions caused controversy. The first war-time meeting of the CID on 7 October 1914 was devoted entirely to questions connected with invasion. It had to deal with Kitchener's dismantling of the established home defense policy and the rapid sweep of events on the continent. It was widely thought that the Germans were aiming for Calais to launch an attack on England. Moreover, the Admiralty had conceded that its supremacy was threatened; submarines and mines had caused the certainties of nineteenth century Britain to be overturned.²⁴ Asquith noted in his journal following the meeting on 7 October that the German invasion had been discussed under:

conditions being, of course, totally different from any we had ever imagined in our long hypothetical inquiries. Everybody agreed that nothing of the kind was likely to occur at the present, which is just as well, as during the next fortnight we shall have fewer Regular troops in the country than has happened for years. Much our weakest point is deficiency in guns and ammunition.²⁵

Up until January 1915, the debate continued as to the best way of defending Britain's shores from foreign attack. The personalities of Kitchener and Churchill appear to have influenced this greatly, along with the unforeseeable events unfolding day-by-day on the continent. As Lord Maurice Hankey, Secretary to the CID in 1914, described almost half a century later:

²² Hamilton (1957), p. 128.

²³ Moon (1968), p. 489.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 335–6.

²⁵ Asquith (1928), p. 43.

At the beginning of September, when we were tuning up our plans for home defence the situation on the Continent was certainly one of almost unrelieved gloom. Who then could say that the Government was wrong in keeping a vigilant eye on home defence? Suppose the French Army had been encircled, as might well have happened! Suppose France had collapsed, as in 1870 and later in 1940! What would then have been our position with the whole coast of France and Belgium in Germany's hands? Invasion, though still difficult, would have been appreciably nearer—and the preparations to meet it must necessarily have required time.²⁶

The military authorities were dealing with a very complicated operation. Naval and military technology had significantly advanced since the last European conflict and there was little trustworthy evidence to indicate the course of future events. The 'balance of power' had shifted. Europe's most powerful adversary was now Germany and she stood only a few miles away from England, one of her most hated enemies. British seapower, the 'Command of the Sea' and last defense of the nation for centuries, was no longer secure even in home waters as evidenced by the sinking of three British battlecruisers off Holland on 22 September 1914. Understandably, during the autumn of 1914 the authorities assumed that invasion was highly possible, as reflected in their detailed planning for the defense of Britain's coastline.²⁷

By January 1915, the controversies surrounding home defense policy appeared to abate as the strategists, tacticians and policy-makers settled into a war of attrition. The enemy's movement towards the British coast via Calais had literally become bogged down in the mud of the trenches.

Invasion Fear and Preparations in Essex

As a largely agricultural county lying to the east of London, with a population of 1,329,246 in 1911, Essex was a logical landing target for German troops with their sights set on the capital.²⁸ The people of Essex were acutely aware of their vulnerability. Stanley Parker Bird from Colchester later defiantly maintained that he understood invasion

²⁶ Hankey (1961), p. 218.

²⁷ Moon (1968), p. 536.

²⁸ *Thom's Official Directory of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland for the Year 1913* (Dublin: 1913), p. 650.

to be a real possibility after the outbreak of war in 1914.²⁹ Similarly, despite being aware that noises of explosions were simply inconvenient houses being destroyed in Harwich, the fear of an invasion certainly played on Arnold Bennett's mind. From Thorpe-le-Soken, Essex, the novelist wrote:

The sensations of Harwich people must be poignant... We also heard thunder; and the children affirm that they distinctly heard the noise of firing—not explosions... I saw one warship in the offing at Clacton.³⁰

Until around 22 August, much of the editorial content of the *Essex County Standard* discussed invasion preparations of the past, particularly during the Napoleonic wars.³¹ Reverend Andrew Clark of Great Leighs mentioned invasion for the first time in his diary on 18 August 1914, when he recounted some banter between a young boy and a Territorial marching with his regiment, towards camp from Chelmsford:

“Any more coming?” the boy asked.

“Yea, there're a lot of Germans behind.” was the answer.

“Get out. If there were, you wouldn't be going slow like that. You'd be just flying.”

“Bet your life!” the soldier answered and crawled on.³²

A fortnight later, at a local recruitment meeting, a fellow speaker treated the matter with more severity: ‘Think of what it would mean if we were to have our country over-run as Belgium is, and the scenes of horror there, of daily occurrence there.’³³ The link between the real invasion of Belgium and the imagined reality in Essex was overt. Less than one hundred miles away, the biggest invasion of modern times was occurring, with brutal repercussions for civilians. It did not take a great leap of imagination to substitute Belgium for Britain; Antwerp for Chelmsford. As Bennett wrote on 10 August 1914, ‘at the back of the mind of everyone is a demi-semi fear lest the Germans should after all by some *coup*, contrive an invasion.’ By 25 August, when he and his household discussed the fall of Namur, they were already considering what to do in the event of a German landing.³⁴ With refugees and wounded soldiers

²⁹ The Imperial War Museum Sound Archives, 7375: Reel 1 (1984).

³⁰ Bennett (1971) 6 August 1914, p. 377.

³¹ For example, *Essex County Standard*, 8 August 1914, p. 2 and 22 August 1914, p. 7.

³² Munson (1985), p. 8.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

³⁴ Horne and Kramer (2001), p. 185.

flooding into the country, accounts of the German invasion spread. For Annie Mary Howell, Belgian refugees were in Britain because: 'the Germans was [sic] in their country, weren't they, over-running them or something, trying to get over here, that's why.'³⁵

Fundamentally, the possibility of invasion was no longer a thing of the past; the experience of Belgium heightened tensions, sparking frequent reports of local sightings of warships and airplanes.³⁶ By November, Clark was reporting 'much talk of invasion by German airships.'³⁷ A month later he was making references to the German Fleet off the East Coast.³⁸ While these comments were only a small number out of a series of false alarms, the tension they created amongst local people was palpable. When shots were fired near a railway viaduct in Manningtree in early October 1914 the *Standard* reported that people believed they were under attack from enemy aircraft. In fact, a trigger-happy sentry had fired at a cat.³⁹

However, the issue of instructing the populace on what to do in the event of an invasion only became a governmental concern when, on 14 September 1914, Hankey argued in a CID Memorandum that confidential instructions for the population should be prepared in the event of a raid, even if invasion was too improbable a contingency to provide against. Such instructions could include directions for groups of men to act as guides for British troops, proclamations for the guidance of the civilian population, and orders for the destruction of large food-stocks, fodder and petrol upon the approach of the enemy. Valuable aid might also be provided by the public in felling trees and destroying bridges to impede the invader's advance; rosters of men with entrenching tools were also to be compiled in areas where a stand was to be made. Hankey further advocated evacuating food supplies inland from the coast during the first few days of invasion, while the enemy was still preoccupied with landing troops and heavy equipment. At the CID meeting on 7 October, a newly appointed sub-committee presented Hankey's proposals in a paper, 'Instructions to Local Authorities in the Event of Belligerent Operations in the United Kingdom.'⁴⁰

³⁵ The Imperial War Museum Sound Archives, 613: Reel 7 (1975).

³⁶ *Essex County Standard*, 5 September 1914, p. 4.

³⁷ Munson (1985), p. 32.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

³⁹ *Essex County Standard*, 3 October 1914, p. 2.

⁴⁰ Moon (1968), p. 540.

As Keith Grieves outlines ‘the threat of invasion required a chain of command of efficiency and energy, which linked government, army commands, Lords Lieutenant, magistrates and police officers.’⁴¹ In late October 1914, the Secretary of State for the Home Office gave instructions to the Lord Lieutenant of Essex, the Earl of Warwick, to form a Central Emergency Committee:

with a view to the formation of Local Emergency Committees, whose duty would be, in the event of a hostile invasion of this County, to instruct the civilian population so that their conduct might not interfere with, and might be of assistance to, the military authorities.⁴²

Such committees were later established under a Home Office ruling dated November 1914. The Central Emergency Committee, in theory, would work in conjunction with the military authorities—in the case of Essex, the South Midland Division headed by General Officer Commanding Heath. These authorities would provide information to the Local Emergency Committees who would in turn communicate with Parish Emergency Committees who would appeal to locals for help and cooperation. The main issue was how a practicable scheme could be prepared secretly without raising public alarm.⁴³ This conundrum is evident in the *Standard* which had to achieve a delicate balance between reporting the activities of the County and Local Emergency Committees whilst still reassuring its readers that invasion was merely a worst-case-scenario.⁴⁴ Five main issues were confronted by the Central and Local Emergency Committees: the prevention of invasion; the necessity of keeping British troops mobile; entrenchment; civilian armed resistance and civilian evacuation.

Prevention

Immediate measures were taken to prevent the possibility of invasion. On 8 August the Defence of the Realm Act ensured that the Essex coastline was immediately under orders of defense; Harwich Port was

⁴¹ Grieves (2004), p. 36.

⁴² ERO, L/P 3/1, p. 1.

⁴³ Moon (1968), p. 541.

⁴⁴ *Essex County Standard*, 5 December 1914, p. 2.

'practically closed.'⁴⁵ On the same day, Brigadier General Buckle issued a notice to local inhabitants warning them of the danger of encroaching or being found moving on the seashore between sunset and sunrise.⁴⁶ This was no empty threat. On 15 August the *Standard* reported that a 'stranger' had been shot at Warley Barracks when he failed to reply when challenged by the sentry.⁴⁷ Cyclists were encouraged not to go out after dark and scouts began patrolling vulnerable areas to defend telephone and telegraph wires.⁴⁸ Joe Cook was travelling home by train to Rochford after holidaying in Walton-on-Naze in early August 1914. He recalled:

We were excited when we saw Boy Scouts guarding bridges and other railway installations. Later in life as a keen member of the Boy Scout movement, I learned that Baden Powell... had given secret instructions to all Police Stations to open a sealed letter in event of war. This instructed them to get all possible Boy Scouts out on guard duty assisted by farmers with shot-guns.⁴⁹

From early September onwards strict orders were enforced regarding the usage of lights after 11pm and, in late October, this was extended to churches and Sundays as well.⁵⁰ Again, this was taken extremely seriously. A fruiterer on Colchester High Street received seven days imprisonment on 5 December 1914 for refusing to lower the lights in his shop.⁵¹

British Troop Mobility

The question of troop mobility created a great deal of anxiety. The responsibility of integrating the needs of the civilian and military populations fell to the Lord Lieutenant through the auspices of the Central Emergency Committee. From the outset it was stated that 'troops would move towards the coast on a large scale... and it would be essential that all roads should be kept perfectly clear.'⁵² In fact the

⁴⁵ *Essex County Standard*, 8 August 1914, p. 2.

⁴⁶ *Essex County Standard*, 8 August 1914, p. 5.

⁴⁷ *Essex County Standard*, 15 August 1914, p. 2.

⁴⁸ *Essex County Standard*, 22 August 1914, p. 4.

⁴⁹ 'Rochford Great War Memories' (1994), ERO Pamphlet Box/R2.

⁵⁰ *Essex County Standard*, 5 September 1914, p. 5 and 31 October 1914, p. 4.

⁵¹ *Essex County Standard*, 5 December 1914, p. 5.

⁵² ERO, L/P 3/1, p. 3.

official view was that people should be notified ‘that their best chance was to stay in their homes.’⁵³ Local Emergency Committees were given as their most important task the order to persuade people not to flee, for any stampede of fugitives would hamper troop movements.⁵⁴ This concern about preventing civilians from fleeing was influenced by stories of atrocities in Belgium where women and children were accurately rumored to have been used as human shields.⁵⁵ However, such sensationalism was grounded in pragmatism. A general exodus of the population with vehicles and animals might benefit the enemy by clogging communications and preventing a British advance or counterattack. The care and feeding of the evacuated livestock would prove an additional complication.⁵⁶ Ultimately though, the Lord Lieutenant was under no illusions, concluding ‘it would be impossible for any Police measures to prevent the stampede of the inhabitants in the case of the bombardment of a town.’⁵⁷

Entrenchment

The strategy to repel invasion was first to hold the coastline from entrenched positions and when these were breached, which the General Staff believed to be inevitable, the invaders would be attacked by mobile forces hurried to the scene over roads and railways purposefully kept clear. Should this counterattack fail, the fall-back solution was to defend London, the main German objective.⁵⁸ It was in the vicinity of these defenses that the inhabitants of Essex would encounter tangible evidence of war.⁵⁹

It is difficult to imagine the impact on these rural neighborhoods where thousands of men were suddenly engaged digging trenches. Farmers were asked to ‘spare men for three days... in public service of digging trenches... 40,000 required for a three day effort.’⁶⁰ Sandhurst tells of men leaving ‘White City in two special tube trains to Liverpool

⁵³ ERO, L/P, pp. 5–6.

⁵⁴ ERO, L/P, 3/1, p. 36.

⁵⁵ ERO, L/P, 3/1, p. 6.

⁵⁶ Moon (1968), p. 541.

⁵⁷ ERO, L/P, 3/1, p. 23.

⁵⁸ Gliddon (1988), p. 12.

⁵⁹ Bardell (2002), p. 34.

⁶⁰ ERO, T/P 188/3, 8 October 1914.

Street then into a special train, work all day and back by the same plan. Essex is all entrenched.'⁶¹ Those living close to these preparations were affected by this entrenchment. One local, for example, related that his view of an elm screen was spoiled 'by a formidable barricade of barbed wire.'⁶² Another, a clergyman, recorded the horrific news that 'the Church would almost certainly be destroyed as a gun is to be established in its near vicinity and would draw shells of the enemy.'⁶³ Entrenchment caused further tensions between civilians and the military authorities, as Clark recalled:

The troops were digging trenches in Mr Hutley's land. He went out and told them to stop. The officer in charge said that of course it was open to raise objections. But if he did, the military authorities would order him and his family out of the house and convert the house into a hospital.⁶⁴

Civilian Armed Resistance

Faced with the invasion threat it is hardly surprising that certain members of the public called for civilian armed resistance. In 1966, Mrs E. Ward remembered how a rumor spread in late August 1914 that the Germans had landed at Bawsdey Ferry in Suffolk and were making their way inland to Ipswich, where she lived:

This upset the people and many gathered near the River [Orwell] with all sorts of weapons such as guns, hayforks, shovels and many others. [The Germans] looked like having a rough reception but the Police and Military put a stop to this and quiet once again reigned.⁶⁵

Evidently, this was a highly controversial issue, with the minutes of the Local Emergency Committees continually stressing that local people should not take up arms against the invaders.⁶⁶ Some members of these committees openly disagreed. Dr J. H. Salter, Chairman of Witham Local Emergency Committee, wrote to the editor of the *Standard* on 7 November 1914 supporting the idea that men and women should bear

⁶¹ Sandhurst (1928), p. 116.

⁶² ERO, D/Du 418/16, 8 October 1914.

⁶³ ERO, T/P 188/3, 8 October 1914.

⁶⁴ Munson (1985), p. 34.

⁶⁵ ERO, T/Z 25/652, p. 1.

⁶⁶ ERO, L/P 3/1, p. 7.

arms to fight the enemy in case of invasion.⁶⁷ By November *The Chronicle* contained a letter suggesting ‘many of us civilians would rather die rifle in hand than be passive spectators of scenes which we are told have taken place in Belgium.’⁶⁸ H. G. Wells, an Essex resident, and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle had both written to *The Times* in August 1914 advocating a home defense reserve.⁶⁹ However, another *Times* correspondent pointed out that many Belgian peasants had taken up arms and died, without slowing the Germans down by a single day. He warned:

If any parts of our islands were raided... and if desultory attempts were made by local organizations to kill or harass the invading troops, let no one doubt for a moment what would be the consequences. We should be treated to the ghastly and maddening spectacle of blazing villages, brutal executions, and all the nameless horrors that retaliation of an exasperated soldiery usually involves.⁷⁰

Warwick severely denounced Wells’ letter at a meeting of the Central Emergency Committee.⁷¹ In December 1914, a poster was circulated emphasizing that it was forbidden for civilians to ‘oppose armed resistance under any circumstances.’⁷² For Arnold Bennett, in a letter to the *Standard*, the best way for civilians to counter the invading enemy was by joining their Local Emergency Committee.⁷³ The government response was to sanction the establishment of an organized uniformed defense force—the Volunteer Training Corps. Groups of men, over the age of active service, would provide a form of back-up to the Regulars and the Territorials.⁷⁴ This initiative was responded to enthusiastically in Essex where local Volunteer Corps began springing up in every town and village. Any eligible men who failed to join such Corps were open to condemnation from the local press.⁷⁵

⁶⁷ *Essex County Standard*, 7 November 1914, p. 8.

⁶⁸ *Chronicle*, 6 November 1914, p. 5.

⁶⁹ *The Times*, 8 August 1914.

⁷⁰ *The Times*, 17 August 1914, p. 9.

⁷¹ ERO, L/P 3/1, p. 38.

⁷² ERO, L/P 3/23.

⁷³ *Essex County Standard*, 5 December 1914, p. 4.

⁷⁴ See Osborne (1988), pp. 59–75.

⁷⁵ *Essex County Standard*, 19 December 1914, p. 4.

Civilian Evacuation

As the Germans moved closer to Calais, plans began to deal with the reality of a successful invasion, rather than simply preparing to prevent or resist one. The minutes of the meetings of Latchingdon Parish Council record on 17 December 1914 how members had to face:

a far more serious and urgent matter and that was what were they do to in the event of an invasion by a hostile foe, they all know what had happened in Belgium and the northern part of France, and the same thing or even worse would happen in England, if the enemy could ever effect a landing it therefore behove every able-bodied person to do all that they possibly could for the safety of the women, children and infirm.⁷⁶

The task of the Central and Local Emergency Committees was therefore 'to educate people in the course to adopt in case of an invasion' by distributing information and plans to Parish Committees.⁷⁷ Extraordinary arrangements were made to evacuate the civilian population should such an attack be made.

In November 1914, the government began to send out standard instructions to the Central Emergency Committee that were then forwarded to the Local Emergency Committees. As reflected in these memoranda, the General Staff believed that the main dilemma facing the German invader would not be his food supply, but rather whether he could achieve his objective and end the campaign before his ammunition ran out. Therefore, the removal or destruction of transport facilities was of greater importance than the evacuation of food stuffs, for this would immobilize the enemy's ammunition supply. Memorandum 'C' was a six-point guide to what the civilian population had to do in the event of an invasion: all means of transportation were to be either removed or destroyed; all livestock should be moved away from public roads or slaughtered; all food supplies had to be removed or destroyed; and all means of communication along with vulnerable sites (such as bridges, jetties, locks and railway tracks) were to be destroyed. Any tools and manpower that could be given to the military authorities to assist them in the above tasks had to be volunteered. Finally the memorandum stressed that the utmost priority was to be given to the movement of

⁷⁶ ERO, D/J 92/1/1, pp. 92–93. Punctuation as in original document.

⁷⁷ ERO, L/P 3/1, p. 8.

troops and artillery—this should not be ‘hampered by the presence of civilians on the roads.’⁷⁸

Based on these instructions, each locality formulated its own plan, specific to its area. In total there were around twenty-one Local Emergency Committees in Essex. Parish Emergency Committees had to ensure that detailed inventories were filled out. These inventories provided information regarding how many horses, stock, crops, vehicles, implements (such as shovels and axes), male employees, telephones and important buildings existed in each area. Leaflets were then distributed amongst local householders telling them that if the Germans invaded the country they were to pack up all their belongings along with a small amount of food, one or two blankets, some money and jewellery, and to leave everything else and head to Oxfordshire. Any food, livestock or tools that they could not carry were to be destroyed. No food or transport was to remain in the county if the Germans landed. The government feared that any Germans who did get past the Royal Navy and landed could cause a lot of havoc. At one point they even considered destroying all available alcohol because they thought that if the Germans got drunk they would cause even more mayhem in the county. J. B. Hawkins, Chairman of the Local Emergency Committee for the Thorpe District, was under no illusions regarding the importance of these plans; they were to ensure that ‘if an enemy lands he must be starved and then killed.’⁷⁹

Each Parish Emergency Committee had to provide their Local Emergency Committee with a map marking their evacuation route. These routes were then collated and printed in poster form to be distributed around the local areas. L. D. Jarvis recalled such information being posted around Stock:

I can remember, the man coming down back lane—which was the road at the back of our house—nailing notices on gateposts, tree trunks, arrows indicating where we had got to be evacuated to, the population of Stock, in the event of a German invasion. All the population had to go off down the back lane, through the Ingatestone and to Blackmore... That was the directions; there were big arrows on the trees for evacuation. Fortunately never needed.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ ERO, L/P 3/1.

⁷⁹ C&NERO, D/P 80/28/2.

⁸⁰ ERO, SA 13/598/1.

The aforementioned inventories were used to establish who would be driving wagons of refugees and to assign various groups of people to each vehicle. This information was also circulated amongst the population. With a signal to indicate the beginning of an invasion, the population would assemble at a pre-arranged place to begin the exodus together. Invasion 'drills' were practiced as Jarvis describes:

And I remember one night, I was in bed... My father heard a commotion outside... and he opened the front door and my mother went to the front door and just as she did two buglers standing right by our front gate which was a matter of about 7 or 8 feet from the front door, sounded the alarm on their bugles. I don't think my mother ever quite recovered from it! It was electric of course... We were all convinced that the Germans had landed and we all hastily got up, not only the soldiers who were told to turn out the order and were shouted down the street "Haul out, full kit, assemble on the Common." Everybody else got up and dressed hastily and all the soldiers were there on the Common, and they were all inspected, and it was a practice alarm to see what it was. And they were all saying "Thank you very much, you've done it very well" and we were all sent back to bed again!⁸¹

Once assembled, Essex refugees were to flee westward through Hertfordshire and on to Oxfordshire avoiding main roads—only lanes and byways were to be used in order to keep routes free for oncoming troops descending towards the coast. The local population was to take enough food with them to last forty-eight hours and then after that every town and village en route was expected to be able to billet these refugees. The movement was expected to last about six days, based on an expected rate of progress of two miles per hour and a maximum of ten miles per day for women and children on foot.⁸²

Despite the period of maximum danger of invasion being over by January 1915, plans continued to be made throughout the war.⁸³ There was even a 'dry run' in August 1918. The results were not encouraging; local squabbles were still going on between various people who were supposed to be involved:

At Ramsey, up in the north-east of the county, they said the Chairman of the Local Emergency Committee and the Parish Police Sergeant didn't appear to be working harmoniously or in conjunction. While just down

⁸¹ ERO, SA 13/598/1.

⁸² C&NERO, D/P 80/28/2.

⁸³ Moon (1968), p. 528.

the road at Bradfield they said, there appears to be a feud between the Special Constables, the Emergency Special Constables and the Emergency Committee and neither will have anything to do with the others.⁸⁴

Clearly plans varied considerably from one part of the county to another and an overall policy for the county failed to develop.

Imagination and Reality

What was the precise nature of reactions in Essex to the possibility of invasion? Firstly, what was happening amongst the population of Essex in August to December 1914 was not a 'legend' or 'myth-cycle' in the sense of Fernand van Langenhove's work on the preoccupation with Belgian '*francs-tireurs*' amongst the German army in 1914.⁸⁵ Although fears of invasion in Essex were grounded in the history of the Napoleonic Wars and popular culture as outlined above, invasion had not occurred on British soil in over 800 years—unlike the '*francs-tireurs*' who had attacked German soldiers in 1870–71. Moreover, during other periods when international tensions increased, for example during the Second Moroccan crisis of 1911, fears of invasion along the East Coast do not arise in the writings of contemporaries such as Arnold Bennett.

Nor did fear ever give way to panic.⁸⁶ Although the situation could have deteriorated into real panic in the event of an invasion, as the Chief Constable stated, while anticipating invasion it was something calmer. This is also evidenced by the Archbishop of Canterbury: when asked what to do with valuable Communion Plates and Parish Registers (one bishop wanted to bury them) he advised the Bishops to transport them to London. But this advice was given 'quietly and not with any such vociferousness as might cause an increase of panic'—suggesting that a feeling of panic was bubbling but had not yet reached the surface.⁸⁷ It would not take much for it to become panic, however.

Fundamentally, the above evidence demonstrates a deep and lasting concern with invasion. It was a constant issue for the inhabitants of

⁸⁴ ERO, SA 10/486/1.

⁸⁵ Langenhove (1916).

⁸⁶ Lefebvre (1973).

⁸⁷ Lambeth Palace, London: The Davidson Papers, Vol. 376 [Great War], ff.98, 15 December 1914.

Essex, maintaining its momentum from the moment war broke out until the end of my period of analysis in December 1914. When atrocity stories and allied defeats (that allowed the movement of German troops nearer to Calais) were reported, fear over invasion was heightened. This is supported by the frequency of references to invasion in the *Standard* between August and December 1914 as illustrated in Table 3.1.

After an initial surge of references prompted by news of the German invasion of Belgium, reports died away after the Marne from around mid-September on, but reached a new and greater intensity in November and early December. On 14 November, an Essex father, with sons fighting at the Front, wrote an emotive letter to the *Standard* about the real and horrific possibility of invasion.⁸⁸ The timing of these fears can be connected to two events. Firstly, on 3 November, eight German cruisers attempted to bombard Yarmouth in East Anglia, although their shellfire was largely ineffective.⁸⁹ Secondly, and more significantly, the First Battle of Ypres was raging in the last weeks of October and the first fortnight of November.⁹⁰ It was during this battle that the original BEF was almost destroyed bringing Germany ever closer to the British shore.⁹¹

Table 3.1 The frequency of the theme of invasion in the articles of the *Essex County Standard*, August to December 1914.

Date	Total no. of articles on invasion	Total no. of articles on war	Percentage of total
1st August	0	5	0
8th August	3	24	12.5
15th August	0	13	0
22nd August	1	29	3.4
29th August	0	13	0
5th September	1	31	3.2
12th September	0	13	0
19th September	0	14	0
26th September	0	14	0
3rd October	1	14	7
10th October	0	3	0
17th October	0	17	0

⁸⁸ *ECS*, 14 November 1914, p. 5.

⁸⁹ Emden and Humphries (2004), p. 34.

⁹⁰ 18 October to 12 November 1914.

⁹¹ Nicolson (2001), p. 96.

Table 3.1 (*cont.*)

Date	Total no. of articles on invasion	Total no. of articles on war	Percentage of total
24th October	0	25	0
31st October	0	7	0
7th November	1	12	8.3
14th November	2	15	13.3
21st November	2	9	22.0
28th November	2	10	20.0
5th December	3	11	27.3
12th December	0	10	0
19th December	0	6	0
26th December	0	12	0
TOTAL	16	307	5.2

All of the sixteen articles in the *Standard* concerned with invasion discuss it as a real and dangerous possibility. A letter from Thomas Herbert on 21 November 1914 is the only exception to this viewpoint. However, his letter does not dismiss the possibility of an invasion. Instead he questions where the Germans were most likely to land, arguing that it would not be the East Coast but Wales or East Anglia ‘where the coast is flat’ and there is ‘plenty of cattle, corn, good shelter and useful roads—and it won’t be too near your garrison town.’⁹² However, perhaps the most overwhelming evidence regarding the real possibility of invasion is an engraved stone plaque set into the old boundary wall of Orford House in the village of Ugley. Erected around 1919, it reads:

These and many similar arrows were painted to direct non-combatants inland across country—avoiding main roads to facilitate the movement of troops in the event of a successful landing by the Germans on the East Coast, 1914–1918.⁹³

It highlights the seriousness with which the issue of invasion was perceived in Essex in 1914. For the people of Essex, just as their introduction to war had been framed by the fear of an enemy landing, their commemoration uniquely expressed relief that it never became a reality.

⁹² *Essex County Standard*, 21 November 1914, p. 8.

⁹³ From photograph taken of the plaque at Ugley, 24 June 2004.

Reactions to the possibility of invasion in Essex in 1914 ranged between concern, false alarms, rational preparation and potential panic. What was happening in Essex at this time can be summarized as follows: there was a real concern with the possibility of invasion, which led officials to make pragmatic decisions about what to do should the Germans land. In order to prevent this concern, nervousness and apprehension becoming panic, great efforts were taken to control the amount of information regarding these preparations that reached the public. However, the information that did reach them—whether from evidence of preparations such as scouts patrolling telegraph wires or stories of German atrocities in Belgium from wounded soldiers and refugees—sufficed to spread concern and apprehension regarding the possibility of invasion. If more information had reached the public, perhaps the concern would have become panic. But for the majority of people, the limited information that was available fuelled an apprehension that the Germans were capable of landing in Essex in autumn 1914.

Conclusion

Military history indicates that Britain was not directly threatened by an invasion in 1914, but this is not how contemporaries perceived it. Statistics tell us that British casualties were far less than those of the French army, but for the British people, the impact of death was no less tragic. They were exposed to the anticipation, apprehension and experience of war and the violence that characterized it in 1914.

The British population was involved both directly and indirectly in the 'enormous explosion of violence that occurred in the summer of 1914.'⁹⁴ Violence became part of the fabric of ordinary people's lives.⁹⁵ Violence was not only experienced, as was the case for the residents of Scarborough, Hartlepool and Whitby on 16 December 1914, but was also imagined. The German invasion of Belgium and the ensuing Battle of the Frontiers sparked fears amongst the British population, particularly those living along the East Coast, that the Germans could (and would) land on British soil.

⁹⁴ Audoin-Rouzeau and Becker (2002), p. 21.

⁹⁵ Healy (Cambridge: 2004), p. 5.

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SECTION II

REDEFINING CIVIC AND NATIONAL SPACES

CHAPTER FOUR

MAKING FRIENDS AND FOES: OCCUPIERS AND OCCUPIED IN FIRST WORLD WAR ROMANIA, 1916–1918

Lisa Mayerhofer

During the First World War, the Central Powers occupied extensive territories on the Eastern and Western Fronts, including approximately two-thirds of the Kingdom of Romania. The phenomenon of ‘occupation’ was thus an integral part of the war experience for numerous contemporaries. Yet this important aspect of the Great War has received little historical attention; apart from the interwar Carnegie studies, historical research ignored it until recently.¹ The Romanian case is particularly interesting for three reasons. First, all three of Germany’s allies were involved in the occupation regime, adding further levels of tension to the occupier—occupied dichotomy. Romania therefore offers insights into how Germany and its allies interacted. Second, in Romania the Central Powers found a local elite, which, at least in part, was prepared to cooperate with the occupying forces to a greater extent than in other occupation zones. Third, partly as a result of the first two factors, the occupation of Romania proceeded relatively smoothly until the summer of 1918. It was only at this point that the Romanian population began to show signs of discontent, as the food situation worsened and it became clear that the Central Powers faced defeat.

Analysing the attitudes of occupiers and occupied towards one another, as well as the different attitudes that existed among the occupied population towards each other, reveals that the concepts of friend and foe were highly ambivalent during the occupation. Focusing

This chapter was translated from German by Christoph Schmidt-Supprian and Heather Jones.

¹ A selection of recent literature includes the following: on Northern France see Becker (1998); on Belgium see de Schaepdrijver (2004); on *OberOst* see Liulevicius (2000); on a number of different regions see Hull (2005); Roshwald and Sütés (1999). The Carnegie studies include: Köhler (1927); Kerchnawe et al. (1928); for Romania see: Antipa (s.d.); Ionesco-Sisesti (s.d.). For Romania see also: Rădulescu-Zoner and Marinescu (1993); Râcila (1981); Kiritzescu (1934).

on the German occupiers, the following chapter will investigate how their relationship with the local population, as well as with their Austro-Hungarian allies, developed. It will first outline how, despite their limited influence, several Romanian opposition politicians tried to use their cooperation with the occupier to achieve their own political aims. Second, it will examine relations between the occupier and the occupied civilian population—relations which were largely determined by economic considerations. The third part of the chapter will explore the rivalries that existed between the occupying powers.

The occupiers saw their relatively successful cooperation with the local Romanian population as a means of ensuring the efficient economic exploitation of the country which had stayed out of the war until 1916. However, severe measures such as requisitions and forced labor were also part of daily life for the civilian population in the occupied Romanian territories. As in other occupied regions, such as Poland or Lithuania, the initial friendly reception which the German occupiers received rapidly disappeared in the face of the realities of the occupation, as escalating hardship and the impending defeat of the Central Powers during 1918 led to an increase in insubordination by the civilian population.

Before discussing the occupation in detail, it is necessary to provide a short summary of the main administrative features of the occupied territory, due to the complex structure of the occupation regime in Romania. The whole occupation administration was under the control of the *Oberkommando Mackensen (OKM)*, the supreme command of the occupying Central Power troops in Romania, and was divided into five different administrative subdivisions, which had responsibility for managing the occupation in different parts of the country: the territory of the Military Administration comprising of most of Walachia, the *Etappengebiet* of the IX. Army in the North-East, the *Etappenverwaltung* in Dobruja, and the operational areas of the IX. Army and the III. Bulgarian Army along the front in Moldova and Dobruja respectively. Southern Dobruja was intended for annexation by Bulgaria and was therefore administered separately from the rest of the occupied territory. In this chapter, I will focus on the territory of the Military Administration, although I will also include some references to the *Etappengebiet* of the IX. Army, where in general living conditions for the Romanian population were much harder.

The Military Administration subdivision was by far the largest entity: the area it controlled represented around half of Romanian state terri-

tory. It was headed by a Military Governor, General Tüllf von Tscheppe und Weidenbach, the owner of a large estate in Silesia. The Military Administration consisted of the *Wirtschaftsstab* (Economic Staff), staffed jointly by German and Austro-Hungarian personnel and the *Verwaltungsstab* (Administrative Staff), which was exclusively under German control. These Economic and Administrative staffs, in turn, liaised with three levels of regional administration: the *Distriktkommandanturen* which corresponded to the prewar Romanian district administrative level; below these, the *Etappenkommandanturen* (in the German case) or *Etappenstationskommandos* (in the Austro-Hungarian case) which provided an intermediate level of administration; and finally the *Ortskommandanturen* who administered the occupation at village level.

The *Etappengebiet* of the IX. Army was directly controlled by the IX. Army itself rather than by the Military Administration. The central administrative authority in this territory was the *Etappen-Inspektion 15*, headed by Generalleutnant Madlung. As in the territory of the Military Administration, the *Etappengebiet* was regionally subdivided into *Etappenkommandanturen* and *Ortskommandanturen*, but here there were no *Distriktkommandanturen* and no Romanian civil administration existed above the local level.²

Occupiers and Local Elites

The relationship between the occupiers and local elites was primarily determined by the occupiers' plans for the future of the subjugated territories. If the occupiers intended to annexe these lands later, local elites were largely excluded from administration, as was the case in *OberOst* (the German military occupation regime for those territories conquered to the north-east of the East Prussian border with Russia) and in Serbia.³ If, however, an annexation was not planned, then the occupiers tried to place an indigenous elite in power which would be friendly to the Central Powers. In addition, any surviving elements of

² For the administrative divisions see: BAMA [Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv, Freiburg] PH 30-III/14: 'Die deutsche Militärverwaltung in Rumänien' (1916-1918). On the Military Administration: 'Die Militärverwaltung in Rumänien' in *Rumänien in Wort und Bild* 1917, Nr. 3, p. 2 ff.

³ For *OberOst* see Liulevicius (2000); Strazhas (1993). For Serbia see: Kerchnawe *et al.* (1928), pp. 53 ff.

the prewar civil service were integrated into the administration. This approach met with only limited success in Belgium and the Polish territories of the Russian Empire. However, in Romania a functioning system of cooperation was established.⁴ Nevertheless, in Romania, too, the occupiers' use of repression to serve their own interests undermined their attempts to foster a cooperative relationship with the local elites. For example, throughout 1917 the occupation regime held over eighty local dignitaries hostage, in order to use them as bargaining pawns in their attempts to obtain the release of Central Power citizens who had been interned in unoccupied Romania.

This chapter will now explore the different forms of cooperation between the occupiers and the local population that developed in occupied Romania, before examining the reasons for the occupiers' relative success. This discussion will be limited to the German occupiers only, as they controlled the Administrative Staff (*Verwaltungsstab*) of the occupation regime, without Austro-Hungarian involvement. As a result, Romanian politicians generally found themselves dealing with German administrators with regard to national or local administration. Finally, the German practice of taking local hostages will be discussed.

The occupation began after the Romanian government and the royal court, recognizing that their military situation was hopeless, retreated in the night of 2–3 December 1916 to the more secure city of Iași in the north of the country, leaving behind a number of pro-German politicians as general secretaries in the most relevant ministries (Interior, Finance, Justice, Education, and Agriculture/Demesnes), in order to maintain a basic level of public order and civil administration.⁵ The occupiers were thus able to use these local experts when establishing their Military Administration (*Militärverwaltung*). In fact, this enabled the Central Powers to successfully administer the occupation, late in the war, at a point when they were facing an increasing shortage of personnel. The German occupiers also turned to the Romanian civil service for help, wherever its personnel had not fled. But the Romanian civil service was also suffering from personnel shortages as many of its staff were serving in the Romanian army or had otherwise fled the occupation zone, resulting in a lack of competent professional person-

⁴ For Belgium see: de Schaepdrijver (2004), as well as Zilch (1994) and Hatke (1990). For Poland: Lemke (1977); Geiss (1960); Conze (1958).

⁵ Nedelcu (1923), p. 16 f., fn. 2. See also: 'Die Militärverwaltung in Rumänien' in *Rumänien in Wort und Bild* (26.5.1917) Nr. 3, pp. 2 ff.

nel. As the report of the Administrative Staff (*Verwaltungsstab*) noted for the second half of 1917:

[Good] will was not always matched by ability, and large numbers, of subprefects in particular, had to be replaced due to incompetence. [...] There is a striking lack of adequate replacements for administrative staff. [...] Thus, civil servants for the administration had to be taken from the most diverse professional backgrounds, and it took a long time before they had been trained in their new offices.⁶

Moreover, in contrast to the cooperative spirit shown by the Romanian civil servants, many of the German officials were reluctant to share power:

[...] it was understandably not very easy for particular military posts to relinquish part of their authority to Romanian administrators and to let the civil servants who had been appointed work independently.⁷

In addition, the supervisory role of the different local headquarters—the *Etappenkommandanturen*—contributed little to orderly cooperation:

In some districts the commander [*Etappenkommandant*] has agreed to acknowledge the [Romanian] district authority; in others he ignores them. An instruction to the subordinate authorities cannot be carried out without authentication by the district command. [...] It is total anarchy!⁸

Surprisingly, however, administrative cooperation between occupiers and occupied successfully outlasted these problems. The Romanian prefects appeared content with the new regime, and the occupiers affirmed that they ‘were at pains to conduct the administration fairly and in accordance with the authority of the occupying powers.’⁹

⁶ Bericht des Verwaltungsstabes v. 1.7.–31.12.1917: II. Innere Verwaltung, Allgemeine Landesverwaltung: ‘Mit diesem [guten] Willen hielten freilich die Fähigkeiten nicht gleichen Schritt und es mußten eine größere Reihe namentlich von Unterpräfekten wegen Unbrauchbarkeit ersetzt werden. [...] An geeignetem Ersatz für Verwaltungsbeamte besteht auffälliger Mangel. [...] So mußten die Verwaltungsbeamten den verschiedensten Berufskreisen entnommen werden, und es verging geraume Zeit, bis sie sich in ihr neues Amt eingearbeitet hatten.’

⁷ ‘Fiel es einzelnen militärischen Dienststellen begreiflicherweise nicht ganz leicht, einen Teil ihrer Machtbefugnisse an rumänische Dienststellen abzutreten und die eingesetzten Beamten selbständig arbeiten zu lassen.’ *Ibid.*

⁸ Marghiloman (1994), Entry for 28.2.1917: ‘În unele plăși, șeful de Etapă consimte să-l recunoască pe administratorul de plasă; în altele îl ignoră. Un ordin dat autorităților inferioare nu se poate executa dacă comandamentul de Etapă nu-l vizează. [...] Este anarhie absolută!’

⁹ Bericht des Verwaltungsstabes v. 1.4.–30.6.1917: I. Innere Verwaltung, Allgemeine Landesverwaltung. See also: Bericht des Verwaltungsstabes v. 1.7.–30.12.1917: II.

The occupiers also sought to establish a cooperative relationship with the Romanian Ministries. They initially agreed to recognize the position of the Ministry representatives that the Romanian Government had left behind.¹⁰ In mid-March 1917, however, they implemented several personnel transfers, changing all heads of Ministries apart from the general secretary of the Interior Ministry, Lupu Kostake. The chief of the occupation Administrative Staff (*Verwaltungsstab*), von Welser, appointed new 'Chief Administrators,' the so-called *Verweser* or *giranți*, to replace the general secretaries. Although the occupiers exercised formal control of this process, the Romanian side did have a certain influence, as they were able to suggest possible candidates for these positions.¹¹

A faction of the Romanian Conservative Party led by Petre Carp was particularly involved in this process. At a crown council meeting at the beginning of the war in 1914, Carp had been the only politician to vote in favor of Romania entering the conflict on the side of the Central Powers. As a result the occupiers regarded him as a natural ally.¹² Upon the removal of the state secretaries who had been appointed by the Romanian Government, members of Carp's party were selected for the new Chief Administrator positions. This facilitated the implementation of the occupiers' policies.

The new Chief Administrators' power, however, remained rather limited. The occupiers retained tight control of all ministerial activities by appointing a liaison officer to supervise each administrator and

Innere Verwaltung, Allgemeine Landesverwaltung: 'Die Zusammenarbeit zwischen den deutschen und den rumänischen Verwaltungsdienststellen vollzieht sich neuerdings fast reibungslos.' See also: Marghiloman (1994), Entry for 30.5.1917.

¹⁰ Marghiloman (1994), Entry for 13.1.1917.

¹¹ Hinna (n.d.), p. 3. On Lupu Kostake's personnel proposals see: Marghiloman (1994), Entry for 13.3.1917. The appointments followed a suggestion by Lupu Kostake made through the Chief of Administrative Staff, von Welser, to whom the *Verweser* also answered. Marghiloman (1994), Entry for 8.3.1917 and 18.3.1917. Netzhammer (1995), Entry for 5.4.1917. On the official employment of the *Verweser* by the Military Administration see: Verordnung Nr. 26 v. 12.3.1917 in: Verordnungen (1917/18), Nr. 4 (3.4.1917). The Romanian Government continued to operate from Iași. Efforts by the occupiers to get the Romanian politicians with whom they were cooperating to form a counter-government in Bucharest failed as a result of Carp's refusal to take on the role of Prime Minister. Carp refused because he wished to avoid dividing the country. Bacalbașa (1921), p. 84 and 96 ff. See also: Antipa (n.d.), p. 49.

¹² The crown council meeting took place on 3 August 1914. See Hitchins (1994), pp. 257 ff.

counter-sign all documents.¹³ The subordinate position of the Romanian representatives was constantly emphasized. For example, Alexandru Marghiloman who later became Romanian Prime Minister, wrote the following note in his diary about a business trip made in February 1917, prior to the March appointment of the new Chief Administrators, by the then General Secretary of the Finance Ministry, Kiriacescu:

Even though he was travelling on business, he had to pay for his [train] seat plus a 50% surcharge; on departure the [German] captain [accompanying him] stepped into first class, but Kiriacescu was forced to travel in second class...¹⁴

The Romanian Chief Administrators' influence was closely linked to how important the occupiers considered their particular political field. For example, Lupu Kostake, Chief Administrator of the Interior Ministry was unable to capitalize on the fact that he was the Germans' main contact as well as a close confidant of Carp—who did not hold any office. Despite being Chief Administrator of the Interior Ministry, Kostake was not granted control of his own Ministry's main function—regional administration. His powers were restricted to suggesting candidates for appointments, whenever the occupier's administrative staff, the *Verwaltungsstab*, had not already found suitable personnel itself, and some limited influence on district budgets.¹⁵

The situation in the Ministry of Justice was somewhat different. The Romanian justice system was of little interest to the occupiers once they had established their own 'German courts' for all civil cases involving

¹³ See the engaging accounts in: Marghiloman (1994), Entry for 24.4.1917; Bacalbaşa (1921), pp. 83f.

¹⁴ 'Cu toate că el călătorea pentru afaceri de serviciu, şi-a plătit locul plus 50% pentru agio; la plecare, căpitanul s-a urcat în clasa I, dar Kiriacescu a fost silit să se urce în a II-a...' Marghiloman (1994), Entry for 28.2.1917.

¹⁵ Prefects and Subprefects were normally appointed by the Interior Minister in the Romanian system of district administration. During the occupation, however, the German administration controlled these appointments and the *Etappenkommandanturen* supervised the Subprefects. Kostake's power was limited to supervising the administration, a role which he shared with the representative of the Military Administration, and the right of consultation regarding district budgets. Marghiloman (1994), Entry for 8.3.1917. Bericht des Verwaltungsstabes v. 1.4.–30.6.1917: I. Innere Verwaltung, Allgemeine Landesverwaltung; Bericht des Verwaltungsstabes v. 1.7.–31.12.1917: II. Innere Verwaltung; Selbstverwaltung, Distrikts- und Gemeindeverwaltung; Änderung und Anwendung der Verwaltungsgesetze.

members of the Central Powers.¹⁶ This meant that Hinna, who was appointed as Chief Administrator at the Ministry of Justice, had more room to maneuver and was able to thwart several of the occupiers' plans: for example, throughout the occupation, court sentences continued to be proclaimed in the name of the King instead of in the name of the Law, German lawyers were not allowed to speak before Romanian courts, and, despite a shortage of personnel, Romanian judges still had to meet all the usual legal requirements. Hinna counted all this as a personal success. On 30 November 1917, the occupiers even revoked their decree that had abolished the right to appeal in criminal cases—introduced because of a shortage of personnel, it had proved impracticable.¹⁷ In contrast to their tight control of the regional administration, the occupiers were prepared to allow the Romanian Justice system more autonomy, as it had little bearing on the balance of power between the occupiers and the occupied.¹⁸

Cooperation by local elites was not limited to the Romanian administration. The occupiers quickly concluded that Romanian assistance in organizing the exploitation of the country's natural resources would lead to more efficient production and distribution. The 'Romanian Economic Association' (*Rumänischer Wirtschaftsverband*) created on 28 April 1917, functioned as a liaison agency between the occupation regime's Economic Staff (*Wirtschaftsstab*) and the Romanian administration. It included both occupiers and Romanians: the management board of the association included Grigore Antipa, Chief Administrator at the Agriculture Ministry, Lupu Kostake and several representatives of the

¹⁶ Bericht des Verwaltungsstabes v. 1.4.1917–30.6.1917: IV. Deutsche Gerichte; Bericht des Verwaltungsstabes v. 1.7.1917–31.12.1917: IV. Gerichts- und Gefängniswesen, III. Die deutschen Gerichte.

¹⁷ The fact that Hinna constantly complained about the same matters to different representatives of the Military Administration was one factor in his success; another was the fact that several of the regulations introduced by the occupiers proved impractical, for example the abolition of the court of appeal in criminal cases. Hinna (s.d.), p. 53. On the personnel working in the courts, see also: Hinna (s.d.), pp. 43f. On the proclamation of sentences see Nedelcu (1923), pp. 173 f. He claimed that as early as December 1916, he contested the unauthorized rewording of the procedure used by Romanian judges. See also: Verordnung des OKM Nr. 24 v. 1.3.1917 and Nr. 56 v. 30.11.1917 in Verordnungsblatt des Oberkommandos der Heeresgruppe Mackensen Nr. 3 v. 7.3.1917 and Nr. 13 v. 11.12.1917; Bericht des Verwaltungsstabes v. 1.4.1917–30.6.1917: III. Rumänisches Gerichtswesen; Bericht des Verwaltungsstabes v. 1.7.1917–31.12.1917: IV. Gerichts- und Gefängniswesen, I. Die rumänischen Gerichte.

¹⁸ In part this was also because Hinna had no further political ambitions which meant that any concessions made to him were unlikely to have major consequences on the internal Romanian balance of power.

occupying Military Administration's Economic and Administrative Staffs, including the Austro-Hungarian lieutenant Count Ledebour. Romanian agricultural interests were also represented on the board of the association by members of the Romanian 'Central Association of Agricultural Syndicates,' the people's banks and tenants' associations. The main aim of the Romanian Economic Association was to increase agricultural yields, as well as to improve the system of recording all available foodstuffs in the country. In addition, it was meant to be the sole arbiter in disputes between landlords and tenants.¹⁹ The surviving minutes of the board of the association show that it was Grigore Antipa, in particular, who constantly emphasized the needs of the population, whereas the landlords were generally more interested in advancing their own positions. The occupiers, for their part, tried to organize agricultural production and an inventory of all available tools with the least possible disruption. In their negotiations, both sides were keen to demonstrate that the other depended upon them, though the Romanians usually lost this contest. The board minutes for 16 August 1917, for example, reveal the occupiers' uncompromising response to Romanian landlords' complaints about low prices:

Count Praschma drew attention to the fact that the Romanian Economic Association was created solely in the interests of Romanian farmers and for the Romanian population in general [...]. It was therefore the Romanians, not the Military Administration, who were interested in the continued existence of '*Ruwiva*' [the Romanian Economic Association].²⁰

When the landlords threatened that they would simply let their fields lie idle if higher prices were not paid, Praschma coolly countered that if this happened the fields would be farmed by force, with the costs billed to the landlords.²¹

¹⁹ Antipa (s.d.), pp. 93ff; Ionesco-Sisesti (s.d.), p. 44. Antipa dates the beginning of the Association's activities to 28 June 1917. Yet minutes exist for 30 May 1917, corroborating the date given in the report of the Economic Staff: 28 April 1917, Bericht des Wirtschaftsstabes v. 1.4.1917–30.6.1917: Vorwort.

²⁰ Major Count Praschma was the director of the occupation regime's Economic Staff's section for foodstuff and fodder, as well as the chairman of the Romanian Economic Association. Österreichisches Kriegsarchiv NFA/M.G.G. Rumänien/Karton 1784, BV 3059: Sitzungsprotokoll des Rumänischen Wirtschaftsverbandes vom 16. August 1917: 'Graf Praschma erinnert daran, dass der Rumänische Wirtschaftsverband einzig und allein im Interesse der rumänischen Landwirte und für die rumänische Bevölkerung im Allgemeinen errichtet wurde [...]. An der Weiterexistenz des 'Ruwiva' hätten also die Rumänen Interesse, nicht die Militärverwaltung.'

²¹ *Ibid.*

Several factors explain why, in contrast to other occupations at the time, occupiers and occupied cooperated at the highest level in Romania. Within the country there was a group of experienced politicians who had traditionally been pro-German and who were prepared to take over the Ministries and work with the occupiers. They were mostly from the generally germanophile Conservative Party, which had been in opposition to the ruling Liberal Party before the occupation.²² Conservatives saw the occupation as an opportunity to shape the development of the country as they wished, even without formally participating in government, as most Liberals had fled with the Romanian government while most Conservatives had stayed behind. The Conservatives also saw the occupation as a chance to reverse certain tendencies in Romanian society that they had long bemoaned. The close ties which some Conservatives felt to German culture and German romanticism played a significant role in encouraging these attitudes. They were often former members of *Jumimea*, an association of young intellectuals founded in 1863 in Iasi that had criticized Romanian society for superficially adopting western-style institutions without giving them any real functions.²³ For the Conservatives, cooperation served not only to maintain a functioning administration and to negotiate better conditions for the population, but also to push through their political ideas without interference from their political opponents.

A further important motive for cooperation was mistrust of Russia, the Romanian government's ally. Romania's geographic location meant that it was threatened by a Russian invasion whenever conflict broke out in the Balkans. In addition, many of the politically conscious members of the Romanian population still felt betrayed by Russia's actions during the Berlin Conference of 1878 when Romania had been forced to cede three Bessarabian districts to Russia in exchange for the Dobruja region which Romania did not want at the time.²⁴ Many Romanian politicians felt that this mistrust was vindicated by the events of 1916:

Despite the great enthusiasm of the population at the beginning of this war [...] the new ally to the north was mistrusted: the fear was that there would be a 'new Russian defection' which would repeat the events of 1878. This fear seemed increasingly to be confirmed. First, the new ally never

²² Hitchens (1994), pp. 257 ff.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 60 ff.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 50 ff.

arrived on time or in sufficient numbers on the Bulgarian front where he was needed the most [...]. Second, when the 'Allies' finally arrived and were hailed by the people even ordinary Russian soldiers proudly replied that they had not come as Allies but as Protectors.²⁵

Given this context, a section of the Romanian elites considered an occupation by the Central Powers as the lesser evil—and this sentiment continued to exist during the occupation. An article in the *Gazeta Bucureștilor*, for example, compared a Russian occupation unfavorably with the real occupation by the Central Powers.²⁶

Cooperation between occupier and occupied, however, was not the whole picture. The occupiers did not treat all of the Romanian elites who remained in Bucharest as potential allies. Shortly after the conquest of the capital, the occupiers began to intern the first Romanian dignitaries in the Hotel Imperial.²⁷ The purpose of these arrests was not to intimidate potential resistance leaders—although this was certainly seen as a desirable side-effect—but rather to put pressure on the Romanian government in Iași. The occupiers intended to exchange the dignitaries for citizens of the Central Powers who had been interned in the unoccupied part of Romania.

From the beginning, the occupation press highlighted the fate of these internees in order to win over the German and Austro-Hungarian communities in Romania to the occupier's war effort.²⁸ Their release

²⁵ 'Malgré le grand enthousiasme de la population au commencement de cette guerre [...] il existait une méfiance contre le nouvel allié du Nord: la crainte d'une 'nouvelle défection russe' répétant les événements de 1878. Cette crainte semblait en plus en plus fondée. Premièrement, le nouvel allié ne pourrait jamais arriver à temps et en nombre suffisant sur le front bulgare, où il était le plus nécessaire [...]. D'autre part, quand le peuple acclamait les 'Alliés' enfin arrivés, il entendait même de simples soldats russes dire fièrement qu'ils venaient non pas comme Alliés, mais comme Protectors.' Antipa (s.d.), p. 10. See also for example Marghiloman (1994), Entry for 29.10.1916: 'Am trecut drept adversar al Franței, când în realitate voiam neutralitatea fiindcă îmi este frică de Rusia...' [I became an opponent of France because in truth, I was for neutrality, since I fear Russia.] Further: Hitchins (1994), pp. 136 ff. and esp. 254 ff. On the debate about Romania's 'natural allies' see: Bucur (1999), pp. 250 ff.

²⁶ 'Sub ocupația militară' in *Gazeta Bucureștilor* (Nr. 275 v. 19.9.1917).

²⁷ Several hostages wrote about their experience after the war. See Burileanu (1919); Bacalbașa (1921), pp. 86 ff. Further: Arhivele Naționale, Fond Marghiloman, Dosarul 40: Brief V. T. Cancicov an Al. Marghiloman 6.1.1918.

²⁸ The German and Austro-Hungarian community refers to citizens of these states already living in Romania before the war, mostly for employment reasons. They enjoyed certain privileges under the occupation, e.g. the right to buy in special shops or a specialized refugee service. Their number was significantly high: in Bucharest alone, 27,000

became a principal aim of the occupiers; the subject was charged with emotion and it invested the occupation with moral legitimacy in the eyes of both the Central Power soldiers and civilian populations at home. As a result, taking Romanian citizens hostage was also regarded as a legitimate measure.²⁹

However, when the Romanian government did not yield to this blackmail, the occupiers upped the stakes. In March 1917, they moved the hostages from the relatively comfortable hotel in Bucharest to the villages of Săveni and Tismana in the Ialomița district. This move was symbolic—this district was where the Romanian Government had held its Central Power prisoners before the advance of Germany and her allies. At the end of October the occupiers transported some of the hostages again, this time to Bulgaria, the enemy country which the Romanian population most feared.³⁰ It was not until Romania was forced to accept an armistice in December 1917 because of the Bolshevik revolution and the effective exit of Russia from the war, that the issue was solved: after almost a year of fruitless negotiations and mutual allegations of breaches of international law, the internees and the hostages were finally exchanged at the end of 1917.³¹

Cooperation with the occupiers yielded few concrete benefits for the Romanians, apart from the symbolic maintenance of some aspects of state sovereignty (e.g. the continued proclamation of court sentences in the name of the King) and isolated successes in improving living conditions for the civilian population. Indirectly, however, it mitigated the harsh opposition between occupiers and occupied. It enabled a

persons were entitled to buy in the aforementioned shops: See e.g. 'Flüchtlingsfürsorge in Bukarest' in *Rumänien in Wort und Bild* 1917, Nr. 4, p. 17 f. These people should not be confused with the members of the indigenous German speaking minority, which, for the most part, consisted of farmers in Dobruja: they were Romanian citizens.

²⁹ While the majority of the internees were able to escape during the chaos of the German advance and the Romanian retreat, a minority were taken into unoccupied Romania. For the occupiers, their fate symbolized the division between occupier and occupied; their liberation was a high priority that served to unite all members of the Central Powers in Romania. See Zekely (1918). See also several articles in *Bukarester Tagblatt*, such as: 'Unschuldige Opfer des Rumänischen Krieges' (Nr. 201 v. 21.12.1916, p. 1), or 'Eingesandt: Eine Episode aus dem Hotel Bratu' (Nr. 202 v. 22.12.1916), and, directly justifying the German measures: 'Rumänische Beschwerden' in *Donau-Armee-Zeitung, Anzeiger für Brăila*, No. 66 (29.3.1917), 'Vermischtes.'

³⁰ On the fear of the Bulgarians, see for example: Antipa (s.d.), pp. 53 ff.; Bacalbașa (1921), pp. 43 ff. See also: Bericht der Militär-Verwaltung in Rumänien (1. Januar–31. März 1917): 4. Allgemeine Haltung der Bevölkerung und Velburg (1930), pp. 42ff.

³¹ On the exchange see: BAMA, PH 5-II/620.

relatively smooth administration of the occupied territories, and both occupiers and occupied could turn to local politicians as mediators in cases of conflict. The suffering of the internees in unoccupied Romania, by contrast, created a *Feindbild*, a powerful image of the Romanian enemy that evoked hatred, which the occupying soldiers had initially often lacked. Conversely, the arrest of the Romanian dignitaries, which was aimed at securing the internees' release, was greatly resented by many Romanians. In the end, the removal of Central Power citizens to the unoccupied zone by the Romanians and the occupiers' response—taking Romanian dignitaries hostage—put considerable strain on the occupier-occupied relationship.

Occupiers and the Local Population

The German occupiers regarded the Romanian population principally in economic terms. To a certain extent this reflected the situation in Germany and it was symptomatic of the general totalization of war, which blurred the boundaries between the military and the civilian spheres.³² Military strength alone was no longer sufficient for victory—the belligerents' will to endure became increasingly decisive. As a result the territories occupied by the Central Powers were primarily seen as suppliers of foodstuffs and raw materials, and their inhabitants as a source of labor. Significantly, the section of the occupiers' Economic Staff responsible for 'labor matters' (*Abteilung für Arbeiterfragen*) included refugees and people evacuated from the front zone in its remit.³³

The emphasis on resources could also have relatively positive consequences for the population, especially in rural areas. Due to the decreasing number of occupation troops, it was impossible for the occupiers to physically oversee and control the entire country. This made them more dependent on the cooperation of the locals than elsewhere. Moreover, the fact that the occupation began over two years into the war meant that the occupiers could immediately draw upon experiences

³² On the concept of total war and forced labor see Armeson (1964). On the totalization of war see: Chickering and Förster (2000); Horne (1997).

³³ See the monthly and fortnightly reports of the occupation regime's Military Economic Staff. Barch [Bundesarchiv Berlin], R 3101, 883 and Barch, R 901, 3919: Halbmonats- und Monatsberichte des Wirtschaftsstabes.

learned in other, earlier occupations—sometimes to the benefit of the Romanian locals. For example, it is likely that the occupiers refrained from deporting Romanian workers to Germany because this policy had proved disastrous in Belgium.³⁴ Overall, the occupiers attempted to exploit the territories using a contradictory mixture of incentives and coercion: Romanians were generally viewed either as producers, in terms of agriculture, or as a labor resource. The Central Powers were increasingly dependent upon Romanian farmers' cooperation, because of the catastrophic food supply situation they faced both at the front and at home. This led them to use force more frequently to deal with the shortage of labor. However, ultimately this proved extremely ineffective: due to a lack of soldiers it proved impossible to adequately implement coercive measures in response to the growing number of Romanian workers who absconded as working conditions deteriorated.³⁵

Given that Romania was a predominantly rural country, the occupiers hoped that its occupation would provide them with agricultural produce. Farmland in Romania was divided into three categories: estates that belonged to either the Romanian state or the crown; a number of private estates that had been confiscated by the occupiers; and finally, lands that remained in private hands. Those estates in private hands were generally tilled by their owners, whereas confiscated estates or those that belonged to the state or the monarchy were farmed under the direct supervision of the occupying Military Administration.³⁶ Wherever possible, the occupiers favored a system of cooperation with the locals—a system which enjoyed considerable success until summer 1918. An example of this cooperation was the granting of leave to prisoners of war. If Romanian prisoners of war owned farmland in the occupied

³⁴ On the Belgian deportations see de Schaepdrijver (2004), ch. VII. During the hasty introduction of an occupation currency to pay for requisitioned goods the authorities looked to the German experience in Poland: 'Aufzeichnung über die [...] im Reichsbankgebäude am Montag, den 23. Oktober 1916 [...] stattgehabene Vorbesprechung, betreffend Finanzierung einer Organisation zur Nutzbarmachung der im okkupierten rumänischen Gebiete vorhandenen Vorräte.' [Barch, R3101, 887, Bl. 12 ff.]

³⁵ For further details, see the discussion later in this paper.

³⁶ Crown estates included Periș, Segarcea, Sadova and Ghergița. The confiscation of private estates usually occurred in cases where the owner had fled, for example the large Bojar estates near Bucharest, such as Bufta, Mogoșoaia, Preotești, Balotești and Saftica—including the attached mills, dairies and factories which produced cotton wool, bandages and tinned food. Their produce went mainly to feed Bucharest. See: Zusammenfassender Tätigkeitsbericht des Wirtschaftsstabes bis zum 31.3.17, 51 f.; Halbjahresbericht der Militärverwaltung vom 1.4.1917 bis 30.06.1917, Bericht des Wirtschaftsstabes, Abt. II: Landwirtschaft, p. 13.

area, they could return home in order to take care of it, as long as they reported to the *Ortskommando*, the local military authority. This was a pragmatic move intended to ease the problem of food shortages and the lack of labor in a way that suited both parties involved: by the end of 1917, about a quarter of the Romanian prisoners of war interned in the occupied territories, 11,288 out of 41,420 had been 'granted leave to carry out farm work in their home area.'³⁷ A further example of this kind of pragmatic cooperation between occupiers and occupied was the treatment of escaped prisoners of war found in the villages: many of these had fled to their home parishes where they tended to voluntarily report to the *Ortskommando*, indicating a certain acknowledgement of the 'enemy' as state authority within the village community. The *Ortskommandos*, for their part, did not consider these former soldiers as a security threat but rather as a valuable source of labor: they welcomed additional workers and asked the Military Administration to leave the escaped prisoners in their area.³⁸

The occupiers requisitioned Romanian grain as well as the country's scarce meat to provision their troops at the front and in the occupation zone. Any surplus was sent to feed civilians in the occupiers' respective home countries.³⁹ At the same time they provided farmers with the incentive of cash payments for their yield. Whereas the occupiers paid in coupons for the requisitioned harvest of 1916, which had already been stored in barns at the beginning of the occupation, the 1917 and 1918 harvests were paid for up front in cash to encourage the Romanian producers to increase their output. The prices were fixed and publicized before the harvest, which was also seen by the occupiers as a way of increasing agricultural production. For example, in autumn 1917 increased prices were announced for the 1918 harvest, allowing farmers to factor this into their plans when sowing their crops.⁴⁰ The

³⁷ Halbjahresbericht der Militärverwaltung v. 1.7.1917 bis 31.12.1917, Bericht des Oberquartiermeisterstabes, Abt. XIII: Kriegsgefangenenwesen: zur 'landwirtschaftlichen Arbeitsaufnahme in ihre Heimatorte [...] beurlaubt.'

³⁸ Österreichisches Kriegsarchiv: NFA/M.G.G. Rumänien/Karton 1781, BV 1657: Vierteljahresbericht d. Meldeämter v. 30.6.17.

³⁹ Verordnungen (1917/18), Verordnungen Nr. 59 (28.01.1917), Nr. 173 (26.6.1917), Nr. 200 (30.7.1917), Nr. 18 (29.6.1918), Nr. 116 (21.9.1918). Although exploiting the resources of an occupied territory to provide provisions for the front was illegal in international law, no protests from the Romanian side regarding this practice have been uncovered in my research up to this point.

⁴⁰ On the confiscation of grain see: Wirtschaftsstab (1917); on payment see *Ibid.*, ch. V. On the 1917 price increase: Halbjahresbericht der Militärverwaltung v. 01.07.

system of payment, however, was not always straightforward. Normally, the farmers received a requisition receipt (*Übernahmebescheinigung*) upon delivery of the goods. The receipt could only be redeemed in 'agrarian loan banks' which had been specially established by the occupiers; only once the price had been fixed could the coupons be cashed. A notable exception was the requisition of meat: farmers bringing their cattle to the abattoirs were paid directly in cash as cattle were a very scarce resource.⁴¹

Despite the complicated bureaucratic nature of this system of payment, the occupiers sought to use it for propaganda purposes. Their Romanian-language newspaper *Gazeta Bucureștilor* repeatedly published articles that highlighted the occupiers' generosity to farmers prominently on its title page: they stated that the price paid for grain was higher than during peace time and that the farmers had never been as content. Moreover, these articles claimed that the occupiers had improved conditions for the farmers by cutting out the middle men, as they were now selling directly to the consumer.⁴² It is difficult to evaluate these claims; their accuracy probably varies from case to case. However, it does appear to be the case that while hoping that their system of payment would increase yields, the Military Administration also wished to ensure that farmers had the minimum needed to survive—not least because the occupiers were dependent on the farmers' work. For example, when in October 1917 the corn harvest appeared to be particularly bad, the occupiers increased the price that they would pay for this crop.⁴³

The extent to which the occupiers adhered to this system of fixed prices and requisitioning depended upon how much they needed a particular type of food. The total output of goods which were easy to transport, such as grain and wine, was requisitioned, whereas only a certain percentage of fruits and vegetables were seized.⁴⁴ The occupiers allowed the free trade of goods which were unsuitable for export

bis 31.12.1917, Bericht des Wirtschaftstabes, Abt. I: Nahrungs- und Futtermittel, Gruppe A (Ausfuhr).

⁴¹ On requisitions and payment for the harvest of 1917 see: 'Plata recoltei din 1917' in *Gazeta Bucureștilor*, 13.7.1917, p. 1. On payment for meat see: 'Bekanntmachungen für die Zivilbevölkerung der Festung Bukarest,' p. 28 (18.1.1917).

⁴² On advance payments and farmers' satisfaction with the system see: *Gazeta Bucureștilor*: 'Administrația militară' (14.7.1917, p. 1); 'Pământul nostru reinvie' (24.7.1917, p. 1).

⁴³ Verordnungen (1917/18), Verordnung Nr. 303 (23.10.1917).

⁴⁴ Verordnungen (1917/18), Verordnung Nr. 79 (13.04.1917).

to continue. This was entirely in their own interest. For example, fruit and vegetables were freely traded in the occupied zone throughout most of the occupation due to the fact that the food processing factories run by the occupiers had only a limited capacity and also suffered from a shortage of glass and tin. For this reason it made sense to allow surplus perishable foods such as fruit and vegetables to be sold on the free market, rather than requisitioning the entire crop and letting it go to waste. Moreover, allowing these foods to be freely bought and sold relieved the personnel of the occupying Military Administration of work. It also meant that any food shortages could be blamed upon the local traders rather than the occupying regime, thereby reducing tension between the occupiers and the occupied.

In this regard it is interesting to note that the boundary between village communities and occupiers often became blurred, particularly in the small, rural *Ortskommandos*. However, the occupiers' idyllic descriptions of Romanian village life, which frequently recur in memoirs and diaries, should not mislead us: their position of power was central to their apparent integration into the village community—albeit a power that was often expressed through pre-existing social structures.⁴⁵ The soldiers more or less consciously took on the role of the absent lord of the estate, which enabled them and the peasants to adapt the new situation to fit traditional norms. The diary of Gerhard Velburg, who worked in the registration office in the hamlet of Fetești, provides a valuable insight into the daily reality of the occupation in the countryside. He describes how the occupation troops gradually developed a personal relationship with 'their' villagers, who in turn sought help from 'their' *Ortszweche* (local command) when they had problems with higher-ranked offices or other soldiers. The peasants also invited the soldiers to dinner, gave them small presents or tried to do other small favors for them. Given the development of such relationships, the soldiers at the lowest level of the occupation hierarchy often did not execute orders as rigorously as they were expected to, particularly when it came to the requisition of food and tools.⁴⁶ Pity and corruption both played a role, as the soldiers realized that they profited from hidden food supplies as much as the villagers did. In some cases, they became

⁴⁵ See for example Antipa (s.d.), pp. 70 f.

⁴⁶ Velburg (1930), p. 69.

farmers themselves, by secretly breeding cattle that the locals had given to them as gifts.⁴⁷

In order to provision the front, the home countries and the occupied population, it was essential to resume economic production. The main difficulty the occupiers faced was the lack of workers due to the numbers that had fled or were away serving in the military. For example, for May–June 1917, they estimated that there was a shortfall of 38,000 harvesters. Finding that the recruitment of civilian labor could not remotely compensate for this deficit, the occupiers used prisoners of war and forced labor to farm those lands that they controlled directly.⁴⁸

The use of forced labor was a last resort; initially the occupiers tried to find other solutions. At first, they tried to solve the shortage of agricultural labor by using the traditional Romanian system of recruiting seasonal workers together with their draught oxen from the mountain districts. This was centrally organized and was intended to maximize the overall yield. The emphasis was upon the fertile plains of the Danube, and considerably more draught oxen from the mountains were ordered to the plains than was the norm during peacetime.⁴⁹ The initiative initially appeared promising: seven recruitment commissions began their work in mid-June 1917 and by the end of the month they had signed up 13,000 harvesters. In addition, there were 4,900 prisoners of war, many of whom were specifically sent to Romania from camps in Germany. Nevertheless, even the most optimistic estimates calculated that at most 79% of the demand for workers had been met.⁵⁰ The situation was further complicated by the fact that the occupation regime's Mining and Forestry Administrations competed for the same workers from the mountain districts. An attempt to improve the situation by recruiting labor from the capital also proved unsuccessful because of the urban workers' lack of experience at agricultural work.⁵¹

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 167.

⁴⁸ Barch, R 901, 3919: Siebenter und Achter Halbmonatsbericht des Wirtschaftsstabes vom 26. Mai bis 10. Juni 1917 bzw. 11. bis 25. Juni 1917, Abt. XVII Arbeiterfragen. On POWs and forced labor see: Oltmer (2006); Oltmer (1998); Becker (1998); Herbert (1986).

⁴⁹ Zusammenfassender Tätigkeitsbericht des Wirtschaftsstabes bis zum 31.3.17, pp. 47 f.

⁵⁰ Barch, R 901, 3919, fol. 221 ff.: Siebenter Halbmonatsbericht des Wirtschaftsstabes vom 26. Mai bis 10. Juni 1917, Abt. XVII Arbeiterfragen.

⁵¹ Barch, R 1501, 119.868, fol. 148: Monatsbericht des Wirtschaftsstabes Juli 1917, Abt. XVII Arbeiterfragen.

The situation rapidly deteriorated. Workers were unmotivated and started to leave, probably because of bad working conditions and insufficient pay. The occupiers reacted with increased coercion towards the civilian workers and with incentives for the prisoners of war, as it was thought that increasing the use of force against prisoners was not likely to improve productivity. As the occupying Economic Staff's monthly report for August 1917 detailed:

To stop agricultural workers leaving, a directive was issued that they were only allowed to leave their workplace with the permission of their employer or the relevant agricultural agent in the *Kommandantur*. An order has been issued regarding the duty to work. According to it, every person liable to work between the age of 14 and 60 has to carry out paid employment assigned to them by a branch of the Allied Powers [...]. The prisoners of war enlisted to work will in future receive adequate payment in order to improve their work motivation.⁵²

These directives on civilian labor issued by the occupation regime were the equivalent of the discussion of the 'Hindenburg Programme' in Germany in autumn 1916 and the Auxiliary Service Law passed by the Reichstag on 5 December 1916 that also stipulated the duty to work and prohibited changing workplace without permission.⁵³ As in Germany, the civilian labor measures proved less effective than hoped in Romania: up to February 1918, only 4,085 volunteer workers had been recruited for the spring sowing of crops. Given their limited number of personnel, the occupying Military Administration was powerless to act effectively against a population which was unwilling to work for it, despite the creation of six commissions for collecting forced labor. Thus the labor situation only further highlighted the occupiers' dependence on voluntary cooperation, as described above. This was illustrated in February 1918, when, faced with particularly high numbers of workers who had fled their jobs in the district of Gorj, the occupiers decided to

⁵² Barch, R 1501, 119.868, fol. 152: Monatsbericht des Wirtschaftsstabes August 1917, Abt. XVII Arbeiterfragen: 'Dem Abwandern landwirtschaftlicher Arbeiter wurde durch die Bestimmung entgegengetreten, dass sie ihre Arbeitsstelle nur mit Genehmigung des Arbeitgebers oder der zuständigen Kommandanturlandwirte verlassen dürfen. Über die Arbeitspflicht wurde eine Verordnung erlassen. Hiernach ist jede arbeitspflichtige Person vom vollendeten 14. bis 60. Lebensjahr verpflichtet, die ihr von einer Dienststelle der verbündeten Mächte übertragene Arbeit gegen Entlohnung zu leisten [...]. Die zur Arbeit herangezogenen Kriegsgefangenen sollen in Zukunft angemessen Lohn erhalten, um ihre Arbeitswilligkeit zu erhöhen.'

⁵³ On the 'Hindenburg Programme' and the 'Vaterländischem Hilfsdienst' see Feldman (1966); Mai (1983).

send a punitive military expedition to capture and punish the missing laborers. The mission failed due to a lack of troops:

The request to send a *Kommando* to the district of Gorj, which had been approved in order to force the many escaped laborers in this district to return to their work and to punish them, has had to be called off as the troops are needed elsewhere. The complaints about workers escaping continue.⁵⁴

The Economic Staff's report a month later stated:

The recruitment commissioners had to struggle with a shortage of the military personnel needed to implement the directives, as well as with the mountain farmers' refusal to go to the plains. A good part of the labor raised, both forced laborers and voluntary recruits, has already fled.⁵⁵

Similar to Belgium, the extent to which the Romanian population was subjected to forced labor depended on whether a particular area was controlled by a civilian administration (in the Romanian case a department within the Military Administration), or whether it was directly ruled by the army, as was the case in the *Etappengebiet*. For example, occupation authorities in the part of Romania that was controlled by the Military Administration resorted to the use of forced labor only reluctantly after the 1916/1917 turning point; however, in the *Etappengebiet*, it was widespread. Similarly, prisoners of war in Romania were granted leave only in the Military Administration zone, and not in the *Etappengebiet*.⁵⁶ The occupying authorities in the Military Administration sought the voluntary cooperation of the local population, and provided

⁵⁴ 'Die beantragte und bewilligte Entsendung eines Marschkommandos in den Bezirk Gorj zur zwangsweisen Zurückführung und Bestrafung der in diesem Distrikte besonders zahlreich entwichenen Arbeitsflüchtigen musste wegen anderweitiger Verwendung zurückgezogen werden. Die Klagen über das Entweichen von Arbeitern dauern an.' Barch, R 3101, 884, fol. 181: Monatsbericht des Wirtschaftsstabes Februar 1918, Abt. XVII Arbeiterfragen. See also the reports for March and April: Barch, R 3101, 884, fol. 240; Barch, R 1501, 119.868, fol. 216.

⁵⁵ Barch, R 3101, 884, fol. 240: Monatsbericht des Wirtschaftsstabes März 1918: 'Die Werbekommissare hatten bei der Aushebung mit dem Mangel an militärischem Personal zur Durchführung getroffener Anordnungen sowie überall mit dem Widerwillen der Gebirgsbauern, in die Ebene zu gehen, zu kämpfen. Von den Ausgehobenen wie von den auf dem Wege der freiwilligen Anwerbung beschafften Arbeitern ist ein Teil bereits entwichen.'

⁵⁶ For Belgium see de Schaepdrijver (2004), ch. VII. On forced labor of civilians in the *Etappe*, see for example BAMA, PH 5 II/556: 'I Reservekorps Generalkommando Abt. Ib, Nr. 2216 an AOK' vom 8. März 1917. On the prohibition of POWs taking leave see BAMA, PH 5 II/633: Etappen-Inspektion 15: Tagesbefehl Nr. 62 (6.4.1917), Nr. 92 (27.5.1917) und Nr. 96 (5.6.1917).

incentives for them to assist the occupiers. However, the success of this policy was limited due to the shortage of labor and the fact that payments were often too low. Ultimately, the Military Administration was forced to take coercive measures which it lacked the necessary manpower resources to effectively enforce.

Competing Allies

Romania was the only occupied region in Europe where all four of the allied Central Powers were involved. Even though the occupation regime was dominated by the German military, Austria-Hungary and Bulgaria had their own occupation zones, and the Ottoman Empire was also nominally involved. For the purposes of this chapter, it makes sense to concentrate on the German and the Austro-Hungarian partners. The Bulgarian occupation zone in the southern Dobruja was intended for annexation and thus completely separated from the rest of the country, while Ottoman participation was limited to providing troops and approving decisions through its representative.

Although Germany and Austria-Hungary jointly administered certain parts of occupied Romania this did not prevent competition between the two countries. Both Germany and Austria-Hungary were equally represented on the occupation regime's Economic Staff. However, overall Germany was better represented in occupation institutions and it had total control of the Military Administration Staff. Perhaps not surprisingly, this situation quickly led to rivalries, especially in economic matters. The Austro-Hungarians believed that Germany was trying to exploit the occupation at their expense. They particularly suspected that their more powerful German partner was trying to take over certain tasks by assigning them to the Military Administration Staff. The Germans, however, were not convinced that the Austro-Hungarian desire for equality was based on honorable motives.⁵⁷ One of the areas where this rivalry was most acute was in relation to the occupiers' plans for what would happen to Romania after the war ended.

⁵⁷ On the institutional distribution see Barch, R1501, 119.868, fol. 144: Abschrift A. 27865 v. 6. August 1917, p. 5. For a general overview see Shanafelt (1985); Meyer (1955).

Romania was of great importance particularly in economic terms to both Germany and Austria-Hungary. Before the war it was one of the main exporters of grain and its rich oil reserves were well known. During the war, this economic importance increased as, after the Entente conference in Paris in mid-1916, the Central Powers concluded that a long 'economic war' would follow any peace treaty that ended the conflict. Given its economic value both Germany and Austria-Hungary began to compete, soon after its conquest, to make Romania into their own sphere of influence. In this regard Romania was unusual, only comparable to Poland. Unlike other occupied areas such as Belgium, Serbia or *OberOst* which were controlled by one occupation power, the question of who would control Poland and Romania in the future remained unclear. An attempt was even made by Germany and Austria-Hungary to come to a deal by trading territory in Poland in exchange for territory in Romania. However, the deal failed, despite an agreement formulated at the Kreuznach conference in April 1917, because neither ally was prepared to give up its influence totally in territory exchanged to the other. Thus the agreement disintegrated in practice, as each side wanted to retain influence. This failure exacerbated the German—Austro-Hungarian rivalry on the ground in Romania.⁵⁸ The two issues that were most bitterly contested between the two allies were those which were also likely to be most important in the postwar period: the exploitation of the oil fields and the control of the financial administration. In particular, the Romanian financial administration was seen as having a huge influence upon trade, through the control of exchange rates for example.

The occupiers were least likely to compromise on those issues that were likely to matter in the postwar period. This is clearly illustrated by the controversy that developed between Germany and Austria-Hungary over the question of providing a currency for occupied Romania. Although both sides were prepared to compromise over providing financial backing for the new currency, neither would give way when it came to fixing the exchange rates, which were so important to any future trade with the country. The Germans unilaterally imposed an exchange rate of 100 Romanian *Lei* to 80 German *Reichsmark*, a rate

⁵⁸ On Germany's dependence on imports of oil and grain, see Torp (2005), esp. pp. 89 ff. On war aims and the Kreuznach conference: Bornemann (1978), pp. 20 ff. and pp. 110 ff. On the importance of Romania for the German war economy: Mann (1918); Militärverwaltung (1917); Onciul (1917).

which Austria-Hungary refused to accept. In order to establish a more advantageous position for its trade with Romania, Austria-Hungary sought to lower the exchange rate to 100 *Lei* to 65 German *Reichsmark*. This would make the Romanian *Lei* and the Austro-Hungarian *Krone* equal in terms of the amount of German *Reichsmarks* they were worth, as 100 *Krone* were already equal to 65 *Reichsmark*.⁵⁹ The German *Reichsbank* was suspicious of this Austro-Hungarian policy. Although this was ostensibly a matter of prestige for the Austro-Hungarians, who objected to seeing an occupied country's currency have a better exchange rate against German currency than their own *Krone*, the Germans also correctly suspected that their ally wanted to protect its own trade interests. As the board of the *Reichsbank* explained:

It is clear from these rather transparent [Austro-Hungarian] explanations that the aim is to exclude Germany from economic activity in the Balkans as far as possible. It is well known that this is also the purpose of the Austro-Hungarian shipping policy towards the Reich, and the actions of the Austrian authorities in Serbia, as consul Freytag has shown. Clearly in order to realize these aims it is of great importance to Austria-Hungary that they enter the peace negotiations with the *Leu* and *Krone* worth the same amount.⁶⁰

The Austro-Hungarian government felt humiliated by the Germans' obstinate refusal to give way. The tension that had developed between the two allies is clear from the tone of a note sent by the Austro-Hungarian embassy to the German Foreign Ministry, which refers to the anticipated conquest of the remainder of unoccupied Romania,

⁵⁹ Barch, R 3101, 887, fol. 96f.: 'Anlage zur Niederschrift über die Besprechung am 31. Januar 1917 und 2. Februar 1917 über das Geldwesen bei der Auswertung Rumäniens.' On the currencies in occupied Belgium and Poland, see Zilch (1994).

⁶⁰ Barch, R 3101, 887, fol. 86 ff., esp. fol. 88: 'Reichsbank-Direktorium an den Herrn Staatssekretär des Innern', 10. Februar 1916: 'Die in diesen wenig vorsichtigen Ausführungen unverhüllt zutage tretende Absicht, die deutsche wirtschaftliche Betätigung vom Balkan möglichst auszuschließen, kommt, wie bekannt, auch in dem Verhalten Österreich-Ungarns gegenüber der vom Reich verfolgten Schifffahrtspolitik und in dem von Konsul Freytag bezeugten Verfahren der österreichischen Behörden in Serbien klar zum Ausdruck. Daß es für die Verwirklichung dieser Bestrebungen von großer Bedeutung sein würde, wenn Österreich-Ungarn in den Friedenshandel mit einer Gleichbewertung von Krone und Leu eintreten könnte, leuchtet ohne weiteres ein.' For the Austro-Hungarian arguments see: Barch R 3101, 887, fol. 96 f.: 'Anlage zur Niederschrift über die Besprechungen am 31. Januar 1917 und 2. Februar 1917 über das Geldwesen bei der Auswertung Rumäniens'; For a summary from the German perspective: Barch R 3101, 887, fol. 190 ff.: 'Niederschrift über die Besprechung am 9. Juni 1917 i[m]n der Kriegs-Rohstoff-Abteilung.'

stating that ‘the existing conditions there [in occupied Romania] are humiliating, both in terms of our prestige as a Great Power and in terms of state finances.’ The note emphasizes the extent to which the currency controversy had left Austria-Hungary feeling belittled, by literally underlining the words ‘humiliation,’ ‘state finances’ and ‘our prestige as a Great Power.’ It went on to explain that the Austro-Hungarian government:

[...] cannot refrain from pointing out that once the Central Powers occupy Moldova, which will effectively bring practically the entire territory of the Kingdom of Romania under their control, this abnormal situation, whereby the currency of the occupied state is valued higher than that of its occupier, namely Austria-Hungary, will be utterly untenable. The measures taken by the Military Administration in Romania to maintain the value of the old *Lei*, would mean that the local currency of the defeated state would be propped up to the disadvantage of the conquering state.⁶¹

With the failure of the Central Powers’ offensive in late summer 1917, however, this argument became irrelevant. The exchange rate remained unchanged until the end of the occupation.

The second great controversy concerned the two allies’ respective share of the Romanian oil fields. The Romanian oil industry was of great interest to both countries, as numerous wartime memoranda attest, particularly in Germany.⁶² Germany had no oil resources of its own,

⁶¹ Barch, R 3101, 887, fol. 380f: K.u.k. österreichisch-ungarische Botschaft, Kommerz-direktion: Verbalnote an das Auswärtige Amt vom 26. August 1917: ‘[...] gegenwärtig dort herrschende Zustand sowohl vom staatsfinanziellen, als auch vom Standpunkte unseres großmachtpolitischen Prestiges als beschämend empfunden werden müsse [...]’. [...] Die k.u.k. Regierung [...] kann nicht umhin darauf hinzuweisen, dass in diesem Momente, wo die Zentralmächte auch die Moldau und somit, das ganze, oder nahezu das ganze Gebiet des Königreichs Rumänien okkupiert haben werden, die abnormale Situation, dass die Valuta des genannten Landes günstiger bewertet werde, als die eines okkupierenden Staates, nämlich Österreich-Ungarns, und dass durch die von der Militärverwaltung in Rumänien verfügte Gleichstellung des alten Lei die einheimische Währung des besiegten Staates zum Nachteile der Währung des eroberten [sic] Staates gestützt wird, ganz unhaltbar erscheint.’

⁶² See for example: Barch R 901, 3099: G. Spies: ‘Unterlagen für die Beurteilung der rumänischen Petroleumfragen,’ November 1917; Barch R 3010, 1419, fol. 126: ‘Denkschrift betreffend die Verarbeitung von auf rumänischen Erdölländereien gewonnenem Erdöl in Deutschland,’ Januar 1916; Barch R 901, 85489: ‘Denkschrift betr. Nutzbarmachung der rumänischen Erdölindustrie im deutschen Interesse für die Zeit nach dem Krieg und die z. Z. zur Erreichung dieses Zweckes zu ergreifenden Maßnahmen,’ 22. Juli 1917. On the Romanian oil industry during the war see Ivănuș (2004), pp. 199 ff.

while the future of the Austro-Hungarian oil reserves in Galicia was in doubt because of the uncertainty surrounding the establishment of a future Polish state. The occupiers accessed Romanian oil during the war by sequestering (*Zwangsverwaltung*) all non-Romanian 'enemy' oil companies, and by exploiting the oil deposits on state-owned lands that had not yet been allocated to companies. In both cases, the Germans tried hard to keep the exploitation of oil to themselves.⁶³ For example, when the Austro-Hungarians demanded a share in the administration of the 'enemy' oil companies taken over by the occupiers, the Germans responded with the remarkable argument that the administration of these companies should 'be German' since it was 'appointed by the German Military Governor.'⁶⁴ The day after receiving this reply, General von Sendler, the Austro-Hungarian plenipotentiary in the occupying Military Administration, protested vehemently that this contravened the agreed principle of the 'joint economic utilization of the occupied territory of Romania.'⁶⁵ Unable to renege on this earlier agreement, the Germans simply took the unprecedented step of placing the administration of the oil fields under the control of the occupying Administrative Staff, which was entirely German.⁶⁶ Yet this did not mollify the Austro-Hungarians, who managed to force the Germans to accept a compromise by June 1917: companies that were run by Austrians and Hungarians would be supervised by an Austro-Hungarian, and the two allies would jointly administer companies where the operation was run by both Germans and Austro-Hungarians.⁶⁷

In addition, from the beginning of the occupation, Austria-Hungary demanded that it be assigned its 'own' oil fields for its own exclusive exploitation. The German strategy, however, was to establish a shared

⁶³ On the exploitation procedure see: Barch, R 1501, 118631, fol. 31–35: 'Besprechung vom 7. Dezember 1916 über Einsetzung eines Beirats für die beim Wirtschaftsstaße der Militärverwaltung begründete Mineralölabteilung,' and *Ibid.*, fol. 92–101: 'Militärverwaltung in Rumänien, betr.: Wiederaufrichtung der rumänischen Erdölindustrie.'

⁶⁴ Barch, R 1501, 118631, fol. 186 f.: 'Militärverwaltung zu den Vorschlägen der österreichisch-ungarischen Kommission zur Besichtigung der rumänischen Erdölfelder,' 27. April 1917.

⁶⁵ Barch, R 1501, 118631, fol. 188–193: 'Von Sendler an Tüllf v. Tschepp und Weidenbach,' 28 April 1917.

⁶⁶ Barch, R 1501, 118631, fol. 196 ff.: 'Tüllf von Tschepp und Weidenbach an von Sendler,' 2 Mai 1917.

⁶⁷ Barch, R 1501, 118631, fol. 245 ff.: 'Niederschrift über die Verhandlungen in Berlin am 7. und 8. Juni 1917 betreffend Ausbeutung der rumänischen Öltrains.'

oil industry, which would then be German-dominated. Their argument was that their southern colleagues had no experience in working with the Romanian oil industry, and that the German repair work on damaged oil fields, which had already begun, should not be impeded by the Austro-Hungarians' lack of practical knowledge.⁶⁸ The Austro-Hungarians insisted that they be given a share of the relevant state-owned oil fields, as well as Romanian extraction equipment and materials.⁶⁹ However, the Germans offered them the most inferior oil fields, which von Sendler duly rejected:

It is clear that there is no information or data available about the possible yield of those state lands, which the Germans indicated on a map as suitable for Austria-Hungary. In addition, according to the admission of the German geologist, it will require going to a depth of 800–1000 meters before we can exploit the only site which lies near to our existing extraction sites. These terrains are probably completely worthless, at least for the purposes of war.⁷⁰

Von Sendler's protests were partly successful: Austria-Hungary was initially allocated the 'enemy' oil fields of Baicoi and Tintea, and, in the event that these proved unproductive, Austria-Hungary was to be granted similar 'enemy' fields near Moreni. However, these allocations were to be valid only until the end of the war. This way, the Germans hoped to be able to assert total control over this important raw material in the postwar period.⁷¹ Nevertheless, the German concessions were a noteworthy success for Austria-Hungary, which, due to its military

⁶⁸ Barch, R 1501, 118631, fol. 94 ff.: 'Militärverwaltung in Rumänien, betr.: Wiederaufrichtung der rumänischen Erdölindustrie,' 31. Januar 1917.

⁶⁹ These were state-owned oil fields, which had not yet been leased to private companies.

⁷⁰ Barch, R 1501, 118631, fol. 188–193: 'Von Sendler an Tüllf v. Tschepppe und Weidenbach,' 28. April 1917: 'Es ist ohne Widerspruch festgestellt worden, dass jene Staatsterrains, welche nach einer uns vorgelegten Karte deutscherseits für Österreich-Ungarn empfohlen wurden, ohne jegliche Aufschlüsse und Anhaltspunkte über deren mögliche Ergiebigkeit sind und dass, bei dem einzigen Terrain, das sich in der Nähe der gegenwärtigen Exploitationen befindet, nach Zugeständnis des deutschen Geologen ein Erfolg erst in einer Tiefe von 800–1000 Metern möglicherweise eintreten könne. Diese Terrains sind wahrscheinlich überhaupt und jedenfalls für Kriegszwecke vollkommen wertlos.'

⁷¹ Barch, R 1501, 118631, fol. 194 f.: 'Militärgouverneur an Kommission des K.u.K. Kriegsministeriums zur Besichtigung der rumänischen Ölfelder,' 2. Mai 1917; *Ibid.*, fol. 199–201: 'Niederschrift über die Verhandlungen in Bukarest vom 23. April bis 2. Mai 1917 betreffend die Ausbeutung der rumänischen Ölterrains'; *Ibid.*, fol. 245 ff.: 'Niederschrift über die Verhandlungen in Berlin am 7. und 8. Juni 1917 betreffend Ausbeutung der rumänischen Ölterrains.'

inferiority and its dependence on German support, was at first sight the weaker partner. Yet the Austro-Hungarians possessed a number of valuable assets as well: they knew that the Germans depended to a certain extent on their goodwill, given their crucial role as a country of transit for the German import of Romanian oil. Moreover, unlike Germany, they had their own oil supply in Galicia which gave them a certain leverage. Indeed, in February 1917, during the row over the German exclusion of Austria-Hungary from the exploitation of the Romanian oil reserves, Hungarian oil refineries had refused to supply heating oil to the German navy.⁷²

Given the uncertain outcome of the war, both occupiers tried to secure the best possible postwar position for themselves. As a result of the first period of globalization that had begun at the end of the nineteenth century, the German Reich was increasingly dependent on imported grain and oil—Romania's two main exports. In addition, Germans, as well as Austrians and Hungarians, saw Romania as a potential market for their products and investments, since Romania was barely industrialized. It was dependent upon foreign capital and had to import industrial plant and products. Romanian foodstuffs and raw materials were seen as crucial given the expectation that an 'economic war' would follow the end of the military conflict. The Central Powers believed that Romanian economic resources would enable them to be economically independent of the Entente states. In the end, the attempt by the two Central Power allies to establish a relationship based upon mutual consideration foundered due to the rivalry between them. The economic value of Romania was too great for either ally to give way. Due to the structure of the occupation, conflicts could not be avoided. Unlike Poland, where each party had a different occupation zone, the Romanian occupation often involved both parties working within the same institutions and controlling the same territories; this necessitated cooperation and compromise. This experience no doubt contributed significantly to the increasing tension between Austria-Hungary and Germany during the war.

⁷² Barch, R 1501, 118631, fol. 113–116: 'Staatssekretär des Reichs-Marine-Amtes an Staatssekretär Auswärtiges Amt,' 29. Februar 1917. See also PA AA [Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes Berlin], R 22266: 'General Ludendorff an General Arz von Straussenberg,' 1. Mai 1917.

Conclusion

In comparison to other occupations, relations between occupiers and occupied were relatively free of conflict in Romania in 1917. During the following year, however, tensions increased. This was largely due to the markedly deteriorating food situation, as well as the Romanians' resentment at the occupation continuing after the peace treaty of Bucharest, signed on 7 May 1918. The treaty destabilized the situation in a number of ways: it created an all-Romanian government closely linked to the Central Powers under Alexandru Marghiloman; it brought about the release of prisoners of war; and it meant that demobilized Romanian soldiers returned home. Information from returning prisoners of war and soldiers led people to think that the Central Powers would be defeated. The political police noted:

It is because of the perverse belief in these rumors that Marghiloman's government is still regarded as provisional, and it is because of these rumors that—apart from a few people who could be counted on one's fingers—Marghilomanists, Carpists, Liberals and Takists still believe that Entente successes on the Western Front will improve Romania's situation.⁷³

Even high-ranking Romanian politicians who had been friendly towards the Central Powers now began to keep their distance from the occupiers. A German army secret dossier, for example, quoted the former Chief Administrator Grigore Antipa: 'No parasite can ever bleed a living thing as white as the Germans have done with us.'⁷⁴ As provisions became scarcer, even the farmers increased their passive resistance against the requisitions of cattle and grain, encouraged by the widespread reports of the Central Powers' impending defeat.⁷⁵ The political police noted:

⁷³ BAMA PH 5 I/16, fol. 8: Wochenbericht der Politischen Polizei (9.–15. Juni 1918), A. Besetzte Gebiete, I. Allgemeines: 'Wenn die Regierung Marghilomans nur als ein Provisorium angesehen wird, wenn—abgesehen von wenigen Leuten, die man an den Fingern abzählen könnte—Marghilomanisten, Carpisten, Liberale und Takisten immer noch auf eine Besserung der Lage Rumäniens durch für die Entente günstigen Ereignisse an der Westfront rechnen, so ist dies alles auf die Rechnung des krankhafte Glaubens an diese Gerüchte zu setzen.'

⁷⁴ BAMA PH 5 I/16, fol. 12: Wochenbericht der Politischen Polizei (23.–29. Juni 1918), A. Besetzte Gebiete, I. Antipa's shift in position is also reflected in his memoir published after the war: Antipa (s.d.).

⁷⁵ BAMA PH 5 I/16, fol. 18: Wochenbericht der Politischen Polizei (13.–20. Juli 1918), A. Besetzte Gebiete, I. Allgemeines. On the revolutionary developments in

In the countryside morale in general has not improved. The impending end to the war, the continuing requisitions and the influence of the demobilized soldiers returning from Moldova have all led to an increase in the number of incidents of passive resistance and refusal to work.⁷⁶

In Bucharest, too, there was an increase in incidents of open hostility towards the occupiers and there were repeated strikes by workers which, according to the occupiers, were politically motivated.⁷⁷

Although the occupation of Romania initially proceeded smoothly, as there was no widespread traditional German-Romanian enmity (*Feindbild*) and as lessons learnt in other occupations were applied, this success soon proved illusory. The pattern was similar to other occupations: the war created labor and food shortages, the occupiers increasingly resorted to coercive measures, and the occupied became embittered and responded with passive resistance. The defeat of the Central Powers in November 1918 rendered all their plans for Romania's economic resources obsolete. The Romanian government, however, acquired huge chunks of the former Habsburg Empire (Siebenbürgen, Bukovina and part of Banat) in the Treaty of Trianon. Today, these areas form about a third of the Romanian state.

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⁷⁶ Wochenbericht der Politischen Polizei (13.–20. Juli 1918), A. Besetzte Gebiete, I. Allgemeines [Ebenda, Bl. 18]. 'Auf dem Land ist die Stimmung [...] im allgemeinen nicht besser geworden. Unter dem Einfluss der aus der Moldau zurückgekehrten Demobilisierten, des bevorstehenden endgültigen Friedens, sowie wegen der immer noch notwendigen Requirierungen [...] ist Arbeitsunlust und passive Resistenz häufiger geworden.'

⁷⁷ BAMA PH 5 I/16, fol. 27: Wochenbericht der Politischen Polizei (11.–18. August 1918), A. Besetzte Gebiete, I. Allgemeines. On the strikes see for example *Ibid.*, fol. 31: Wochenbericht der Politischen Polizei (24.–31. August 1918), A. Besetzte Gebiete, I. Allgemeines.

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CHAPTER FIVE

FROM STREET WALKING TO THE CONVENT: CHILD PROSTITUTION CASES JUDGED BY THE JUVENILE COURT OF BRUSSELS DURING WORLD WAR ONE

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A decline in public morality regularly follows whenever a sizeable armed force is present among the population—this is a sociological phenomenon that invariably repeats itself. And only rarely has any invading army demonstrated worse moral character than the German army. Its lechery respected neither age, nor condition, nor gender.¹

With these words, Paul Wets, the Juvenile Court Judge for Brussels, re-opened one of the most delicate questions that the Belgian justice administration had dealt with during the First World War: child prostitution. Of all the different types of cases which brought minors before this judge during the Great War, charges of prostitution probably accounted for the greatest number and gave rise to the most frequent, and the most difficult, contacts with the Germans. The question was particularly delicate because at the end of the nineteenth century Belgium had experienced what was an unprecedented child prostitution scandal at the time, the ‘affair of the little English girls.’²

As a result of the study by Benoît Majerus, published in 2003, the control and the practice of prostitution in Brussels during the First World War are much better known.³ Majerus’s work describes the phenomenal increase in the number of prostitutes that occurred during the war

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¹ ‘C’est un phénomène de sociologie qui se reproduit invariablement, qu’un affaïssement de la moralité publique, suit régulièrement la présence d’une force armée considérable, au sein des populations. Rarement une armée envahissante, fit preuve de plus de salacité (sic) que l’armée allemande. Sa lubricité ne respecta ni âge, ni condition, ni sexe.’ Wets (1919), p. 11.

² With regard to nineteenth century prostitution in Brussels see: Huberty and Keunings (1987); De Schaepdrijver (1985 and 1986).

³ Majerus (2003). On the Wehrmacht and prostitution in the Second World War, see Meinen (2006).

and the upheavals that the prostitution business went through, as well as the efforts made to clamp down on it. In April 1915, in an attempt to reduce the number of cases of sexually transmitted diseases among German army soldiers, the occupying army instituted a '*Sittenpolizei*' ('vice squad') to enforce 'essentially medical aspects' of regulations related to prostitution.⁴ These regulations provided for the registration and medical inspection of all female prostitutes.

Majerus's analysis, based on lists of prostitutes (*filles publiques*) working in Brussels in 1915, clearly reveals the relative youth of these women: the great majority of female prostitutes on the lists were under the age of 25 and the average age was 31.⁵ The lists reveal only a few girls under the age of 16 working as prostitutes in 1915. However, Majerus includes a series of statements from police (mostly sworn depositions taken in cases involving violence) which reveal that some girls began working as prostitutes at a much younger age.⁶

This situation developed despite the fact that two years before the beginning of the war Belgium had passed its first Child Protection Act, the Carton de Wiart Law, voted into force on 15 May 1912. This law was specifically intended to protect children and adolescents. It allowed specialist judges to place minors under supervision or to monitor their behavior and to issue protective orders. It provided for penalties ranging from simple reprimands to declaring a minor a ward of the state until legal adulthood. The law applied not only to children under 16 who had violated the Penal Code in one way or another but also to those under 16 who were in vulnerable situations or working as prostitutes, and even to those under 18 who were found to be homeless or beggars or whose parents had filed a complaint about their conduct.⁷ In the context of this discussion, however, it is important to acknowledge the spirit in which the law of May 1912 was enforced. It was above all the overall situation of the child, the context in which he or she was growing up, and the 'dangerousness' of this situation either to the child or to others, which determined the judge's decision, rather than the actual facts of a juvenile criminal case. This occurred despite the fact that, as with adults, judiciary intervention could 'only be justified where there is

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 25–27.

⁷ Maus (1912).

evidence of an action which renders the child subject to the tribunal.⁸ Analysis of standard practice in the Juvenile Courts reveals that there was sometimes a gap between the facts of the case as presented in court and the overall case history of the child, and that this often motivated the final decision of the judge.⁹ Cases involving child prostitutes are a good example of this. Article 15 of the Carton de Wiart Law clearly stipulated measures to be taken in relation to children under 16 found to be practicing prostitution or leading what were termed dissolute or immoral lives. However, an analysis of case histories reveals that cases brought before the court relating to 'homelessness and begging' or parental negligence often masked child prostitution as well. In fact, the Wiart Law clauses relating to begging, homelessness or parental negligence were often used by judges in order to intervene in cases where the minor involved in prostitution was aged over 16. Indeed, judges often preferred to invoke these clauses of the law, rather than Article 15, because of the 'stigma attached to the behavior outlined under Article 15.'¹⁰

Trial statistics for the Juvenile Court in Brussels taken from the *Statistique judiciaire de la Belgique* reveal that in 1914 there were 6 cases where Article 15 was invoked to try female minors for acts of prostitution; there were 20 cases in 1915 and 10 in 1916. Statistics were not published for the last two years of the war.¹¹ These figures only include those cases where Article 15 was applied, and do not include cases in which other statutes were used instead. Prostitution was not the only area where the number of cases rose during the war and the postwar years: during both World Wars, the Belgian Juvenile Courts saw an increase in practically all the different categories of cases they handled. Unfortunately, an exhaustive analysis of the war years is impossible due to the disappearance of many of the dossiers.

However, individual case dossiers do survive. This study will examine 15 cases involving female minors charged with prostitution under Article 15. It will also explore several cases of minors charged with violations under Article 13, which dealt with the prevention of homelessness and

⁸ 'L'intervention du pouvoir judiciaire ne peut être justifiée que par la constatation d'un fait matériel rendant l'enfant justiciable du tribunal.' Velge (1941), p. 30.

⁹ François (2005).

¹⁰ 'En raison du caractère péjoratif des faits prévus par l'article 15.' Velge (1941), p. 63.

¹¹ *Statistique judiciaire de la Belgique (1914–1916)*. Table: 'Mineurs jugés. Résultat des poursuites en rapport avec les faits commis.'

begging, and with cases where bad behavior and lack of discipline led to parental complaints about their own children. The limited number of dossiers which have survived is compensated to some extent by the fact that each dossier provides a rich source of different types of information, such as police reports, records of interviews with the accused girls and their friends, sociological observations about their social milieu, reports by medical and/or psychological experts, etc., all of which help us to understand the environment in which these minors lived, as well as the impact of the war upon their everyday lives. Some of these observations or value judgments provide a key insight into why a judge thought it preferable to remove certain children from their daily environment or decided to leave them there. The sequence of decisions made by a judge in a given case, and the reports on how these decisions were enforced, help us to understand what happened to these young girls and how they interacted with the Juvenile Courts and (in some cases) juvenile detention centers, all within the quite specific context of a foreign occupation.

*The German Police ‘Vice Squad’ versus the Juvenile Court System of Brussels:
No Agreement Possible?*

How did the occupying authority, and more specifically its police ‘vice squad,’ deal with these young prostitutes? During an initial period, it appears relatively certain that it did not even occur to the occupying authorities to make any distinction in their policy towards prostitutes based upon age: child prostitutes were not to be treated any differently from adults. On 3 February 1915, the German Governor General in charge of the occupation of Belgium created, by decree, a special German police unit or ‘vice squad’ (*Sittenpolizei*) with responsibility for policing public morals. Ten days later the chief of this new vice squad unit, Gerstein, issued a police order which placed ‘women who practice prostitution as their profession [...] under the control of the police.’¹² The order also specified a series of repressive measures which would apply to those who did not comply with its regulations. According to

¹² ‘Les femmes se livrant par profession à la prostitution [...] sous le contrôle de la police,’ Bulletin officiel des lois et arrêtés pour le territoire belge, 13 February 1915, quoted by Collard (1920), p. 40.

the deputy prosecutor for Brussels, the chief prosecutor (*parquet*) was outraged at the news of the order:

Article 15 of the law of 15 May, 1912 which permits a judge to take action with regard to minors under the age of 16 working as prostitutes has been tacitly repealed. As regards minors aged between 16 and 18, this order actually hinders intervention by the courts and by the Juvenile Court judge in cases where the minors working as prostitutes happen to be homeless or where their parents wish to bring a complaint themselves [...]. In addition, minors and adults will be held together in special German hospitals.¹³

The courts in Brussels explained these issues to Gerstein, who pronounced himself 'quite surprised at their action [...]: it came as a revelation. He acknowledged, quite openly in fact, that he had not thought about the Belgian law of 15 May 1912 and indicated that he was quite willing to allow it to be applied.'¹⁴ Thus, Gerstein promised to alert the Belgian Juvenile Courts to cases where minors under the age of 18 were suspected of prostitution.¹⁵

From the examination of the surviving case dossiers that are available, it appears that in fact a large number of young prostitutes were actually reported by the German police vice squad to the Belgian King's Prosecutor at the 'First Instance Court for Brussels' (district level).¹⁶ In some cases, in turn, the German police vice squad had been initially tipped off by Belgian police.¹⁷ Usually, information from the German

¹³ French text of the original quotation: 'L'article 15 de la loi du 15 mai 1912, qui permet au juge de prendre des mesures à l'égard des mineurs de moins de 16 ans qui se livrent à la prostitution, était tacitement abrogé. En ce qui concerne les mineurs de 16 à 18 ans, l'arrêté s'opposait en réalité à l'intervention du parquet et du juge des enfants, si les mineurs prostituées étaient en état de vagabondage ou si les parents désiraient déposer plainte [...]. Enfin mineurs et majeures devaient être détenues pêle-mêle dans les hôpitaux spéciaux allemands.' Collard (1920), p. 41.

¹⁴ French text of the original quotation: 'Fut tout surpris de la démarche [...]: c'était pour lui une révélation. Il reconnut, en effet, avec la plus grande franchise, qu'il n'avait pas songé à la loi belge du 15 mai 1912, et se montra tout disposé à en permettre l'application.' *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ The exact title of this court was 'Tribunal de première instance de Bruxelles.' In the Belgian judiciary system, the *parquet*, is responsible for the prosecution of cases and is supervised by the King's Prosecutor (*procureur du Roi*). The *parquet* acts as a filter, receiving complaints, and deciding which ones to send on to the judge.

¹⁷ One girl described how: 'I went to the barracks of the small castle, where a Belgian policeman, who saw me speaking to four German soldiers, went to the barracks afterwards and asked for the officer of the guard. [...] He brought me to a German policeman at the stock exchange, [...] the next day I was to be brought to the 'Morals'

police vice squad was passed on by letter to the King's Prosecutor. The following example is typical: 'I wish to request that juvenile welfare proceedings as outlined in the Law for the Protection of Youth of 15 May 1912, Chapter II, Article 14, be initiated against the person here named.'¹⁸ This declaration was usually followed by a brief statement describing the situation of the girl in question, and the results of the medical examination; approximately half those girls examined were declared to be diseased. All the minors arrested by the German police vice squad were taken to be examined at the hospital on Avenue Molière, sometimes after having spent a night in the Amigo prison—'*à l'Amigo*.'¹⁹ All of the Belgian institutions for the protection of children were outraged at every level at the news that such medical examinations were taking place and objected strongly, particularly protesting at the way in which the examinations were conducted:

Before she was set free, she had first to undergo a physical examination, as if she were the most worthless hussy, at the Hospital of Saint-Gilles which is occupied by the Germans. [...] As for the physical examination carried out in front of 15 or 20 other young women (workers and employees), arrested the same night while returning home after work, I cannot permit myself to give you the details. It would be too shocking. This is what the Germans call protecting good moral character!! You know better than I, Your Honor, what these people brought into Belgium along with their armies. Their nation would like to make the entire world as corrupt as they are but I will stop myself there for fear of going too far and expressing too clearly the mistrust I feel for their police which are the product of a government that believes that force should always come

Bureau, rue des Longs Chariots.' (Je me suis rendue vers la caserne du petit château ou un agent de police belge me voyant parler avec quatre soldats Allemands [sic] s'est rendu à la caserne demandé après l'officier de garde. [...] Il m'a conduit a un policier Allemand a la Bourse, [...] pour le lendemain, être conduite au bureau des mœurs rue des Longs Chariots). Pro Justitia for the commune of Ixelles. Deposition by a female minor (original as written), 1 January 1916. Dossier n°817/1917, T(ribunal) des E(nfants) de B(ruxelles), A(rchives) de l'E(tat) à A(nderlecht).

¹⁸ German text of the original translation: 'Gegen die nachgenannte Person stelle ich Antrag auf Einleitung der Fürsorgeerziehung gemäss Bestimmungen des Jugendschutzgesetzes vom 15. Mai 1912 Kap. II Art. 14.' Letter from Gerstein to the King's Prosecutor for the *Tribunal de 1^{re} Instance*, 14 December 1915. Dossier n°391/1917, TEB, AEA.

¹⁹ The Amigo was a prison in Brussels.

before law and which reserves for itself rights and powers which neither the Geneva Convention nor the Hague Convention have given it.²⁰

As well as the arbitrary manner in which some arrests were carried out, the way in which the physical examinations were handled was roundly denounced:

Nothing could have been more distressing than the sight of that place in which all (the women) together, without distinction, awaited their turn to be examined. There is no need for me to state the immoral influence that must result from such promiscuity, and the sort of “friendships” that were formed there. At the hospital itself, there would have been some sort of classification made. Not all prostitutes are equally perverse or depraved, and there are minors alongside the adults.²¹

The King’s Prosecutor (*procureur du Roi*), Charles Collard, who wrote these words had experienced even more difficulties in dealing with the occupiers than the Juvenile Court judge, Paul Wets, particularly in his attempts to obtain the release of underage prostitutes arrested by the German police vice squad. Problems particularly arose where a girl was diagnosed as suffering from venereal disease. In such cases the girl was sent to the hospital on Avenue Molière until she showed no further signs of infection. However, some of these girls were retained

²⁰ French text in the original quotation: ‘Avant de lui rendre la liberté elle a dû préalablement passer, tout comme la dernière des gourgandines, une visite corporelle à l’hôpital de Saint-Gilles occupé par les Allemands. [...] Quant à cette visite corporelle faite devant les 15 à 20 autres jeunes filles (ouvrières et employées) arrêtées le même soir alors que toutes retournaient chez elles leur travail terminé je ne me permettrai pas de vous en donner des détails ce serait trop choquant. C’est cela que les Allemands appellent protéger les bonnes mœurs !! Vous savez mieux que moi, Monsieur le Juge, ce que ce peuple a amené en Belgique à la suite de ses armées. Cette nation voudrait voir tout le monde aussi corrompu qu’elle mais je m’arrête ici de peur d’aller trop loin et d’exprimer trop clairement le mépris que j’ai pour cette police qui émane d’un gouvernement qui estime qu’il faut que la force prime le droit et qui dès lors usurpe des droits que ne lui confèrent ni la convention de Genève ni la convention de La Haye.’ Monthly probation report (Modèle N), 22 Feb. 1916. Dossier n°82/1916, TEB, AEA.

²¹ ‘On more than one occasion, one sees young girls brought as prostitutes to the Bureau Sanitaire and forced to undergo a medical examination, the result of which only causes confusion for the German authorities.’ Collard (1920), p. 42. French text in the original quotation: ‘Rien n’était plus pénible que la vue de ces lieux où toutes ensemble, sans distinction, attendaient leur tour de visite. Je n’ai pas besoin de dire l’influence dépravante qui résultait d’une pareille promiscuité, et des camaraderies qui s’y contractaient. A l’hôpital même, une classification eût été nécessaire. Toutes les prostituées ne présentent pas le même caractère de perversité, et à côté des mineures, il y a des majeures.’ Collard (1920), p. 51.

at the hospital, even after they had recovered, and were employed in the hospital laundry, under the supervision of nuns, despite repeated demands by the Belgian prosecutor that they be released immediately into his custody.²² In one case that began in January 1916, the Belgian police, who had been sent by the prosecutor to obtain the release of a young prostitute, were repeatedly sent away empty-handed:

We declare that the person named in the order, Marie Isabelle S. [...] is at present employed by the 'Mädchenheim,' which is part of the hospital on Avenue Molière, and the German authorities do not want to release her to us, at least not for the moment. This young woman is no longer ill but is at the service of the German authorities.²³

The prosecutor also wrote several notes to the German police commissioner responsible for the commune of Forest, over a period of seven months to try to obtain the girl's release, but to no avail.²⁴ The initial promises made by the head of the German police vice squad to comply with Belgian child protection law were not kept. The German authorities' response varied: sometimes they pretended to be concerned about some of the young women arrested; on other occasions they threatened to 'card' them which meant registering them as public prostitutes, subject to 'medical examinations.'²⁵ In other cases they simply arrested girls and forgot about them, leaving them to remain at the hospital.²⁶ There was a considerable gap between the rhetoric of the

²² *Ibid.*, p. 41.

²³ French text in the original quotation: 'Déclarons que la nommée S. [...] Marie Isabelle se trouve actuellement employée à la "Mädchenheim," dépendance de la Krankenhaus [sic], Avenue Molière, et l'autorité allemande ne veut pas nous la remettre, du moins momentanément. Cette jeune fille est guérie mais au service de l'autorité allemande.' Pro Justitia for Forest commune police. Declaration made by the adjunct to the commissioner of police, 17/5/1916, following a note from the King's Prosecutor dated 6/1/1916. Dossier n°23/1916, TEB, AEA.

²⁴ One letter stated: 'On 6 January 1916, I asked you to release into my care as soon as the German authorities gave their permission the minor named here, Marie Isabelle S.[...], who is detained at the hospital. I would like to remind you of this case and ask you to inform me when this young girl will be released.' Note from the King's Prosecutor to the police commissioner of Forest, 16 May 1916. Dossier n°23/1916, TEB, AEA.

²⁵ In some cases Gerstein passed comment on the family difficulties of the minor involved and the need to take measures with regard to other children in the same family. This occurred, for example, in the case of Adele V. Letter from Gerstein to the Tribunal de 1^{re} Instance at Brussels, 22 December 1915. Dossier 101/1915, TEB, AEA.

²⁶ One letter to the judge stated: 'Your Honor, I would like to inform you that on 6 May last, the Policeman Dieckvorss brought a young girl Julia G.[...] to this establishment in order that she be treated and retained here at the request of the occupying

German authorities and their deeds, and both the Belgian judge and King's Prosecutor felt outraged.

According to Collard, who was prosecutor at Brussels, getting arrested by the German police vice squad and receiving the subsequent 'medical examination' was quite likely to lead to girls being registered as prostitutes, despite the promises which had been made by the Germans with regard to underage minors. The Germans did not hesitate to 'sign up' underage prostitutes—girls aged under 18:

[...] the German police nevertheless sought to prevent the Belgian authorities from obtaining proof of this, and they took back the registration cards from minors before releasing them to us. Despite the fact that they took this precaution, the courts of this country did obtain numerous cards of this type which were issued to minors or photographs of such cards [...].²⁷

This Belgian claim was to some extent paradoxical given that in a number of the dossiers researched for this chapter prostitution cases involving minors were actually brought to the attention of the Juvenile Court by the German police. No examples of these registration cards were located during this research. However, correspondence from the German police vice squad was found that threatened to have certain girls (one as young as 13 at the time of the letter) placed on the register for 'medical inspections' if they were caught soliciting again; in other words, unless the Belgian children's protective services reacted with great haste: 'Fanny B.[...] is leading an immoral life and working as a prostitute. The vice police have already given her a warning because of this and

authorities. The doctor has informed me that the girl is now recovered. As the policeman named above does not remember the case, I would ask you to let me know what should now be done. [...]' French text in the original quotation: 'Monsieur le Juge, J'ai l'honneur de vous faire connaître que sous la date du 6 mai écoulé, le polizei Dieckvorss [...] a amené en mon établissement une gamine du nom de G.[...] Julia afin d'y être traitée et maintenue à la disposition de l'autorité occupante. Le médecin venant de signer la guérison de la prénommée et la police susdite ne se rappelant plus de la chose, je vous prie de me faire savoir ce qu'il convient de faire.' Letter from the Director of the Saint-Pierre Hospital to the Juvenile Court judge of Brussels, 21 August 1918. Dossier n°8/1918, O(ffice) I(ntercommunal) de la P(rotection)de l'E(nfance), AEA.

²⁷ French text in the original quotation: '[...] elle cherchait cependant à empêcher les autorités belges d'en recueillir des preuves, car elle enlevait les cartes aux mineurs avant de les mettre à notre disposition. Malgré cette précaution, les parquets du pays possèdent de nombreuses cartes délivrées à des mineures ou des photographies de ces cartes.' Collard (1920), p. 44.

if this is not effective she will be placed under medical supervision.’²⁸ The number of these threats shows that such an outcome was perfectly possible in the event that a first warning was not heeded.

Bringing Child Prostitutes before the Juvenile Court

Minors involved in prostitution or delinquency were initially reported to the Belgian authorities by the German authorities, the Belgian police or the child’s acquaintances or family. Each individual situation was then examined by a King’s Prosecutor who decided if there was sufficient evidence to bring the case before a judge. On some occasions, it was the judge who actually requested that the court take charge of the matter: ‘I want this case to come before me; please have [the prosecutor] send me a warrant under Article 15.’²⁹ As highlighted in the introduction to this chapter, once a girl was over 16 she could not be judged under Article 15 for prostitution or for disorderly conduct. In such cases, where the girl did not meet the criteria of Article 15 due to age, the only option open to the prosecutor or the judge was to intervene on the grounds of habitual homelessness as set out in Article 13 of the Carton de Wiart Law or to ask the parents to sign a complaint regarding their child’s conduct as legislated for under Article 14. Some parents welcomed this kind of intervention and willingly proceeded to make a complaint. Often the parental motivation for complaining against their daughter in such cases was relatively straightforward:

I did not know that my daughter was behaving in this way. [...] I brought Marie up to be well behaved. In order to avoid the shame of being registered by the German vice squad and so that I may supervise

²⁸ Letter from the chief of the German police vice squad for metropolitan Brussels, 26 January 1916. TEB, AEA, dossier n°82/1916; Translation of correspondence of the chief of the Brussels vice squad (original not found) to the King’s Prosecutor attached to the Court of Appeals, 21 December 1917. Dossier n°36/1918, TEB, AEA. Original text of the quotation: ‘Fanny B. [...] ist geständig, einem unsittlichen Lebenswandel zu führen und gewerbsmässig Unzucht zu treiben. Die Sittenpolizei hat ihr deshalb eine Verwarnung erteilt und wird, wenn diese keinen Erfolg hat, die Stellung unter ärztliche Aufsicht anordnen.’ Letter from the Chief of the German police vice squad in Brussels to the King’s Prosecutor attached to the Court of Appeals at Brussels, 12 January 1916. Dossier n°58/1916, TEB, AEA. The minor mentioned was 13 year old at the time of the events in the case.

²⁹ Note from Juvenile Court judge to the King’s Prosecutor, 29 January, 1916. Dossier n°58/1916, TEB, AEA.

the correction of my daughter's conduct, I request that Your Honor, the Juvenile Court Judge take an interest in her case and take her into care for a short period of time.³⁰

For other families such an outcome was less acceptable, either because in some cases the child was expected to bring home money or because the family itself lived in an environment which had very close contacts with prostitution, for example where the parents ran a bar or the mother was also a prostitute. The interaction between the court and the family was therefore sometimes difficult; in some cases the two even clashed. Some couples disagreed as to what attitude should be adopted towards their daughter.³¹ Other cases reveal that some of the parents who signed complaints against their own children did not know what they were doing:

You must realize, sir, that I am illiterate (the present letter is dictated by me to someone else) and I don't understand French when it is correctly spoken, and this is the reason for the mistake. The prosecutor must have asked me to put my child in jail, and I signed a piece of paper whose meaning I did not understand. [...] I beg you therefore [...] to return

³⁰ Original French text of the quotation: 'J'ignorais l'inconduite de ma fille [...] Marie qui avait toujours été si bien élevée par moi. Pour éviter la honte d'être cartée par la police des mœurs allemandes et afin de veiller à l'amendement de ma fille Marie, je demande que Monsieur le juge des enfants s'intéresse à son sort et prenne éventuellement pendant un court laps de temps une mesure de garde à son égard.' Declaration of the mother of the minor to the Assistant Prosecutor attached to the Tribunal de 1^{re} Instance of Brussels, 12 January 1918. Dossier n°36/1918, TEB, AEA. In most cases the parents' complaint adopted this type of pattern: 'For a number of months my daughter Clara has been behaving very badly. She does not want to listen to my good advice and goes to bed late at night. I ask that she be placed in an institution for her improvement as I have other children and I cannot watch her all the time.' Flemish text in original: 'Sedert eenige maanden gedraagd mijne dochter Clara haar zeer slechts. Zij wilt naar de goede raden die ik haar geef niet luisteren en blijft dikwijls s'nachts uit slapen. Ik vraag dat zij in eene verbeteringsschool geplaatst wordt, aangezien ik nog anderen kinderen heb en er niets gedurig kan opletten.' Pro Justitia for the police of Uccle, Interview with the girl's mother, 2 September 1918. Dossier n°40/1918, TEB, AEA.

³¹ The actions of Anne-Catherine B., for example, who was put on probation after being convicted of homelessness and begging, were denounced to the *délégué à la protection de l'enfance* (probation agent) by her father, who was visibly in disagreement with her mother: 'The father came to inform me that Anna was behaving badly and that her mother was encouraging her to prostitute herself. I am writing this to M. Wets.' French text of the original quotation: 'Le père vient me prévenir qu'Anna se conduit mal et que la mère la pousse à la prostitution. J'écris à M. Wets.' Monthly probation report (Modèle N), 14 October 1916. Dossier n°186^{ter}/1915, TEB, AEA.

my daughter to me as soon as possible, my daughter from whom I have never wished to be separated and who is utterly blameless.³²

Waif or Wanton: Images of the Child Prostitute

In 1919, the Juvenile Court judge Paul Wets summarized the reasons why children turned to prostitution during the war as follows: children were ‘tempted by the promise of easy, and sometimes relatively large financial rewards, victims of idleness due to the scarcity of jobs, drawn in at times by the attractiveness of vice, or else became involved because of the impossible burden of real poverty [...]’.³³ In fact, the evidence provided in the case dossiers by those dealing with child prostitution—social welfare workers, legal workers or the prostitutes’ friends and families—reveals that the image of child prostitutes constantly fluctuated between portraying them as either the exploited poor or as individuals of shameless bad character. At times, the depictions in the dossiers almost dissolved into stereotypical caricature. The second of these interpretations, which portrayed prostitutes in terms of an innate personal inclination to vice, was relatively rare. However, it often prompted quite crude observations such as the following: ‘Investigation

³² French text of the original quotation: ‘Il faut savoir, Monsieur, que je suis illettrée (la présente lettre n’est écrite que sous ma dictée) et que je ne comprends pas le français pour peu qu’il soit correctement parlé, et c’est ici la source de l’erreur. Monsieur le procureur a dû me demander de faire incarcérer mon enfant, et j’ai signé une pièce dont je ne connaissais pas la teneur, puisque je ne sais pas lire [...] Je vous supplie donc [...] de faire en sorte que ma fille me soit rendue le plus tôt possible, ma fille dont jamais je n’ai désiré me séparer et qui n’a rien à se reprocher.’ Letter from the mother of a minor to the judge of Juvenile Court in Brussels, 10 February 1916. Dossier n°82/1916, TEB, AEA.

³³ French text of the original quotation: ‘Tentées par l’appât d’un gain facile, souvent relativement considérable, victimes de l’oisiveté, résultante de la rareté du travail, entraînées parfois par le seul attrait du vice, ou ployant sous le faix d’une réelle misère [...],’ Wets (1919), p. 13. Referring to an anthropometric study by Pauline Tarnowski on prostitutes and thieves, and to his own experience as a prosecutor, Charles Collard, for his part, lists three categories of prostitutes: ‘[...] those who are obtuse, that is, who only live to eat, drink, and sleep; the carefree, who are animated, talkative, and emotionally volatile; and the vicious ones, who know quite well that what they are doing is bad, but they do it just the same, finding in prostitution satisfaction for their bad instincts.’ Original French text: ‘les obtuses, qui ne vivent que pour manger, boire ou dormir, les insouciantes, remuantes, babillardes, d’humeur très mobile et les vicieuses, qui ont bien conscience du mal qu’elles font, mais elles le font quand même, trouvant, dans la prostitution, l’assouvissement de leurs mauvais instincts,’ Collard (1920), pp. 35–36.

of her morality: bad. Character: sneaky. Tendencies: has a propensity to lie, and is completely perverted.³⁴ Such beliefs often led the family of a prostitute to reject her outright: 'I absolutely refuse to have anything to do with my niece, who is a shameless person [...]. If I took her back in, she would quickly tire of family life and she would rush back into a life of vice [...].'³⁵ In cases where prostitutes succeeded in earning a reasonable amount of money, neighbors often reported that a girl was enjoying a relatively luxurious lifestyle, the symbol of which was fine clothes. Statements such as 'Mother and daughter went out often and came home in the company of Germans [...]. They were expensively dressed' or '[...] they made a lot of money easily, they both wore pretty clothes and lunched and ate supper at fine hotels,' were typical.³⁶

The disapproval of neighbors and friends was all the more pronounced because the economic situation was very bad and because most of the girls' clients were either soldiers or officers in the occupying German army. All the dossiers, in fact, at one point or another, mention long term or short term relationships between young girls and German soldiers. And while the tone of those accounts provided by the police, magistrates and representatives from child protection agencies remained relatively neutral, neighbors who provided testimony often did not hesitate to condemn behavior which they considered an absolute moral outrage:

³⁴ Original French text of quotation: 'Renseignements sur la moralité: mauvais; caractère: sournois; penchants: a des penchants à mentir et est complètement pervertie,' Bulletin de renseignements concernant Alice B. Dossier n° 35/1918, OIPE, AEA.

³⁵ French text of the original quotation: 'Je refuse absolument de m'occuper de ma nièce qui est une dévergondée [...] Si je la reprenais, elle en aurait vite assez de la vie de famille et elle aurait hâte de se replonger dans le vice [...].' Pro Justitia for the police of Brussels (2d division). Testimony by the aunt of the minor, 6 January 1916. Dossier n°23/1916, TEB, AEA.

³⁶ French text of the original quotation: 'Mère et fille sortaient continuellement et rentraient en compagnie d'Allemands [...] Elles faisaient grande toilette et beaucoup de dépense'; '[...] elles gagnaient facilement, elles portaient toutes deux de jolies toilettes et allaient dîner et souper dans de grands hôtels,' Pro Justitia for the police of Schaerbeek. Testimony of a neighbor, 7 January 1919 and from Child Protection. Inquiry concerning a child (Modèle J), 9 September 1918, Dossier n°35/1918, OIPE, AEA. Such testimony frequently recurs: 'The girls were always dressed beyond their means.' French text in the original quotation: 'Les filles ont une tenue équivoque [...] Toujours leurs toilettes étaient en disproportion avec leurs salaires.' Child Protection. Inquiry concerning a child (Modèle J), 1 April 1915, Dossier n°186^{er}/1916, TEB, AEA. 'G. Jeanne is out of work and is always very well dressed.' French text in the original quotation: 'G. Jeanne est sans travail et est toujours très bien vêtue.' Pro Justitia for the police of Ixelles, November 25, 1915. Dossier n°82/1916, TEB, AEA, etc.

She has continued with this sort of thing, receiving Germans in uniform and in civilian clothes at all hours of the day and night; some are for the mother, the others come for the daughter [...]. They bragged about their orgies to one of my housemates [...] This lifestyle lasted throughout 1917 and into 1918; by battling and by threatening to have them “given a card” I finally managed to get them to leave.³⁷

With regard to the same mother-daughter pair, another neighbor noted: ‘[...] they never stop saying how much they love the Germans and hate Belgians.’³⁸ These testimonies often evoke the sense of a double betrayal, described by Benoît Majerus in his study: ‘[...] these women [...] are doubly marginalized: by their bodies, they have betrayed both morality and their country.’³⁹ Relationships with the occupiers were all the more shocking in cases where the minors involved had a family member—usually an older brother—at the Front.⁴⁰ ‘These troubling cases defy psychology,’ Judge Wets stated, before citing the following example

Of an unhappy child whose father was executed by the Germans, and who then became a prostitute serving Germans. Such cases have occurred several times and are evidently caused by the war. One must not rush to judge these sad phenomena solely in terms of the disapproval which such

³⁷ French text of the original quotation: ‘Elle a continué de plus belle, recevant à toute heure de jour et de nuit des Allemands en tenue et des civils: les uns pour la mère, les autres pour la fille [...]. Elles se vendaient de leurs orgies à une de mes co-locataires [...]. Ce train de vie a duré pendant toute l’année 1917 et une partie de 1918; à force de batailler et sous menace de les faire “carter” je suis parvenue à les faire partir,’ Pro Justitia for the police of Schaerbeek, Testimony of a neighbor, 7 January 1919, Dossier n°35/1918, OIPE, AEA.

³⁸ French text in original quotation: ‘Elles ne cessaient de vanter les Allemands, disant détester les belges,’ *Ibid.*

³⁹ French text in original quotation: ‘Ces femmes [...] sont doublement marginalisées: par leur corps elles auraient trahi et la morale et leur nation,’ Majerus (2003), p. 39. Benoît Majerus also refers to what Sophie De Schaepdrijver has argued concerning the *home front*: De Schaepdrijver (2000), pp. 22–23.

⁴⁰ One such example is the case of Clara L. Interned by the judge, her release was sought by her brother when he returned from the front: ‘Having done my military service and proudly fought for my country I feel able to take charge of my brother and sister and to ensure they behave well. I give you my oath that I will supervise them and make them into respectable middle class people with a love of what is right and of work.’ French text in the original quotation: ‘Ayant fait mon service militaire et fièrement combattu pour ma Patrie, je me sens à même de conduire à bien mon frère et ma soeur. Je vous fais le serment de veiller sur eux et de tâcher d’en faire de dignes bourgeois en leur inspirant l’amour du bien et du travail.’ Letter from the brother of Clara L. to the judge of the Juvenile Court in Brussels, 7 August 1919, dossier n°40/1918, TEB, AEA.

falls from grace inspire—often the fall from grace is admitted to with a disconcerting sincerity which is not always cynical.⁴¹

Little information exists regarding the amount of money that prostitutes could make. Certainly those who worked as prostitutes over a long period maintained a steady income: 'During the month before my arrest, I gave myself to men, sometimes two or three on the same day. For this, I received sums varying between 3 and 9 marks.'⁴² In the majority of cases the sums received were quite small, and the decision to work as a prostitute for such small gains was motivated, according to some testimonies, by the simple desire to survive. As one girl, Juliette G. explained: 'My mother's husband who was my natural father (illegitimate and adulterous), abandoned me some time after the death of my mother and as I was too young to receive unemployment benefit or to get an identity card or to receive food aid, I was in such a miserable situation that I had to work as a prostitute.'⁴³ A representative from a child protection agency who questioned the neighbors ascertained the following about Juliette: 'Since her mother died, she has been working as a prostitute. She had scabies, so the neighbors refused to shelter her; lately she has been sleeping in a kitchen cellar on a straw mattress.'⁴⁴ She was 14 at the time. Many young women admitted having accepted food in exchange for sexual favors, testimony to the extreme poverty

⁴¹ French text in the original quotation: 'Ces cas troublants déconcertent la psychologie tel celui de cette malheureuse dont le père avait été fusillé par les allemands et qui se prostituait à ceux-ci. Ce cas d'espèce se représenta plusieurs fois. Il faut se garder de juger ces tristes phénomènes, évidents produits de guerre, sous l'impulsion des réprobations inspirées par l'énoncé sommaire de ces chutes, généralement avouées avec une sincérité qui déconcerte. Cette sincérité n'est pas toujours cynique,' Wets (1919), pp. 13–14.

⁴² French text in the original quotation: 'Depuis un bon mois avant mon arrestation, je me donnais aux hommes, parfois à 2 et à 3 le même jour. Je touchais pour cela des sommes variant entre 3 et 9 marks,' Deposition by a minor, 25 September 1918. Dossier n°40/1918, OIPE, AEA.

⁴³ French text of the original quotation: 'Le mari de ma mère qui était mon père naturel (adultérin mais non légitime) m'a abandonnée quelque temps après le décès de ma mère et comme à défaut d'âge je ne pouvais obtenir ni chômage, ni carte d'identité, ni assistance alimentaire, je me suis trouvée dans une situation de misère telle que j'ai été induite à me prostituer,' Deposition by a minor, 22 August 1918. Dossier n°8/1918, OIPE, AEA.

⁴⁴ French text of the original quotation: 'Depuis la mort de sa mère, elle a continué à se prostituer. Etant atteinte de la gale, les locataires refusaient de lui donner asile et dans les derniers temps, elle dormait dans la cuisine cave sur un paillason,' Child Protection. Inquiry concerning a child (Modèle J), 6 September 1918. Dossier n°8/1918, OIPE, AEA.

in which they found themselves: 'I never worked as a prostitute but I admit having had sexual relations with a German soldier because I had no food. The soldier gave me bread, and I had relations with him twice [...]'.⁴⁵

'Examining the Wounds, Prescribing a Remedy': The Judge's Decision

What did the Juvenile Court eventually decide regarding these children? Judge Wets' testimony is particularly clear concerning the attitude he believed should be adopted:

[...] the magistrate who is really mindful of his own social role will not be satisfied with surface impressions [...]. His judgments will benefit no one, if he does not examine the extent of the wounds, if he does not study the causes of the problem, if he does not establish its history, if he does not attempt to find remedies, and if, in order to attain this goal, he does not go beyond simply trying to understand the conscience of the guilty party to enquire into the family situation, into the full depth of the social evil which must be remedied.⁴⁶

The inquiries into family situations mentioned here were partly carried out by representatives of child protection agencies and commune authorities. Their reports, based on questions asked of neighbors and family members, concerned many issues relating to a case: family composition, any previous criminal or police records, income and expenditure, the standard of living quarters and their state of upkeep, the morality of the neighborhood and the neighbors, and other related information about the social or moral problems which affected the minor's environment. After weighing up all this information, the judge

⁴⁵ French text of the original quotation: 'Je ne me suis jamais livrée à la prostitution mais je reconnais avoir eu des rapports sexuels avec un soldat allemand parce que je me trouvais sans manger; le militaire m'a donné un pain, et j'ai eu deux fois des rapports avec lui,' Pro Justitia for the police of Brussels (Central Division), 25 July 1918. Dossier n°56/1918, OIPE, AEA.

⁴⁶ French text of the original quotation: '[...] le magistrat vraiment soucieux de son rôle social, ne saurait se contenter d'une impression de surface [...] Il jugerait sans profit, s'il ne sondait pas ces plaies, s'il n'en étudiait pas les causes, s'il n'en établissait pas l'étiologie, s'il n'essayait pas d'en déterminer les remèdes, et, pour atteindre ce but, il ne lui suffit pas de descendre dans la conscience du coupable, mais, passant par dessus sa tête, il ira découvrir à la lueur des enquêtes familiales, toute la profondeur du mal social auquel il faudra remédier,' Wets (1919), p. 14.

was able to evaluate the case and assess the chances of rescuing the child from its environment.

For in this context it must be admitted that the family portraits of these young prostitutes are a long way from corresponding to the bourgeois family ideal such as it was conceived in the early twentieth century. Here is one example:

The married couple B. have lived apart for 12 years. [The husband] was a thief who had spent most of his life in a correctional facility or in prison. A girl, Françoise, was born from this union (the nickname of Fanny which she uses was given to her by German soldiers). The mother has lived for 10 years as the concubine of a man, V., at present interned in Germany, with whom she has two other children [...]. At the moment of V.'s departure the household was in turmoil: a woman, named Alphonsine L., aged 22 [...] had become the mistress of V. According to this woman, it was not because he loved her that he left [his woman]; he was forced to leave by poverty.⁴⁷

We have relatively complete information concerning the familial environment of fourteen girl prostitutes. Of the fourteen, two were orphaned.⁴⁸ Four had lost their father.⁴⁹ One had lost her mother.⁵⁰ Four others had parents who had separated: three still lived with their mother and her companion; one other lived with her father.⁵¹ Of the two girls whose parents' marriages had survived, one marriage was foundering, the father having denounced his wife to the social services because she was pushing the daughter into prostitution.⁵²

All these families earned a relatively low income and were considered working class. They were sometimes entirely dependent upon charity,

⁴⁷ French text in the original: 'Les époux B. vivent séparés depuis 12 ans. [Le mari] était un voleur qui a passé sa vie dans une maison de correction et en prison. De ce mariage est née une fille Françoise (le nom de Fanny qu'elle porte lui a été donné par les militaires allemands). Depuis 10 ans la mère vit en concubinage avec un nommé V., en ce moment interné en Allemagne, avec lequel elle a 2 enfants [...]. Au moment du départ de V., le ménage était en désaccord : une nommée Alphonsine L. âgée de 22 ans [...] était devenue la maîtresse de V. [Selon ce dernier], ce n'était pas par amitié pour Alphonsine qu'il avait quitté [sa femme] [...], il avait été poussé à agir ainsi par misère.' Child Protection, Inquiry concerning a child (Modèle J), 1916. Dossier n° 58/1916, TEB, AEA.

⁴⁸ Dossier n°23/1916, TEB, AEA; dossier n°8/1918, OIPE, AEA.

⁴⁹ Dossier n°35/1918, OIPE, AEA; Dossier n°30/1918, OIPE, AEA; Dossier n°101/1916, TEB, AEA; Dossier n°82/1916, TEB, AEA.

⁵⁰ Dossier n°23/1919, TEB, AEA.

⁵¹ Dossier n°56/1918, OIPE, AEA; Dossier n°191/1915, TEB, AEA; Dossier n°58/1916, TEB, AEA; Dossier n°36/1918, TEB, AEA.

⁵² Dossier n°31/1916, TEB, AEA; Dossier n°186^{er}/1916, TEB, AEA.

and their housing arrangements were quite basic. Many of the parents were unemployed because of the war, and found it difficult to make ends meet. Some testimony also indicates a relatively violent family environment: 'The father was very brutal towards his daughter.'⁵³ Other accounts revealed serious family problems, often already familiar to representatives of the social services and child protection agencies: 'The familial environment, on the father's as well as on the mother's side, is awful; this has already been described in my previous reports made at the time the other children were placed in care [...].'⁵⁴ Some young girls began to work as prostitutes after being sexually abused, sometimes by members of their own family. The father of one girl, Rachel, testified that his daughter only began trying to work as a prostitute for soldiers after she had been serially sexually abused by her uncle.⁵⁵

Many witnesses blamed the naïveté of some of the parents and their failure to watch over their children. Clara L. admitted she had been having sex with two or three men a day. In reviewing an interview with the mother, the child protection worker noted:

The mother has no complaint against her daughter's conduct; lately Clara did not want to work around the house anymore; she spent her time putting on make up and fixing her hair, and then she would go out walking. What can I do, said the mother, she's young; I don't see anything really bad in her.⁵⁶

⁵³ French text of original quotation: 'Le père était très brutal envers sa fille,' Child Protection, Inquiry concerning a child (Modèle J), 30 April 1918. Dossier n°56/1918, OIPE, AEA.

⁵⁴ French text of the original: 'Le milieu familial tant paternel que maternel est détestable; celui-ci du reste a été décrit dans mes rapports précédents faits à l'occasion de l'internement d'autres enfants [...],' Child Protection. Inquiry concerning a child, (Modèle J), 18 August 1919. Dossier n°191/1915, TEB, AEA.

⁵⁵ Pro Justitia for the police of Zaventem, 11 January 1916. Testimony of the father of Rachel H. The young woman testified several days later: 'It is true that my uncle sexually abused me on several occasions, over a period of three months, at his home.' French text in the original quotation: 'Il est exact que mon oncle m'a employée à différentes reprises, depuis trois mois environ, dans sa demeure [...].' Pro Justitia for the police of Molenbeek, 24 January 1916. Dossier n°31/1916, TEB, AEA.

⁵⁶ French text of the original quotation: 'La mère n'a aucune plainte à faire sur la conduite de sa fille, dans les derniers temps Clara ne voulait plus travailler dans le ménage, elle passait son temps à sa toilette et à se coiffer, puis elle allait se promener. Que voulez-vous dit la mère, elle est jeune, et je ne vois aucun mal en elle,' Child Protection, Inquiry concerning a child (Modèle J), 9 September 1918. Dossier n°40/1918, OIPE, AEA.

In about half of the cases the social workers also blamed the people around the child, pointing out that they were associated with prostitution or had links to those who practiced it—many young women apparently just copied the actions of a sister or a mother who was a prostitute. Social workers also criticized the fact that often the people around these children did nothing to challenge their behavior. The social worker in charge of the case of Jeanne G. mentioned her parents' actions several times: 'Before having known D. Joseph, this girl was raped by someone from Auderghem (whose father was himself a pimp). These events got her in a family way, but she obtained an abortion with the help of her father and the knowledge of her mother.' The social worker's report details the relations between Jeanne and a whole series of men, some of whom were quite wealthy, and then observes:

Not only was her mother aware of all the things she was doing of an improper nature, but her father also knew and even seemed to encourage the girl to follow that path. He was heard to say one day that his daughter earned more doing nothing than working [...]. It was said that Mr and Mrs G. had dinner in the city with an officer one night when he came to pick up the young lady [...]. Everything seems to indicate that these parents introduced their daughter to prostitution in order to make money out of it.⁵⁷

This example is not exceptional. In a number of the cases studied, the parents were suspected of pushing their daughters into prostitution in order to get money. Anna B., for example, was arrested and sentenced for the first time in 1915 because she had been out begging with her cousin, with the knowledge of her parents: 'According to the declarations of the parents, they knew that their daughter was begging with their nephew. They profited from it because they took the money she

⁵⁷ French text of the original quotation: 'Avant d'avoir connu D. Joseph, elle aurait été violée par un individu d'Auderghem (dont le père serait entraîneur). Ces manoeuvres auraient eu pour conséquence des espérances de famille, elle se serait fait avorter, avec la complicité de son père et à la connaissance de sa mère. [...] Ce n'est pas seulement sa mère qui était au courant de sa conduite plutôt légère, le père l'était également et semblait même encourager sa fille dans cette voie. Il aurait dit un jour que sa fille gagnait plus à ne rien faire qu'à travailler [...]. Il serait avéré que les parents G. auraient été dîner en ville avec [un] officier un certain soir qu'il était venu chercher la jeune fille [...]. Tout semble porter à croire que les parents auraient instigué leur enfant à la débauche dans le but de se procurer de l'argent,' Report from a Child Protection social worker, 22 March 1916. Dossier n°82/1916, TEB, AEA.

made.⁵⁸ Anna was released on probation and then began to work as a prostitute instead. ‘Anna goes out at night and only comes home in the morning [...], she works as an unregistered prostitute. Her mother rows with her when she doesn’t bring back enough money.’⁵⁹ Julia G.’s case dossier described a relatively similar situation: ‘The parents of this minor ran a café [...] frequented by German military personnel. According to statements from the neighbors, the mother forced the daughter to flirt with Germans, and forbade her from going out with a young boy her own age.’⁶⁰

The judge sentenced all these girls to a period in institutional care, most often in a private Catholic establishment. However, attempting to enforce some judgments led to new problems with the occupying German authorities, who had their own social service agency in Belgium, the *Deutsche Zivilverwaltung für die Provinz Brabant—Fürsorge-ABTLG (Fürsorgedienst)*. Through this agency, the Germans had placed a number of minors in Protestant establishments.⁶¹ There was also an economic aspect to disputes over who was responsible for these girls, as revealed by the following message from the King’s Prosecutor, Charles Collard, to Judge Wets:

I do not really understand the mission of the *Fürsorgedienst*. I [...] would be grateful if someone would alert me to any case in which the work of the Belgian Magistrates is hindered or prevented. In my opinion the Belgian State should not pay for any of this—it should only begin to pay on the day when the minors are placed in care by the Belgian Authority.⁶²

⁵⁸ French text of the original quotation: ‘D’après les déclarations des parents, ils étaient bien au courant que leur fille mendiait avec leur neveu. Ils en profitaient, puisqu’ils en acceptaient le produit. [...]’ Pro Justitia for the police of Saint-Gilles, 22 January 1915.

⁵⁹ French text of the original quotation: ‘Anna sort la nuit et ne rentre que le matin [...], se livre à la prostitution clandestine. La mère lui cherche dispute lorsqu’elle ne remet pas assez d’argent,’ Child Protection. Inquiry concerning a child (Modèle J), 1 April 1915 and report ‘Liberté surveillée—résultats,’ 14 November 1915, Dossier n°186^{ter}/1916, TEB, AEA.

⁶⁰ French text of the original quotation: ‘Les parents de la mineure tenaient un café [...] fréquenté par des militaires allemands. Selon les déclarations du voisinage, la mère obligeait sa fille à s’amuser avec les Allemands et elle lui défendait de courtiser un petit jeune homme de son âge,’ Child Protection, Inquiry concerning a child (Modèle J), 6 September 1918, Dossier n°8/1918, OIPE, AEA.

⁶¹ Institut Wielemans, rue du Prévôt 26, Ixelles, Letter from the President of the German Civil Administration for Brabant Province to the King’s Prosecutor for the *Tribunal de I^{re} Instance*, 27 January 1916, Dossier n°58/1916, TEB AEA.

⁶² Message sent from the King’s Prosecutor to the judge of the Brussels Juvenile Court, 4 March 1916. Dossier n°58/1916, TEB AEA.

The minor in question in this case finally demanded to be transferred to the Catholic institution 'in order to be able to practice the Catholic religion.'⁶³

Despite difficulties in dealing with the occupying power, the Brussels Juvenile Court continued to function, handling an unusually large number of cases.⁶⁴ However, at the beginning of 1918, the German authority arrested three Presidents of the Brussels Court of Appeal (*Cour d'Appel de Bruxelles*) and suspended the powers of officers of the court. In light of this German action, the Supreme Court of Appeal (*Cour de Cassation*) decided that judicial power could no longer be freely exercised in Belgium, and decided to cease hearing cases, which led to the official suspension of all court operations, including the Brussels Juvenile Court.⁶⁵ The Juvenile Court thus ostensibly ceased to function, only hearing a handful of exceptional cases of children who had been interned and needed medical attention. Yet behind the scenes, court activity continued clandestinely. This represented a certain form of resistance which developed very quickly: personnel in each jurisdiction organized discreet weekly meetings in locations provided by the charity organization 'Martyred Children' in order 'to check the post which had been received, receive representatives from different child care agencies, and to follow up on new incidents related to old cases, which needed immediate attention in the interests of the most basic humanity.'⁶⁶

As the occupying authorities refused to consider new cases involving minors, and the Juvenile Court was suspended, Judge Wets took the initiative in the summer of 1918 and created an Inter-Communal Office responsible for the protection of children. The judge cited an increase in prostitution as one of the reasons for this move: 'The evil is progressing rapidly: prostitution is ravaging our young females, and it thrives because of misery, idleness, and a frantic and unbridled thirst for

⁶³ Monthly probation report (Modèle N), 28 June 1917. Dossier n°58/1916, TEB AEA.

⁶⁴ Not until the Second World War would there be a larger or more impressive caseload.

⁶⁵ Velge (1919), p. 30.

⁶⁶ French text of the original quotation: 'Pour vérifier le courrier, recevoir les délégués et donner une suite aux incidents survenus dans les anciennes affaires, qui requéraient une intervention immédiate commandée par les exigences élémentaires de l'humanité,' Wets (1919), p. 73.

pleasure.⁶⁷ From August to December 1918, the new Inter-Communal Office had responsibility for the protection of children from a legal point of view. Continuity with the previous system was assured since Judge Wets himself was directing the new office. Many of the children whose cases have been discussed here were interned, following a decision by this provisional institution. Once the Juvenile Court was restored to full activity after the war, the judge simply took charge of all of the Inter-Communal Office's pending cases which were transferred to the court: '[...] in view of the resumption of judicial functions; it is in order to regularize the measures which we took as President of the Inter-Communal Office [...].'⁶⁸

Only a few of the young prostitutes whose cases we have examined were freed before the end of the war. Most of them would not leave the institutions in which they had been placed until they reached legal adulthood or civil majority, at the age of 21. Some girls were placed in service in private homes or sent to live with a foster family, but they continued to be subject to severe restrictions.⁶⁹ Their later lives followed a variety of paths. Some stayed for years in one institution; others had a more disjointed experience, being moved from institution to institution or from home to home, with periods when they were released on probation or confined in disciplinary state establishments (*établissements disciplinaires de l'Etat*), which were often the last stop for people who

⁶⁷ French text of the original quotation: 'Le mal progresse rapidement: la prostitution fait des ravages parmi la jeunesse féminine, elle sévit à la faveur de la misère, de l'oisiveté, et d'une soif effrénée et débridée de jouissance,' *Ibid.*, p. 76.

⁶⁸ French text of the original quotation: '[...] vu la reprise des fonctions judiciaires; Attendu qu'il échet de régulariser les mesures prises par nous en qualité de Président de l'Office intercommunal [...],' Order for protective custody for Clara L., 1 January 1919. Dossier n°40/1918, OIPE, AEA.

⁶⁹ 'By accepting this minor you agree to all the following obligations: to prevent her from receiving any visitors other than those authorized [list of permitted visitors] [...]. She is not allowed to go out alone, except to do shopping in the neighborhood for short periods only; she is not allowed to send or receive any correspondence that you are not allowed to read. It is your duty to keep me updated on the young girl's behavior and to alert me if you find young men hanging around her or trying to communicate with her.' French text of the original quotation: 'En acceptant la mineure vous acceptez en même temps les obligations suivantes: interdire qu'elle reçoive d'autre visite que celle [list of authorized visitors] [...]. Elle ne peut sortir seule, sauf pour lui laisser faire une course dans le voisinage et encore celle-ci doit être de courte durée; elle ne peut recevoir ni expédier de correspondance que vous ne puissiez lire. Il est de votre devoir de me tenir constamment au courant de la conduite de la jeune fille et de me prévenir si vous constatez que des jeunes gens rôdent autour d'elle ou veulent communiquer avec elle,' Letter from *délégué à la protection de l'enfance* (probation agent) to the foster family taking in Jeanne G., 23 July 1917. Dossier N°82/1916, TEB, AEA.

became too difficult for the system to deal with. The case of Adele V. is fairly typical: after being arrested by the German police vice squad and spending a period hospitalized at the Avenue Molière facility in December 1915, she was confined in six successive private institutions. She was not set free until 1921, a few months before turning 21.⁷⁰

What Became of Them? Underage Prostitutes' Lives after their Release

What happened to these young women after they were released from state care? The Juvenile Court judge Wets appears to have been quite anxious to find out, even though after their 21st birthday legally these girls were no longer his concern. Here, again, the results vary. The most frequent outcome for these girls, after their internment, was marriage: this sometimes allowed girls to leave the institutions where they had been interned before the age of 21. The various representatives of agencies involved in child protection (the judge, social workers and the institutions where the girls were placed) appeared to see marriage as one of the most desirable outcomes. '[...] we rejoice to see the happy turn this affair has taken [...] we are always very happy when a young girl placed in care marries,' a nun from the Good Shepherd convent at Evere stated.⁷¹ The judge sometimes sent a representative to check up on the girl's situation: 'Rachel was at home in her house, which was modest but quite clean, with two rooms on the second floor. I checked the marriage licence.'⁷² A third of the cases studied ended in marriage, following a decision by the judge to release the women from care. Other girls, however, evaded his control, like Jeanne G. who escaped from internment in March 1919, shortly before her 21st birthday. The judge continued to pursue the case: 'Transmitted this message to the King's Prosecutor, asking him to carry out another search. This minor lived near the Military Boulevard. She has been seen in the city in fine

⁷⁰ Dossier n°101/1916, TEB, AEA.

⁷¹ French text of the original quotation: 'nous nous réjouissons de l'heureuse tournure qu'ait pris cette affaire [...] nous sommes toujours très heureuses quand une jeune fille de la protection se marie,' Note from the Superior of Bon Pasteur in Evere, 10 April 1920. Dossier n°31/1916, TEB, AEA.

⁷² French text of the original quotation: 'Rachel était installée dans son ménage, modestement mais très propre, deux chambres au second étage. J'ai constaté le livret de mariage,' Monthly probation report (Modèle N), 13 April 1920. Dossier n°31/1916, TEB, AEA.

clothes, and she continues without doubt to work as a prostitute.⁷³ The prosecutor in this case refused to search again. The case of Alice B. was also filed away without resolution, despite the following complaint made by her neighbors: ‘Sunday night, on August 28th last, around midnight, Mlle. Alice B. brought an American soldier into the passageway between my store rooms, and in order not to be caught by me or my concierge, she locked herself in [...]’.⁷⁴ Let us end with the case of Fanny B., whose mother sent a great number of letters to the judge (and even to the Queen) asking that her daughter be restored to her. The girl refused to go home:

[...] Your Honor, sir, I am very well here, and the world is so bad. I will suffer no harm if I remain here. And also, Your Honor, each of us has her own vocation, I have a project to carry out and I would like to finish it. I do not flee the world because I fear to lose it, but because the world is a deceiver and a betrayer [...].⁷⁵

This young woman took holy orders in 1920.

Conclusion

Referring to the cooperation between the German police and their Belgian counterparts, Benoît Majerus states that ‘It appears clear that cooperation between police forces went further with regard to controlling prostitution than in any other area.’ Such cooperation between occupier and occupied was not without difficulties, but despite this it

⁷³ French text of the original quotation: ‘Transmis à Monsieur le procureur du roi avec prière de vouloir bien prescrire de nouvelles recherches. La mineure habiterait aux environs du Boulevard militaire. On la rencontre en ville en grande toilette et elle continue, sans aucun doute, à se livrer à la prostitution,’ Message sent to the judge of Juvenile Court in Brussels to the King’s Prosecutor, 22 March 1919. Dossier n°82/1916, TEB, AEA.

⁷⁴ French text of the original quotation: ‘Dimanche soir, 28 août dernier, vers minuit, mademoiselle Alice B. a introduit dans le couloir de mes magasins un soldat américain et, pour empêcher d’être surprise par mon concierge ou par moi-même, elle s’est enfermée [...],’ Complaint from the neighbor of the minor to the King’s Prosecutor for the *Tribunal de l’Instance*, 1 September 1921, Dossier n°35/1918, OIPE, AEA.

⁷⁵ French text of the original quotation: ‘[...] très digne Monsieur le Juge, je me plais si bien ici, et le monde est si mauvais. Cela ne me ferait pas grand tort de rester encore ici. Et puis, Monsieur le Juge, chacun sa vocation, j’ai un projet et je veux l’exécuter. Ce n’est pas la crainte de le perdre qui me fait fuir le monde, mais parce qu’il est si trompeur et si perfide [...]’ Letter from Fanny B. to the Juvenile Court judge in Brussels, no date (probably 1920). Dossier n°58/1916, TEB, AEA.

continued throughout the war. Majerus asks in his study whether the absence of long-term conflicts in this regard is ‘explained by the fact that this effort at control affected a group of women which was marginalized as much by the occupiers as by the occupied?’⁷⁶ With regard to underage prostitutes, however, perceptions differed slightly. Although largely ignored by most people, they were usually described as victims ‘debauched by the enemy soldiers.’⁷⁷ Social observers and Juvenile Court judges, in their attempts to define the various causes which led these girls into prostitution, generally concluded that it was the social and moral misery of their environment which was to blame—misery which these girls sought to escape.

Contacts between the German occupying authorities and the Brussels Juvenile Court relating to underage prostitution left many of the Belgian participants with a very negative impression:

[...] it is dangerous to generalize and to extend one’s own judgment to the mass of the population, but it is nonetheless difficult to avoid the fact that the overwhelming impression left by a great number of the cases handled in this area is that immorality and hypocrisy were the dominant characteristics of the German military power.⁷⁸

The Juvenile Court quickly abandoned any illusions it may briefly have entertained about the goodwill of the occupiers, as initial German promises regarding underage prostitutes were not kept. Instead the Germans constantly threatened to hang medical examination cards around the girls’ necks, if a girl did not heed the first warning given about her work as an unregistered prostitute. The King’s Prosecutor and the Juvenile Court judge held the same view regarding the German police’s vice squad: ‘This institution, of course, was created in the exclusive interest of the occupying army, and its only purpose was Teuton prophylaxis, not any concern for general morality.’⁷⁹ The Juvenile Court

⁷⁶ French text of the original quotation: ‘Il semble bien que la coopération policière n’ait été dans aucun autre domaine aussi loin que dans celui du contrôle prostitutionnel [...]. Est-ce que cette absence de conflits à long terme s’explique par le fait que le contrôle touche un groupe de femmes marginalisées aussi bien par l’occupant que par l’occupé?’ Majerus (2003), p. 40.

⁷⁷ French text of the original quotation: ‘débauchée par la soldatesque ennemie,’ Collard (1920), p. 23.

⁷⁸ Wets (1919), p. 11.

⁷⁹ French text of the original quotation: ‘Cette institution, bien entendu, ne fut imaginée que dans l’intérêt exclusif de l’armée occupante, dans un seul but de prophylaxie teutonne et nullement dans une préoccupation de moralité générale,’ *Ibid.*

was able to pursue its objectives relatively independently. However, as far as prostitution was concerned, its work was always dependent upon the goodwill of the occupying authority. There was frequent German interference, including threatening to register underage girls as legal prostitutes subject to medical examination if a judge did not act quickly enough to intervene in a case, retaining young prostitutes to work in the hospital laundry even after the court had demanded their release into its custody, and committing young girls to private care institutions without the agreement of the Juvenile Court which was the only body that had the legal right to act in such cases. Despite such interference, however, the system continued to function, and the law of 1912 was not suspended—far from it. The number of cases handled by the Juvenile Court was greater than in peacetime and its work continued practically without interruption, even after all court activity in Belgium was officially suspended. From secret meetings to the creation of the Inter-Communal Office for the protection of children, a whole range of strategies were developed to continue the Juvenile Court's operations, all of which drew upon the conviction of the Juvenile Court judge, Paul Wets: 'that it was necessary [...] to try to respond to the moral catastrophe of the time.'⁸⁰

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CHAPTER SIX

DEFENDING THE *HEIMAT*: THE GERMANS IN SOUTH-WEST AFRICA AND EAST AFRICA DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR

Daniel Rouven Steinbach

The enemy's hordes are filled with alarm
When faced with the German man's strong arm.
Germania's lands remain pure and fine,
In the East, as on the German Rhine!
While the Fatherland watches anxiously to see
If the result of this world war will be
The theft of its sons' homeland overseas
As the perfidious Brit anticipates already.¹

The lines quoted above were composed in spring 1915 by a German citizen living in Tanga in German East Africa and were intended as an additional verse for the famous German patriotic song, '*Die Wacht am Rhein*' (The Watch on the Rhine). Behind its bombastic language, this verse clearly illustrates the different reasons why German colonial settlers felt motivated to fight in the First World War. This chapter aims to examine this wartime mobilization of German settlers in Africa with particular reference to the German concept of *Heimat*.² It focuses on the two German *Schutzgebiete* which had the largest white populations and that experienced the most protracted fighting during the war: German South-West Africa (now Namibia) and German East Africa (now mainly Tanzania).³ Newspapers that were published in the cities

¹ *UP*, Deutsche Wacht allerwege! (22 May 1915, no. 21): 'Voll Grauen spürt der Feinde Schwarm/Des deutschen Mannes starken Arm./Germanias Fluren bleiben rein,/Im Osten, wie am deutschen Rhein!/Doch sorgvoll schaut das Vaterland/Hinaus, ob auch der Weltenbrand/Nicht seiner Söhne ferne Heimat raubt/Wie es der falsche Brite schon geglaubt.'

² The expressions *Reich* (German Empire, i.e. the German national state), *Heimat* (homeland), *Schutzgebiet* (protectorate; German colony) and *Schutztruppe* (the German colonial army) will not be translated. All other translations are by the author.

³ Togo and the colonies in the South Sea collapsed within days, after little or no fighting. Even the fortress of Tsingtao in China fell after less than three months of

of Windhoek, Swakopmund, Lüderitzbucht, Dar es Salaam and Tanga, up until their occupation by the Allied forces, are the primary sources for this study, together with accounts written by German colonialists during or immediately after the war.

The central thesis of this chapter is that the African context challenged the identity of German colonialists in many ways, and that the war provided them with a means to assert their unity with the German Reich. As was the case for Germans living in the Reich, the idea of *Heimat*—a particular, cultural idea of a German homeland—helped reassure the colonialists when faced with the crisis situation of war.

To understand the situation in the colonies in August 1914, it is necessary to look first at how the idea of *Heimat* related to German identity in general during the previous decades. In addition, it is necessary to examine the special role that ideas of *Heimat* played in the *Schutzgebiete* and how this affected their relationship with the Reich. The 1904 Herero War in German South-West Africa, the first war fought by Germany, will then be analyzed in order to highlight the importance of the *Heimat* concept in a war situation, and to provide points of comparison with the First World War, ten years later. The subsequent discussion of the First World War will focus on four aspects in detail. First, it will investigate the situation at the beginning of the war, when fighting in the *Schutzgebiete* became inevitable. Second, it will analyze how the *Heimat* image was used to provide a rational explanation for the conflict, particularly in the poetry produced by the colonialists. Third, it will examine German colonial society at war, through an exploration of its attitudes towards the local African population and soldiers, and towards other ethnic groups. Finally, it will look at the battles of the *Schutztruppen*—not in military terms, but in terms of their impact upon the colonialists' attitudes. The chapter concludes with a brief assessment of how the war in Africa influenced the settlers expelled from Germany's former colonies after the conflict ended, as well as German society in general.

Overall, the aim here is to provide insights into the colonialists' experience of war from a number of different perspectives, rather than to provide a comprehensive analysis. By comparing the behavior

siege. Although Cameroon's *Schutztruppe* did not leave the colony until the beginning of 1916, the British and French had conquered the strategic harbor towns in September 1914 and began deporting the interned German civilian population.

of Germans in the Reich and in the *Schutzgebiete*, the expression of patriotism and the significance of the idea of *Heimat* during the First World War become clear.

The Importance of Having a Heimat

Arguably, the idea of *Heimat* or 'homeland' was the most successful, the most fluid, and the most enduring of nineteenth century German ideologies. Rooted in the esthetic ideals of romanticism, it was largely based on the work of the folklorist Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl who developed the idea of 'conservative progress' in terms of looking to the past to find solutions for the problems German society was facing.⁴ He and his followers regarded modern cities, with their masses of dependent workers, as the graveyard of German civilization since they destroyed families and, in turn, the birth rate, and promoted socialism and cultural decadence.⁵ Riehl and his adherents contrasted the hectic life in the cities with the countryside where the stable lifestyle of the peasants, who lived and toiled on their own property for generations, protected traditional folklore and culture, and, through their many children, secured the future of the German nation. This combination of tradition, nature and nation was the main focus of the idea of *Heimat*. The lower *Bildungsbürger* (educated lower middle classes) who were especially threatened by social change embraced the idea and transformed it into their *Krisenideologie* (ideology for times of crisis).

After the foundation of the German national state in 1871, the concept of *Heimat* became the cultural basis for German national identity. By celebrating regional German history, folklore and craftsmanship, the supporters of the *Heimat* movement tried to respond to the more threatening aspects of modernity. The sense of a shared local past that they constructed was free from the social mobility, urbanization and homogenization of the Wilhelmine Reich that challenged the social and economic position of the bourgeoisie. Contrary to its image, this sense of *Heimat* was not part of a natural, organic folk culture but was, in fact, a constructed idea which was promoted with considerable effort and energy.

⁴ Rohkrämer (1999).

⁵ Bergmann (1970); Bausinger (1984).

Given the diversity of the different German states and territories, the idea of a shared sense of *Heimat* was a successful way to create an overall German identity without neglecting the old regional identities.⁶ As Celia Applegate writes: '*Heimat* was both the beloved local places and the beloved nation; it was a comfortable flexible and inclusive homeland, embracing all localities alike.'⁷ When the advocates of *Heimat* presented their region's peculiarities this was not done to promote particularism or separatism. Rather, according to their understanding of identity, the powerful new fatherland was built around *Heimaten* with their own histories and traditions that together formed German national history. This way, the *Bildungsbürger* were the most ardent supporters of both the Reich and the *Heimat*—and, by their definition, a German without a *Heimat* was not a real German.

Being of predominantly middle class background, the Germans who emigrated to the African *Schutzgebiete*, either permanently or for an extended period, promptly adopted the colonies as their new *Heimat*. The cultivation of a *Heimat* within the colonies happened for two reasons: first, to help the colonialists identify with their new and hostile environment, and second, to prevent them becoming alienated from the distant home administration. These two functions of *Heimat* need to be explained further.

The primary factor driving the construction of *Heimat* was the hostile environment surrounding the colonial settlers. While the Germans in the Reich felt threatened by 'modernism,' those in Africa were frightened by the 'unhealthy' natural environment, a 'hostile' indigenous population, and the fluctuating, transient nature of colonial society. The notion of *Heimat* as an ideal, stabilized, and balanced world created a compensating 'reassuring landscape' (*Besänftigungslandschaft*) and gave the colonialists a sense of social order, security and familiarity.⁸

Colonial societies have been described as 'imagined communities,' both diverse and fragile.⁹ In German Africa, it proved impossible to maintain the usual social roles and hierarchies under the exceptional conditions of colonial life. However, the ever-present opposition of colonizer and colonized led to the formation of a strong 'white identity' in reaction to the black African population. Thus, increasing racism

⁶ Confino (1993), p. 50.

⁷ Applegate (1990), p. 11.

⁸ Bausinger (1984), p. 15.

⁹ Stoler (1989), pp. 136 f.

in the colonies was not only an instrument to oppress the indigenous people, but it also served to create an atmosphere of solidarity amongst the colonialists. In addition, the *Heimat* ideology made it possible for the colonialists to couch the harshness and brutality of everyday racist practice in more familiar and 'gentler' terms. Specifically, the notion of *Heimat* made it possible to draw a distinction between 'good, cooperative natives' and 'evil natives' who were competitive and confrontational. The former were praised as settled, content farm laborers, with a sense of homeland, sticking to their traditional way of life, and obeying their 'white masters' like good children. In contrast, those depicted as 'bad' natives were portrayed as lacking any sense of *Heimat* by virtue of being nomads, or because they had been 'spoilt by civilization,' or were opposed to the 'natural' paternalistic order.¹⁰ Within this dichotomy of 'good' and 'bad' natives, special praise was reserved for the Askari—the African soldiers of the *Schutztruppe* in German East Africa—on the grounds of their loyalty and obedient service to the German authorities, which had led to a symbiotic relationship between the Askari and the colonialists.¹¹

While the indigenous population could be dealt with very neatly in this way, the biggest non-African groups—the Afrikaners in German South-West Africa and the Indians in German East Africa—posed the greatest challenge to the colonialists, both before and during the war. These economic competitors could not be so easily dealt with through racist legislation alone.

Consequently, the colonialists' initial strong support for the Afrikaners during the South African War was later displaced by the image of an 'unsettled, homeless and degenerate Boer' who abused the hospitality of the Germans in South-West Africa. The colonialists' attitude towards the Indian population, who were successful traders in the East African towns, was even more hostile. They were often referred to as the 'Jews of East Africa.'¹² Although this phrase originally described their trading activities, it quickly became imbued with anti-Semitic stereotypes, depicting the Indians as mean, money-obsessed city people with no love for the land—a people without any *Heimat*.¹³

¹⁰ Rüdiger (1993), pp. 64 f.

¹¹ Moyd (2004), p. 38.

¹² Bald (1970), p. 48.

¹³ Paasche (1907), p. 319.

The colonialists considered themselves as true embodiments of the *Heimat* image of the ideal German individual and family. They saw themselves as engaged in a struggle to bring glory to Germany through their work as farmers and planter settlers and believed that they were better Germans than those ‘degenerates’ who remained in European cities. Despite the fact that most colonials were unmarried men, they subscribed to an idealized image of the colonial family, headed by the father, with his wife responsible for the household and for ensuring the spread of German culture throughout the colony through their (numerous) children.¹⁴

The second factor in the colonial construction of a *Heimat* was the colonialists’ sense of alienation. They believed that they were persistently ignored or belittled by public opinion, parliament and state administration in Germany. In fact, the negative view of the colonies within the Reich was mainly due to the failure of the expensive colonial project to benefit the national economy.¹⁵ In particular, the settler colonies of German South-West Africa and German East Africa were criticized as an economic burden, draining the Reich’s tax revenue in order to pay the *Schutztruppe* and build a European infrastructure.¹⁶ Calls to cut the annual subsidies to the colonies or to sell them to South Africa or Great Britain were not representative of public opinion throughout the Reich. However, they still had enough of an impact to trigger unease among the colonialists.

As a result, the German settlers in the colonies were dissatisfied with the standard portrayal of the *Schutzgebiete* as part of a global German market, or as a base for German naval supremacy. They wanted the colonies to be regarded as a part of ‘Germany Overseas’ or of the ‘Greater Germany’ (*Deutschland über See, Größere Deutschland*)—in other words, as an integral part of the German Reich. The colonialists underlined their bond to the fatherland by declaring that the colonies were their new *Heimat*—as, given the perception that *Heimat* was sacred, nobody could possibly demand that anyone relinquish it for reasons of profit.

¹⁴ Wildenthal (1996), Reagin (2001).

¹⁵ Gann (1987), pp. 7 f.

¹⁶ In contrast, Togo and Samoa, the two colonies that had no permanent German settlers, were economically the most successful German overseas possessions.

Colonial War and Propaganda

For most Germans in Europe the First World War was the first war that they experienced personally. However, the colonial settlers in both German South-West Africa and German East Africa had already experienced military conflicts, as ‘native uprisings’ and ‘punishment expeditions’ regularly occurred. Their role during these conflicts had largely been that of observers as the fighting was carried out by the *Schutztruppen* against the indigenous populations. However, from 1904 to 1908, Germany fought the brutal Herero War in South-West Africa and in 1905–1906 it conducted the Maji-Maji-War in East Africa. Both these wars had an important genocide component to them, resulting in the deaths of tens of thousands of local Africans and impacting severely upon the survivors at an economic and social level.¹⁷

While the colonialists in East Africa rarely publicly commemorated the Maji-Maji-War, the memory of the Herero War was an important part of the construction of a *Heimat* identity and history in German South-West Africa.¹⁸ It is necessary to explore this further, as this narrative of war and *Heimat* reveals strong parallels with the idea of *Heimat* during the First World War.

Only a year after the Herero uprising began, the main newspaper in Windhoek established a framework for remembering the war that was largely based upon the idea of *Heimat*. For example, one article opens by describing the ‘idyll of 1904’ when peace and progress ruled:

Splendid rains had changed the land into a lush green meadow, scattered with the dark green of bush and forest; nature was bursting; action and joyful hope were everywhere; through all work and activity there was a sense of deep satisfaction.¹⁹

This idyll is at the core of the *Heimat* idea. Yet it is disturbed by the war. The article goes on to describe a settler, living with his family on a homestead, unexpectedly attacked from behind the building:

¹⁷ Becker and Beez (2005), Zimmerer and Zeller (2003).

¹⁸ Krüger (1999), Bald (1970), pp. 64–74; Chall and Metzger (2005).

¹⁹ *WN*, Der 12. Januar (14 January 1905, no. 2): ‘Prächtige Regen hatten das Land in eine üppig prangende Wiese verwandelt, durchsetzt mit dem dunkeln Grün von Busch und Wald, die Natur strotzte, Tatendrang und Hoffnungsfreude überall, durch das Schaffen und Weben ging ein Zug tiefer Zufriedenheit.’

Roused up by betrayal and treachery, the War Fury lit her torch and threw its burning flame into the quiet, isolated hut of the settler who lived alone, scattered all across the country.²⁰

Nearly all contemporary publications which refer to this war contain similar descriptions of its outbreak, emphasizing destroyed homes and killed or abused German women. In reality, only four German women actually died in the war. However, the fact that they take center stage in the depiction of the conflict reflects the role of women as symbols of *Heimat*.²¹

The soldiers in the Herero conflict fought and died not only for the national fatherland, but also for their regional *Heimat*. This view was explicitly expressed by the commander of the *Schutztruppe*, Major General von Deimling, in 1907:

These 100 officers and 1,400 men did not give their lives in vain. A wonderful seed has flourished out of their graves, namely the realization by the German people that a land in which so many German sons have fallen and are buried is no longer a foreign land but part of a homeland, which they have a holy duty to care for.²²

Paradoxically, the soldiers—most of them shipped in from Germany—gave their lives for a country that only through their deaths became real ‘German’ territory. These victims were frequently described as ‘the payment that we had to make for our colony,’ a financial image that was somewhat out of step with the natural-organic notion of a *Heimat* that could definitely not be bought.²³ This dilemma was resolved by declaring that the blood of the German soldiers was a currency that was not cold and artificial like money, but warm and organic—a currency that ‘soaked’ and ‘fertilized’ the soil.²⁴ This blood and soil symbolism

²⁰ *Ibid.*: ‘Durch Verrat und Tücke angestachelt, zündete die Kriegsfurie ihre Fackel an und warf den Feuerbrand in die stille Klausse des im Lande vereinzelt und zerstreut wohnenden Siedlers.’

²¹ Krüger (2003).

²² *WN*, Abschiedsfeier für Generalmajor von Deimling (11 April 1907, no. 15): ‘Diese 100 Offiziere und 1400 Mann haben ihr Leben aber nicht umsonst gegeben. Eine herrliche Saat ist aus ihren Gräbern erblüht, nämlich die Erkenntnis des deutschen Volkes, daß ein Land, in dem so viele deutsche Söhne gefallen und begraben sind, ihm kein fremdes Land mehr ist, sondern ein Stück Heimatland, für das zu sorgen seine heilige Pflicht ist.’

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ See *LZ*, Die Grundsteinlegung der evangelischen Kirche in Lüderitzbucht (25 November 1911, no. 47), *SWB*, Weihnachten (25 December 1912, no. 154/155).

was a precursor of the later development of the *Heimat* idea during the Weimar Republic and the 'Third Reich.' Irredentist claims to the 'stolen eastern provinces' were often based upon the fact that there were German graves in those territories and the argument that German blood had been spilled there.

As well as emphasizing the 'Germanness' of the African soil and the colonialists' lifestyles and *Kultur*, the discourse that developed also repeatedly asserted the 'ineradicable feeling of connection between the population of the *Schutzgebiete* and the old *Heimat*.' This was an effort to make the public and government in the Reich recognise the colonies as part of the German Reich and as the *Heimat* of the colonialists.²⁵ When Governor Theodor Seitz informed the colonialists in German South-West Africa in 1912 that they should make 'out of this colony and people a worthy child for mother Germania' by faithfully supporting 'folk and Fatherland, Kaiser and Reich,' he was also appealing indirectly to the fatherland's duty to look after its 'colonial children.'²⁶

This combination of the concepts of 'Fatherland' and *Heimat* would be used again in 1914 in both the Reich and the *Schutzgebiete* to rationalize the First World War and to mobilize support for the German war effort.

Celebrating the Unwanted War

During the last decade, new research has demonstrated that the majority of the German population did not experience the *Augusterlebnis* ('August experience') of 1914, when the government announced mobilization for war, as a moment of joyful excitement. Rather, a complex picture of differing and often ambiguous reactions has emerged, which is nearly impossible to generalize. Jeffrey Verhey and others, for example, provide a detailed analysis of the events in different German cities and among different social groups.²⁷

When considering the situation in the German colonies immediately prior to, and just after the outbreak of war, it is important to bear in mind that only a limited amount of information from Europe was

²⁵ *SWB*, Südwest und die Völkerschlachtfeier (5 April 1911, no. 27).

²⁶ *SWB*, Das Landesfest am Kaisertage (31 January 1912, no. 13).

²⁷ Geinitz (1998), Verhey (2000).

available, in the form of short and neutral cable messages or newspapers sent by post that arrived weeks late. As a result, the colonialists had to develop their own opinions about the war and find ways to express their feelings. In this regard, existing, familiar patterns of patriotism provided a reassuring cultural framework.

The assassination of Archduke Franz-Ferdinand and the 'July Crisis' was, of course, covered in the local colonial press, but war was not as strongly anticipated as it was in Germany. The inhabitants of the *Schutzgebiete* did not experience the heightened belligerent atmosphere that affected the middle class public and its press in Germany in the last week of July, but rather concentrated on issues like the opening of the colonial exhibition in Dar es Salaam or the cancelled royal visit to German South-West Africa.²⁸

When news of the war's outbreak reached German South-West Africa, however, the press and the bourgeoisie in the capital Windhoek reacted similarly to their counterparts in any other German regional center. On hearing that Germany would walk the 'path of honor and duty,' one newspaper editor observed that there was 'joy in the hearts of every citizen.'²⁹ Men, waving flags and singing the customary, patriotic songs, marched past the monuments of Bismarck and Kaiser Wilhelm I to the governor's residence in order to express their loyalty.³⁰ As Verhey argues in relation to Germany, the masses in these demonstrations 'followed an unwritten script,' rehearsed at prior anniversaries of historical events at places like the regional castle or the aforementioned monuments. Participating in such demonstrations channelled the uncertainty and anxiety of war into reassuring and familiar patterns.³¹ However, it was especially true for the colonies that the apparent joy of war, and the expectation of victory, were tempered by 'heavy pressing sorrows.' The colonials unquestionably supported the war, but it was a war that they expected would take place in Europe. It was a common assumption during the years preceding the conflict that any 'decision on the colonies' future' would be made in the North Sea. Consequently the *Deutsche Frauenverein vom Roten Kreuz für die Kolonien* (German Women's Red Cross League for the Colonies) and the *Südwestafrikanischer Landeskriegerverband* (South-West African Warriors' Association) initially collected

²⁸ Schnee (1918), p. 8.

²⁹ *SW*, Deutschland im Kriege (4 August 1914, no. 62).

³⁰ *SW*, Aus Windhuk (7 August 1914, no. 63).

³¹ Verhey (2000), p. 36.

Liebesgaben (gifts of love) for 'the men that defended the borders of the old *Heimat*,' rather than for their own *Schutztruppe*.³²

Despite this, however, the German colonialists in South-West Africa were mentally and materially prepared for war and for defending their *Schutzgebiet*.³³ In the same way that publications from the Reich drew upon the 'glorious' victories of the Wars of Liberation and the War of 1870/71, the colonialists invoked their own war history: the battle of Naukluft in 1894, the unofficial founding day of German South-West Africa, when the first *Schutztruppe* fought the Africans.³⁴ Twenty years before, colonialist publications argued, the Germans had also been in the minority but had gained a victory. As before, they would once again be able to defend the 'outpost of Germandom (*Deutschtum*)' through willpower and duty. After the Union of South Africa declared their support for Great Britain and a military confrontation became likely, volunteers joined the South-West Africa *Schutztruppe*. However, there was still doubt about whether the war would actually reach Africa, as demonstrated by a press announcement made by the Farmers' Association: 'to leave important farm work that is in the common interest, without being asked or called to, is a form of damnable desertion!'³⁵

The colonial press adopted a more sober tone after the South African troops occupied the coastal town of Lüderitzbucht, and transported their German inhabitants, who had not fled to Windhoek, to internment camps in South Africa. It was not until the battle of Sandfontein at the end of September was declared a 'German victory over the English' that public opinion regained a more positive outlook.³⁶ This parallels reactions within the Reich, where the population remained quiet and uneasy until the conquest of Liège in the second week of the war was celebrated as an important breakthrough.³⁷

The atmosphere in German East Africa at the beginning of the war was less enthusiastic than in German South-West Africa.³⁸ The residents of East Africa placed great hope in the protection afforded by the Congo Treaty of 1885, which had stipulated that African possessions would

³² *SW*, Aufrufe (7 August 1914, no. 63).

³³ For the course of the war: Strachan (2004), pp. 61–93.

³⁴ Burkhardt (1996). *SW*, Naukluft! (28 August 1914, no. 69).

³⁵ *SW*, Die Pflichten des Farmers (14 August 1914, no. 65).

³⁶ *SW*, Der Sieg von Sandfontein (29 September 1914, no. 78).

³⁷ Verhey (2000), p. 79.

³⁸ For the preparation and course of the war: Strachan (2004), pp. 93–184.

be neutral in the event of war between the European states.³⁹ In addition, fear of a 'native uprising' should whites enter into conflict with whites was frequently articulated, partly because there were far more indigenous people living in East Africa than in South-West Africa. As one missionary expressed it, the fear was that a war in Africa would 'undermine the basis of European rule in Africa and destroy moral values, which will be completely impossible to re-create.'⁴⁰

After a half-hearted declaration that German East Africa would stand dutifully by its fatherland should Great Britain attack, voices of dissent soon appeared in the newspapers suggesting that 'true patriotism is neither shown in ill-considered action, nor expressed in senseless and useless death,' but in protecting the economic value of the colony.⁴¹ Nevertheless, the majority of colonialists expressed their patriotism by signing up as volunteers. Influenced by the commemoration of the Wars of Liberation, which had been intensively celebrated in the *Schutzgebiete* only a year earlier, public opinion focused upon the overall solidarity shared by all Germans in the colonies. Those who had earlier criticized the active expression of readiness for war were now seen as disloyal.⁴² Such critics were accused of undermining the colonial system, since it was believed that the Africans would undoubtedly interpret any passive or pacifist attitude as weakness. As a result, the wartime pressure that led to conformist behavior amongst middle class groups in the Reich was even stronger amongst the colonialists.⁴³ In the end a large majority joined the *Schutztruppe*, ready to defend their *Heimat*.

Fighting for the Fatherland and Defending the Heimat

Like the inhabitants of all countries involved in the conflict, Germans felt that they were fighting a 'defensive war.' In Europe, however, this defense generally occurred outside the borders of Germany, apart from a few weeks of Russian occupation in East Prussia and the bombing of border towns along the Rhine. The German African *Schutzgebiete*, in

³⁹ Petter (1994), p. 390.

⁴⁰ *DOAZ*, Der Krieg in den Kolonien (19 August 1914, no. 67).

⁴¹ *UP*, Vom Weltkrieg (15 August 1914, no. 33).

⁴² Arning (1918), p. 18; Rochl (1918), p. 15.

⁴³ Geinitz (1998), 10 f.

contrast, were battlefields practically from the beginning of the conflict. This fact impacted greatly on the colonialist perspective of the war.

The prewar feeling of being geographically remote from the Reich, and mentally distanced from the Germans there, was exacerbated after the telegraph connection to Germany was destroyed when Togo surrendered at the end of August 1914 and telegrams arrived irregularly. The colonialists in Africa felt ‘cut off from the whole world.’⁴⁴

When examining the motives and rationale for defending the colonies, a comparison between the colonial population in the *Schutzgebiete* and colonialist circles within the Reich is particularly fruitful. At the outbreak of the war, the latter focused mainly on strategic questions, such as the role of the colonies’ telegraph stations or the significance of their harbors as bases for German battle ships. These questions had already been controversially discussed within the general staff in the years preceding the conflict. However, as all the *Schutzgebiete* were forced to give up their key coastal towns and telegraph stations within months of the war starting, the continuation of fighting in the colonies no longer made sense for the military.⁴⁵ Significantly, articles in the German African newspapers expressed none of these concerns. Nor did they discuss any concrete war aims in Africa, unlike the colonialist publications in the Reich, which wrote about this issue early on, even though such discussion of war aims was officially banned.

In the years before the war, colonial propagandists liked to draw new maps of Africa depicting a large, continuous area designated as German *Mittelafrika* or *Südafrika* (Middle or South Africa).⁴⁶ Since negotiations for buying colonies from Portugal or exchanging significant territory with France or Great Britain had failed, these colonial lobbyists saw the outbreak of war as an opportunity to advance their plans. Their fantasy of a German *Mittelafrika*, which included naval bases in the Atlantic, became part of the official war aims propaganda. Interestingly, however, as the colonies began to collapse, one after the other, these African war aims lost their attraction. Even the paper *Der Deutsche Kulturpionier* (‘The German Pioneer for *Kultur*’) of the *Reichskolonialschule* (German colonial college) shifted instead towards increasingly demanding territorial

⁴⁴ Suchier (1918), p. 13.

⁴⁵ Petter (1994), p. 401.

⁴⁶ See, for example, the two booklets by Emil Zimmermann, published just before and during the war: Zimmermann (1914) and (1917). Tschapek (2002).

compensation in Eastern Europe.⁴⁷ Although nobody went so far as to give the former African colonies up completely, given the huge German conquests in Poland and Russia, the distant, struggling African territories increasingly became a marginalized issue in debates.

Here the gap between the colonial population in the *Schutzgebiete* and the colonialists in the Reich can be seen most sharply. For the latter, what mattered was merely the possession of territory that offered space, resources and labor for German settlers; its actual location was seen as far less important. In contrast, the colonialists living in Africa wanted to keep, and defend, what they saw as their 'homes.' As in the decades before the war, any suggestion of exchanging colonies with other imperial powers (such as taking Nigeria or Cyprus in return for German East Africa) were vehemently criticized by Germans in Africa. Again, the colonial population's greatest fear was being seen as insignificant—a '*quantité négligeable*'.⁴⁸

To identify the motivations of the German colonialists in East and South-West Africa one has to focus on a rather abstract concept: the relationship between the *Schutzgebiet* and the Reich. The threat of war made it clear to the colonial population just how fragile this relationship was. Consequently, they repeatedly stressed that their contribution to the war was for the sake of the common German fatherland, as illustrated by the official declarations made by the various governors.⁴⁹ By asserting their loyalty to the fatherland, the colonials indirectly laid claim to the fatherland's loyalty towards them as well. In this way even if the *Schutzgebiete* were remote in Africa, they could feel part of the strong Reich.

The absence of explicit war aims did not mean that the colonialists did not share the Reich's ambition to become a 'world power.' They regarded themselves as the Kaiser's overseas bulwark and considered the question of fleet building and naval superiority as issues that mattered particularly to them. Consequently, when they referred to the fatherland, they had in mind a strong state, economically healthy and militarily well equipped for the war. But, as has already been suggested, more than the abstract idea of fatherland was needed to motivate men

⁴⁷ Fabarius (1915), pp. 7–31.

⁴⁸ *UP*, Das grosse Ringen (8 August 1914, no. 32).

⁴⁹ *Koloniale Rundschau*, no. 8–10, August/Oktobre 1914, Kriegsaufruf des Kameruner Gouverneurs, p. 539.

to fight and die for Germany.⁵⁰ This is why the idea of *Heimat* is so important in order to understand the war. As witnessed in the Herero War, the soft, female image of *Heimat*—represented by lonely, scattered homes, rural towns and happy families that were attacked from the outside—provided the most effective and straightforward motivation.

Similar to what occurred in the newspapers of Europe, where some ten thousand poems were published within the first months of the war, the Germans in the colonies expressed their views on the war through poetry.⁵¹ While most factually based articles were often flat and dispassionate in tone, these poems are an interesting source, providing an insight how the colonialists emotionally resolved and publicly expressed their feelings towards the war.

In a long poem by Otto Gerlach, a citizen of Dar es Salaam, written shortly after the start of the war, the connection between fatherland and *Heimat* comes into sharp focus. It starts with a description of a peaceful, rural *Heimat* in the Reich, where people brought in the harvest while singing *Heimat* songs, until the enemy brought war to the land:

My German land! You feel the fiery steps,
Where they rush through you on bloody feet,
Where they have destroyed the quiet peace of German vales
With thunderous voice that echoes everywhere,
Where our harmless, joyful *Heimat* songs
Are drowned out by the clarion call of war
And the fair muses' garland is driven out.⁵²

References to German *Kultur* and German work also appeared in publications in the Reich, but as these values were at the core of the cultural justification of colonization, they had a special significance in the colonies. The mantra of the colonial population and the colonialist lobby in Germany was that the colonies propagated 'Germanness' (*Deutschtum*) around the globe and benefited the national economy. In nearly every colonial text about the war, these ideas were expressed in a similar fashion to the way that they had been ten years before,

⁵⁰ Applegate (1990), p. 67.

⁵¹ Nipperdey (1998), pp. 778 f.

⁵² DOAZ, An unser Vaterland! by Otto Gerlach (23 September 1914, no. 77): 'Mein deutsches Land! Du fühlst die Feuerschritte/Wo sie auf blutigen Sohlen dich durch-eilt/Wo sie der deutschen Täler stillen Frieden/Mit Donnerstimme ringsum brausend brach/Wo unsere harmlos frohen Heimatlieder/Die Kriegsfanfähe schmetternd über-tönt/Und fortgescheucht der holden Musen Kranz.'

during the war in South-West Africa: German culture and civilization were depicted in terms of simple, rural folklore, and German labor was epitomized by the farmer toiling on his land.⁵³

In the following lines the construction of fatherland and *Heimat* can be seen very clearly: the *Heimat*, with its soft rolling hills, its bright colors and its quietness, evokes the female and consequently must be protected by a tough German fatherland that surrounds and incorporates all the different '*Heimaten*' (homelands):

My German People! When around you at all borders
The enemy, bristling with weapons, threatens you!
You stand armed and ore-plated, shielding
Your regions on all sides.⁵⁴

Thus far, the verses of this poem replicate those found in multiple variations in regional wartime newspapers throughout Germany.⁵⁵ In the following verse, however, the author shifts focus to the *Schutzgebiete* and describes the passivity and powerlessness felt by the colonialists who could not fight in the fatherland's war of conquest:

Alas—to protect the *Heimat's* meadows
We cannot do any brave deeds from here—
To scatter the enemies' superior numbers and
To conquer new lands in battle
And build new frontiers all around us.⁵⁶

As they could not fight for Germany directly in Europe, the colonialists saw the defense of their African *Heimat* against any enemy as their way of contributing to the war:

Thus we will not sit idly by,
Merely apathetic, waiting for news from the motherland—
No—this rich earth, grown beloved,

⁵³ In contrast, the colonial population consumed the same magazines and gramophone music as Germans in the *Reich*, and profit-orientated capitalists dominated the colonial economy.

⁵⁴ *DOAZ*, An unser Vaterland! by Otto Gerlach (23 September 1914, no. 77): 'Mein deutsches Volk! Wenn rings von allen Grenzen/Der Feind, in Waffen strotzend, dich umdräut!/Gerüstet stehst du, schirmend deine Marken/Nach allen Seiten, erzgepanzert da.'

⁵⁵ Confino (1993), pp. 63 f.

⁵⁶ *DOAZ*, An unser Vaterland! by Otto Gerlach (23 September 1914, no. 77): 'Doch—können wir zum Schutz der Heimatfluren/Von hier aus keine Taten mutig tun/Der Feinde Uebermacht rings zu zerstreun/Um kämpfend neue Lande zu erobern/Und neue Grenzen rings uns aufzubaun.'

Which has earned our deep gratitude,
 Let us protect her, guard her like the *Heimat*,
 So that here, too, no enemy on land or sea
 Insolently will seize her from us.⁵⁷

After a victorious end to the war, the author hoped that the Reich and its colonies would once more come to epitomize the *Heimat* idyll. Indeed, the war has revealed the colony to be a true *Heimat* and has bound it more closely to the Reich:

And when our *Heimat's* meadows grow green once more
 From fresh seed in blood-fertilized fields—
 Then here, too, the last wound shall heal,
 The last tear from cheeks vanish,
 A German song will rush into the blue sky,
 A German echo sound through the palm trees!
 Then here, too, life shall be revived,
 And tighter the bonds of loyalty bind.⁵⁸

Despite the flowery language, the image of *Heimat* remains very abstract in this poem. Only the palm trees hint at where this distant place is located, allowing for a broad identification with the colonies.⁵⁹ Other writers provided more specific descriptions of the *Heimat* that outlined the geographical boundaries of the colonial region which was to be defended. At the same time, however, the use of well-established, colonial stereotypes meant that such writing was usually broad enough to reach a wide audience and to allow them to potentially identify with the location depicted. This can be observed in another adaptation of the German song '*Die Wacht am Rhein*,' the 'War song of the East Africans,' which called upon all Germans 'from Tanganyika to the ocean, from the Spekegulf to Rovuma bank' to defend the new *Heimat*:

There booms a call
 From the beach fringed by palms

⁵⁷ *Ibid*: 'So wollen wir die Hand im Schoß nicht bergen/Uns müßig nur der Mutter Botschaft freun—/Nein—diese liebgeordnete reiche Erde,/Der unser heißer Dankeszoll gebührt/Laßt sie uns schützen, wahren gleich der Heimat/Auf daß auch hier kein Feind zu Land und Meere/In stolzem Uebermut sie uns entreißt.'

⁵⁸ *Ibid*: 'Und grünen wieder unsere Heimatfluren/In neuer Saat auf blutgedüngtem Feld:/Dann soll auch hier die letzte Wunde heilen/Die letzte Träne von den Wangen fliehn/Ein deutsches Lied zum blauen Himmel eilen/Ein deutsches Echo durch die Palmen ziehn!/Dann soll auch hier das Leben auferstehen/Und fester schlingen sich der Treue Band. [...]'

⁵⁹ Confino (1993), p. 66.

To the Kibo's glacier wall:
 Deutsch-Ost, this is about your treasure!
 Who wants to be the mountain's protector?
 Rest assured, dear fatherland,
 We all stand by you, a loyal band! [...]
 As long as the palm tree greets the sea,
 Mount Kibo shimmers in *Heimat*-snow,
 With a bullet still waiting in the barrel,
 We will crush the mercenary peril!
 Rest assured, fatherland dear,
 [We will never let the enemy enter here!]⁶⁰

As the symbol of German East Africa, Kilimanjaro with the Kibo peak was declared a 'sacred mountain' which, similar to the river Rhine was under no circumstances to fall into the hands of the enemy who was allegedly keen to conquer it:

The Kilimanjaro is a prize worthy of the most noble of effort. When the massive arc of the Kibo's snowy summit glows in the morning sun, shining over hundreds of kilometers into English territories, when a tender Alpine glow at dusk, visible from far and wide, cloaks the snow in soft crimson, then this king of African mountains—so near and yet so far—must have aroused the senses, awakened the desire [of the English].⁶¹

The symbolic depiction of German blood transforming the African soil into German land was widely used, either in the context of defending the colony as the new *Heimat* or, after the territory had been conquered, to underline that the 'freshly soaked soil' was still German territory that had just been temporarily occupied.⁶²

This rather archaic presentation of *Heimat* with its emphasis on the natural environment was not enough, on its own, to inspire men to fight

⁶⁰ *UP*, Kriegslied der Ostafrikaner, by X.Y., Moshi (1 January 1916, no. 1), Verse 1: 'Es braust ein Ruf vom Palmenstrand/Bis zu des Kibo Gletscherwand:/Deutsch-Ost, es gilt dem Kleinod Dein!/Wer will des Berges Hüter sein?/Lieb Vaterland, magst ruhig sein,/Treu steh'n für Dich wir alle ein! [...].'
 Verse 2: 'So lange die Palme grüsst die See,/Der Kibo glänzt im Heimatschnee,/Noch eine Kugel dräut im Rohr/Zerschmettern wir das Söldnerkorps!/Lieb Vaterland, magst ruhig sein,/ [Nie lassen wir den Feind herein!].'

⁶¹ Arning (1918), pp. 59f: 'Der Kilimandscharo aber ist ein Kampfpfeis, des Schweißes der Edelsten wert. Wenn die gewaltig gewölbte Schneekuppe des Kibo in der Morgensonne auf hunderte von Kilometern hinüberleuchtet ins englische Land, wenn weithin sichtbar zartes Alpenglühen im Abendschein den Schneeglantz in linden Purpur hüllt, da muß der afrikanische Berge König wohl—so nah und doch so fern—die Sinne aufgewiegelt, das Begehren [der Engländer] erweckt haben.'

⁶² *DOAZ*, Der Krieg in den Kolonien (19 August 1914, no. 67), SW, Der Einmarsch der Briten in Windhuk (3. May 1915, no. 36), SW, Zur Lage (6 May 1915, no. 37).

and die for the colonies. For this reason, it was necessary to develop a more complex image of *Heimat*: though only a few men, and none of the soldiers of the *Schutztruppe*, actually had a family with children born in wedlock in the colony, it was for the ideal of protecting German women and children that they were prepared to die. This was expressed in a poem by Tom von Prince, an 'old African' and part of the colony's 'high society,' written just days before he died in battle. He called on all the Germans to do their duty and fight 'for woman/wife and child, for field and stove.'⁶³

The symbolic role of women, which had long been central to the *Heimat* concept, gained even greater significance during wartime.⁶⁴ Although the creation and propagation of the term *Heimatfront* (home front) should have led to an emphasis on women's contribution to the war effort, in reality public discourse continued to focus upon depicting women as a fixed symbol of the *Heimat*. The few public female voices in the *Schutzgebiete* during the war generally conformed to this idealized *Heimat* role. In an article published in April 1915 a South-West African farmer's wife asked whether 'we women are worthy to live in noble times like these?'⁶⁵ True to the *Heimat* ideal, she rejected those women whose 'nerves' and 'education' rendered them caricatures of what a German woman should be and who were unable to display the virtues which 'fatherland and freedom' required of them. A woman's duty, however, was reduced to two things: to encourage her husband to volunteer as a soldier and to behave like a proper German woman by being brave and keeping quiet. She was encouraged to do her duty and look after 'children, home and farm,' so that the returning head of the household would find this domestic *Heimat* unchanged after the war.⁶⁶

A Colonial Burgfrieden and the Enemy Within

Following the declaration of war, conflicts with the so-called *Reichsfeinde* (enemies of the Reich) in Germany, such as the Social Democrats, were set aside, and minorities, including Jewish citizens, were incorporated into society under the slogan of the *Burgfrieden*, a wartime truce

⁶³ *UP*, Heraus' ihr Deutschen, alle! by Tom von Prince (14 November 1914, no. 46).

⁶⁴ Confino (1993), p. 71.

⁶⁵ *SW*, Der deutschen Frau (8 April 1915, no. 29).

⁶⁶ Applegate (1992), p. 67.

on domestic issues. The colonialists suppressed any conflicts amongst themselves using this slogan, and demanded that the whole colony should stand together as one man. This, however, did not solve the problem that the majority of the population in the *Schutzgebiete* was not German. For good reason, the colonialists feared that the exploited and suppressed African population could take advantage of the war and spark an uprising. In both East and South-West Africa, however, a general rebellion against German rule did not occur, although the advancing British and South African troops received support from local people in several areas.⁶⁷

In newspapers in German South-West Africa, the issue of the African population was, in comparison to German East Africa, a less central topic, since serious organized opposition had disappeared with the genocide carried out during the wars that had occurred between 1904 and 1908. In fact, articles complaining about the laziness and wickedness of the 'natives,' which had previously been a regular feature, now faded into the background. The farmers' newspaper advised its readers to keep on their laborers during the war and create an atmosphere of normality.⁶⁸ The Colonial Women's League advised women left alone with their African staff to talk more German with them in order to reinforce the 'native's loyalty' towards Germany, something neglected by the colonialists in the past.⁶⁹ One letter to an editor even reported that loyal and thankful African workers had supposedly expressed their desire to fight alongside their 'white masters.'⁷⁰

Since its foundation, the *Schutztruppe* in South-West Africa had consisted exclusively of white soldiers, due to a general mistrust towards the Africans and a relatively large white population which the force could draw upon. When the colonialists discovered that the South African Army was using 'native troops' there was outrage throughout the colony.⁷¹ The question as to if and how Africans should be involved in the conflict, which was regarded by many colonialists as a 'white men's

⁶⁷ Strachan (2004), p. 86 + 98.

⁶⁸ *SW*, Die Pflichten des Farmers (14 August 1914, no. 65).

⁶⁹ *SW*, An die deutschen Frauen im Schutzgebiet: Über unsere deutsche Sprache im Umgang mit den Eingeborenen (22 March 1915, no. 24).

⁷⁰ *SW*, Ein Beitrag zur Denkungsweise der Eingeborenen (28 August 1914, no. 69).

⁷¹ *SW*, Bothas Regierung bewaffnet Eingeborene gegen uns! (23 Oktober 1914, no. 82). As a matter of fact the South African Army did not allow Africans to carry weapons, but they served as laborers and horse minders. L'Ange (1991), pp. 227–231.

war,' emerged in all European colonies, since it touched upon the core of the racist, hierarchical structure of colonial society.⁷²

In German East Africa, where the ratio of colonial settlers to the African population was one to ten, the fear of a 'native uprising' was widespread. Yet, after these initial fears proved unwarranted, the German colonialists generally ignored the African civilian population, but recommended the avoidance of any conflict. Their attitude towards armed and military trained African soldiers in East Africa (Askaris) was generally different to those held by their counterparts in South-West Africa. Generally, the role of the Askaris in the East African *Schutztruppe* was crucial to both the war in Africa and the colonialists' racial attitudes. Prior to the war, the image of the 'loyal Askari' was frequently evoked to depict the relationship between the white officers and their black soldiers. This image fitted with the colonialists' paternalistic view of the Africans, which made the Askaris an important part of their cultural representation of the *Schutzgebiet*.⁷³ It should be noted, however, that praise for the bravery and loyalty of the Askari largely occurred after the war, starting after the first colonialists were repatriated to Germany and published their war memoirs. The most influential example is Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck's memoir *Heia Safari!*, published in 1919 with an Askari on the front cover. It established the image of the loyal African soldier for the following decades.⁷⁴

The First World War took a heavy toll on all the African inhabitants of European colonies in Africa. The inhabitants of the tropical colonies, in particular, were used as 'fighting material' and auxiliaries.⁷⁵ Many hundreds of thousands of African army porters and civilians in German East Africa died from disease, malnutrition and fighting, and their agriculture was devastated by four years of guerrilla warfare. In South-West Africa, as mentioned above, the colonial administration refused to arm Africans because of a racist ideology and the fear of an uprising. However, despite a local rebellion by the Rehoboth 'Bastards' in April 1915, the African population remained quiet.⁷⁶ After the fear of a great uprising had passed, the colonialists' relationship with the 'Kaiser's African subjects' was—in their view—fairly unproblematic.

⁷² Strachan (2004), p. 2 f.

⁷³ Moyd (2004), p. 39.

⁷⁴ Michels (2006), pp. 161–164. Maß (2006).

⁷⁵ For an overview on the different colonies: Page (1987).

⁷⁶ Strachan (2004), p. 86.

Their attitude towards the non-African, non-European population, however, was more uncertain.

The Indian population in German East African towns was the cause of particular concern, not only due to their British citizenship but also because of a general mistrust towards them. On the one hand, there were high hopes that Muslim Indians would recognize how much better they were treated under German, as opposed to British, rule. Again, while colonialists in the Reich hoped for an uprising against the British Empire in India, with positive consequences for the war in Africa, this hope was never shared by the German population in the *Schutzgebiete*. However, public suggestions that the Indian population should be interned in retaliation for the internment of German civilians in South Africa were heavily criticized, as the view was that Indians should not be blamed for the actions of 'the English'.⁷⁷ On the other hand, harsh attitudes were still common. As observed earlier, Indians were verbally attacked in a similar way that Jews were in the German Reich. This denigration continued throughout the war in a surprisingly similar fashion to the wartime anti-Semitism that existed in the Reich. Immediately after the beginning of the war, there were protests in the colonies against 'foreign inhabitants' who were accused of profiteering from price hikes (*Preistreiberei*), which it was argued should be stopped by the authorities.⁷⁸ In 1915, the tone became more severe and there were demands that the Indians 'should be booted out, these vampires that are poisoning this country'.⁷⁹ Just before the final occupation of Dar es Salaam, the local Indian community collected nearly 3,000 Rupees for the purchase of *Liebesgaben* (gifts of love) to be sent to the *Schutztruppe* at the front, and the donors were listed by name in the *Deutsch-Ostafrikanische Zeitung*.⁸⁰ It cannot be assessed here whether this action was due to any patriotic motivation, or whether it was the result of fear and intended to placate the Germans.

After the outbreak of war, the colonialists in German South-West Africa also revised their resentment towards the Afrikaners. Similar to sections of the German public in the Reich who hoped for Dutch

⁷⁷ *UP*, Zur Frage der Behandlung der Inder und der anderen englischen Untertanen, by Franz Ranniger (24. December 1914, no. 51/52), *DOAZ*, Lokales: Maßnahmen gegen Inder (30 December 1914, no. 105).

⁷⁸ *UP*, Eingesandt (5 December 1914, no. 49).

⁷⁹ *UP*, Aus Tanga und Umgebung (27 March 1915, no. 13).

⁸⁰ *DOAZ*, Aus unserer Kolonie (4 February 1916, no. 10).

neutrality in the war, the colonial population now saw the Afrikaners as their 'natural allies' based on common 'Low German roots.' Even governor Theodor Seitz officially declared that 'this war was fought against the English only, and not against the Boers.'⁸¹ Germans interpreted an uprising by Boer Nationalists in South Africa against Prime Minister Botha's pro-British war policies as a sign of support for their own cause, to which they attached high hopes. There was some speculation about neutrality. However, colonialists in the Reich had already made plans for a future South African Union led by Germans and Afrikaners.⁸² Yet within weeks, South African government troops crushed the uprising and resumed their attack on the *Schutzgebiet*. Botha, who was the only premier during the First World War to lead an army, became the target of German anger. Once again, the Afrikaners were labelled with the old stereotype of the 'dishonorable Boer' who was scarcely more civilized than a 'native.' With the occupation of Windhoek, which marked the defeat of the South-West Africa *Schutzgebiet*, the Afrikaners were not mentioned at all in the German public discourse. The local paper declared that the population should not be afraid of the British occupiers since they were 'neither wild Russians nor undisciplined French, but a related *Kultur* nation.'⁸³ It seems that losing the war was bad enough; but to admit to losing it against the disrespected 'Boers' would have been unbearable.

Losing the War and Losing the Heimat

From a military perspective, the war in Africa was very different to the industrial war waged in Europe. The absence of heavy artillery, an undeveloped infrastructure, and the many thousands of African porters employed by the armies who often brought their families with them meant that colonial warfare appeared to resemble the propagandist, historical image of war, centered on individual heroism, the genius of leaders and strategic moves.⁸⁴ Yet the military aspect of the war in Africa is not of primary importance here—rather it is the war's impact

⁸¹ *SW*, Bekanntmachung von Gouverneur Seitz (25 September 1914, no. 77).

⁸² Puttkamer (1915).

⁸³ *SW*, Der Einmarsch der Briten in Windhuk (3 May 1915, no. 36).

⁸⁴ Strachan (2004), pp. 10–12.

on the consciousness of the colonial population that is the focus of the following examination.

Despite being far fewer in number, the German colonial troops were able to hold out against the Allies on several occasions. This had an immense psychological impact on the colonialists and their feeling of connection to the Reich.

In German South-West Africa, the Germans were able only once, at the battle of Sandfontein in September 1914, to cause a serious setback to the invasion by the South African troops. Although the important harbor town Lüderitzbucht had already been occupied, the *Schutztruppe* was able to stop the South Africans entering the colony by land.⁸⁵ Joachim von Heydebreck, commander of the *Schutztruppe*, was celebrated as a hero—who ‘with passion loved his, our, fatherland and was a true friend of our *Schutzgebiet* as well.’⁸⁶ The poems and speeches which were produced in honor of this military success once again emphasized that the victory was important not only for the colony, the new *Heimat*, but also for the fatherland:

The South-West Africans stand on a par with the warriors on the wide battlefields of France, Belgium and Russia. We can be proud that the South-West African *Schutztruppe*—the South-West African *Deutschtum* (‘Germandom’) in arms—plays such a glorious part in the worldwide struggle of the German people against its enemies.⁸⁷

The battle of Tanga on the border of British and German East Africa in November 1914 also gained special significance.⁸⁸ It was celebrated as the ‘East African Tannenberg,’ although it was ‘neither the biggest nor the bloodiest of African battles.’⁸⁹ Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck, the commander of the East African *Schutztruppe*, repelled an attack by British and Indian troops and thus prevented the quick collapse of the colony’s defenses. Despite his success, Lettow-Vorbeck, who had only arrived in

⁸⁵ L’Ange (1991), pp. 25–38.

⁸⁶ *SW*, Oberstleutnant von Heydebreck † (13 November 1914, no. 91). Although he was praised as a fallen soldier, he actually did not die in the battle, but in an accident practicing throwing hand grenades.

⁸⁷ *SW*, Das Gefecht bei Kakamas (9 February 1915, no. 12): ‘Ebenbürtig stehen die Südwestafrikaner neben den Kämpfern auf Frankreichs, Belgiens und Rußlands weiten Schlachtfeldern. Stolz dürfen wir darauf sein, daß die südwestafrikanische Schutztruppe—das südwestafrikanische Deutschum in Waffen—so ruhmvollen Anteil hat an dem weltumspannenden Ringen des deutschen Volkes gegen seine Feinde.’

⁸⁸ Anderson (2001).

⁸⁹ *Koloniale Rundschau*, no. 11/12, November/Dezember 1917, Ostafrika. Farwell (1987), p. 162.

German East Africa at the beginning of 1914, was not yet the focus of the celebrations. This honor went to Tom von Prince instead, who had taken part in the first invasion in 1888/89, and who had lived in the *Schutzgebiet* as a plantation owner ever since. He was regarded as a dyed-in-the-wool colonial. Upon his death in battle, he was idolized as an ideal German East African whose life and death had demonstrated his 'deep love and devotion' to colony and fatherland.⁹⁰

These two unexpected victories had the desired effect on public opinion in the Reich. In the short term, the war in the colonies was discussed in the *Reichstag* and was the topic of a number of newspaper articles.⁹¹ The following poem from the women's magazine *Kolonie und Heimat* (Colony and *Heimat*) expressed the kind of sentiment that the colonials had hoped to hear:

Two names—Tanga and Sandfontein—
 Deep in your memory retain,
 Despite all names already written therein—
 Because these names you have to love! [...]
 As the old *Heimat* protects our hand
 The German-East African future land,
 Because it to the Reich with honor has been fettered
 Is thus deeply in our hearts embedded.⁹²

These victories, however, did not prevent the German colonies from being occupied before the war had finished in Europe. The campaign against German South-West Africa had to be postponed because of the uprising by Boer Nationalists in South Africa that tied up the army for several months. After the rebellion had been put down by January 1915, it took the South African troops just five months to capture Windhoek and, in July, German South-West Africa surrendered.

After the unsuccessful landing of troops at Tanga, it took until 1916 before Britain, now with the support of the South African army, undertook a new major offensive against German East Africa. Despite the initial successful attempt by the *Schutztruppe* under Lettow-Vorbeck to contain the invasion, by September 1916 the capital Dar es Salaam had

⁹⁰ *DOAZ*, Die Schlacht bei Tanga (7 November 1914, no. 90).

⁹¹ Farwell (1987), pp. 179 f.

⁹² Buschhorn (1914): 'Zwei Namen—Tanga und Sandfontein—/Prägt tief euch in euer Gedächtnis ein,/Trotz all der Namen, die dort schon geschrieben—/Denn diese Namen, die müßt ihr lieben! [...] /Wie die alte Heimat schirmt unsere Hand/Das deutsch-ostafrikanische Zukunftsland,/Weil durch Edelmüt es an das Reich schon gekettet/Und tief drum in unsere Herzen gebettet.'

been occupied. It took, however, another year before the British troops forced the remainder of the *Schutztruppe* to escape to Portuguese East Africa and gained complete control of East Africa. However, Lettow-Vorbeck only surrendered in November 1918 after he received news of the armistice in Europe.⁹³

In contrast to the experience of most Germans in the Reich, the end of the war in the colonies was not something that occurred unexpectedly and at a distance. The progressive defeat of one town after another and the lack of any information meant that the situation was more similar to the experience of the Second World War, without, of course, any positive attitude towards the 'liberators.' Given these circumstances, ultimate defeat appeared a foregone conclusion in the colonies. Nevertheless, most colonials still hoped that the Reich would be victorious in Europe. In German South-West Africa, Botha did not want to 'impair the standing of the white race' and his guarantee meant that the private property of the Germans remained largely untouched.⁹⁴ Thus, the paper *Südwest* could declare defiantly in its last edition: 'South-West is German and will be German.' Similarly, the colonialists continued to hope that the *Schutzgebiete* would be returned to Germany or that, at the very least, German South-West Africa might be retained with its relatively large German population.⁹⁵

The immediate postwar years saw the colonies gain unprecedented popularity amongst the different political factions in Germany. Even the Social Democratic transitional government not only maintained the colonial office, but also protested together with all the Reichstag parties (apart from the Communists) against the League of Nations' mandates for the *Schutzgebiete*. Lettow-Vorbeck, who joined the *Freikorps* after his celebrated return to Germany, became one of the most famous war heroes: 'The Hindenburg of Africa.'⁹⁶ How did this 'marginal war,' far away from the slaughter of the Western Front, obtain this level of attention?

In his research into the 'culture of defeat,' Schivelbusch identifies both positive and negative elements in patterns of defeat in the First World War. The German slogan of 1918/19 '*Im Felde unbesiegt*' (Undefeated in the Field) suggested that surrender had not been necessary and that

⁹³ Strachan (2004), pp. 132–184.

⁹⁴ Stoecker (1986), p. 272.

⁹⁵ *SW*, Der Einmarsch der Briten in Windhuk (3 May 1915, no. 36).

⁹⁶ Michels (2006), p. 155.

victory had still been possible.⁹⁷ The colonial war, however, had all the elements of a glorious finale that were missing in the Western Front conflict: in the *Schutzgebiete*, the civilian home front was not perceived as having stabbed the army in the back (*'Dolchstoß'*), and, Germans believed, in the colonies the military commanders had not been obstructed by small-minded politicians. Moreover, it was readily apparent that the Allied troops were greater in number and better equipped in Africa. The German defeat was therefore inevitable and could be rationalized. It did not engender shame as all the available resources had been used for this extensive war. The enemy won through a combination of better equipment and dishonorable tactics—using African soldiers, ignoring treaties, employing blockades—but not through bravery, military skill or love of their country:⁹⁸

Hunger and superior numbers,
Have forced you to submit.
These alone, not the battle of warriors,
Have succeeded in their task.
Look! Your image, known to all,
Shines brightly in golden frames,
And when one day they list the best,
That list will include your names.⁹⁹

The postwar colonial enthusiasm, however, was not shared by the German general public. In reality, it was promoted by the colonialist lobby and the former German colonial population.¹⁰⁰ As in the prewar years, they tried their best to keep the *Schutzgebiete* on the public and political agenda. Various pressure groups and a variety of colonial authors tried to keep the memory of the colonies alive.¹⁰¹ The core of their argument was that the Germans who were expelled from the *Schutzgebiete* had not only lost their property, but had been deprived of their *Heimat*. Although they also sought financial compensation, akin to that which

⁹⁷ Schivelbusch (2003), pp. 225–256.

⁹⁸ This point is underlined by the fact that very few publications on the war in Togo and the South Sea were published: the defeat there was too unspectacular and inglorious to merit attention.

⁹⁹ Friedländer (1916), p. 123: Der Hunger und die Übermacht,/Die haben euch bezwungen./Nur ihnen, nicht der Männerschlacht/Ist jetzt das Werk gelungen./Seht! Euer Bild, das jeder kennt,/Strahlt hell aus goldnem Rahmen,/Und wenn man einst die Besten nennt,/Nennt man auch eure Namen!

¹⁰⁰ Schmokel (1964), p. 1 f.

¹⁰¹ Gümbel (2000), pp. 93–109.

the Germans of Alsace-Lorraine and West Prussia had received, they claimed that a loss of *Heimat* could not simply be compensated for with money. Nothing short of the return of the beloved land to the rule of the fatherland would suffice. In this way, the ‘German dream of Empire’ was combined with the ‘German dream of *Heimat*.’

Conclusion

As in Europe, the beginning of the First World War unveiled a range of contradictory sentiments amongst the Germans living in the African colonies. Torn between the unrestrained expression of patriotism and deep worries about their personal and collective future, the colonialists needed a reassuring cultural framework to express and channel their emotions. Similar to previous crisis situations, the notion of having a *Heimat*, a secure place where everybody and everything has its natural and traditional place, became a reassuring image which the colonists relied upon. Their peculiar position as loyal German citizens on the one hand, and as white colonialists with a European identity that was shared with other colonialists in Africa on the other hand, prompted considerable debate in the first weeks of the war. Yet, when fighting became inevitable, the colonialists fought not for a vast German empire in central Africa or for German world domination, but for the defense of their respective colony. Since they did not see themselves as foreigners in a strange land, but felt part of their African territory, their reaction to the outbreak of war was not simply a display of loyalty to the fatherland, but also the expression of a wish to protect a country which they regarded as their *Heimat*.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

THE 'REBIRTH OF GREATER GERMANY': THE AUSTRO-GERMAN ALLIANCE AND THE OUTBREAK OF WAR*

Jan Vermeiren

In a lecture given in the spring of 1916, Hugo Preuß, then Professor of Politics and Constitutional Law at the now defunct Business College (*Handelshochschule*) of Berlin, drew attention to the war's repercussions on German social and intellectual life: 'In the sufferings and sacrifices it imposes, in the outrage it provokes, in the prospects it opens, so much has become uncertain which had seemed to most concluded and decided once and for all.' Preuß's assertion of a 'new intellectual orientation,' based upon the observation of changes in certain thought patterns and role models caused by the war, did not hint at a general condemnation of Imperial Germany's authoritarian system. Nor did it signify an end to the confidence the majority of Germans placed in their political and military leaders—such considerations were far too premature in the spring of 1916. Rather Preuß, who would later become one of the founding fathers of the Weimar Republic, was referring to national identity, to the way in which Reich Germans perceived themselves as a distinct political and cultural community. He was trying to describe the redefinition of Austro-German relations on a popular level, the supposed beginning of the end of the Lesser German paradigm of 1866/71 and the re-emergence of a Greater German sentiment, instigated by a novel solidarity between the German Reich and the Habsburg Empire.¹

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¹ Hugo Preuß, 'Großdeutsch, Kleindeutsch und die Idee des nationalen Staates,' in idem, *Obrigkeitsstaat und großdeutscher Gedanke. Zwei Vorträge* (Jena: 1916), pp. 29–57 (pp. 30–1). For Austro-German relations more generally see Katzenstein (1976), Kann

My research aims to delve into this very process and to analyze the implications of First World War comradeship-in-arms with Austria-Hungary for German national identity. Taking into account the fact that the First World War was a clash of alliances rather than a struggle between isolated states, several studies have already dealt with the complicated and often tense relationship between the two allies. So far, however, they have concentrated on political and diplomatic aspects, economic issues or matters of military cooperation. They have shown how over the course of the war and after various arguments concerning issues such as joint warfare and strategic planning, the Polish question, or the *Mitteleuropa* project—to name but a few—the Danube Monarchy gradually slipped into the position of a dependent vassal of Germany.² Unsurprisingly, conflicts between the allies materialized mainly in the secret sphere of diplomats and generals. Pejorative remarks such as Ludendorff's complaint about the 'wretchedness of Austria' or Falkenhayn's reference to the Habsburg ally as 'a carcass' and its troops as 'flabby' and 'sloppy' were not meant for the general public, which had to form its own image of the war's course and of Germany's relationship with its allies.³ My doctoral thesis seeks to deal with such questions of perception and interpretation, relating the Austro-German discourse to the broader debate about German war ideology and nationalism, the mobilization of intellectuals, and the impact of war on German society and culture.⁴

It is not my intention in this chapter to give a comprehensive analysis of the 'brotherhood of arms' and its implications, which would have to take into account issues such as the role and perception of Hungary (and the Hungarian Germans), competing historiographical concepts,

and Prinz (1980), Lutz and Rumpler (1982), Gehler (1996). Also Korálka (1993) and Mommsen (1990). The term 'Austria' in this paper is used to denote the Western or Cisleithanian half of the Dual Monarchy, which only acquired this official title in October 1915. Before this, the non-Hungarian lands were officially known as 'the kingdoms and countries represented in the *Reichsrat*.' 'Reich German' refers to the Germans of Imperial Germany; 'Austrian German' to those within Austria.

² Craig (1965), Holborn (1970), Silberstein (1970), Gonda (1977), Lemke (1977), Shanafelt (1985), Mommsen (1996). More generally on Germany and Austria-Hungary in World War I: Rauchensteiner (1993), Chickering (2004), and Herwig (1997).

³ Ludendorff to Moltke, 1 April 1915, quoted in Zechlin (1970), p. 334; Bethmann Hollweg to Jagow on his talks with Falkenhayn, quoted in Fischer (1964), p. 253. See also Kronenbitter (2004).

⁴ See for the wider context Schwabe (1969), Mommsen (1996a), Flasch (2000), Müller (2002), Bruendel (2003), Hoeres (2004).

attitudes towards the nationality issue, and the *Mitteleuropa* debate. Instead I would like to adopt a somewhat less wide-ranging approach and examine the outbreak of Greater German euphoria at the start of the war and the altered Reich German perception (and more precisely, public depiction) of an ally previously seen as an anachronistic and mortally ill entity, shattered by struggles between its numerous nationalities. I aim to demonstrate that the glorification and mythologization of the coalition between Imperial Germany and the Habsburg Monarchy in the first months of the war represented a significant element in German war ideology, a point hitherto ignored in existing research.

The German Press in July 1914

The momentous assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife on 28 June 1914 was condemned not only in Austria-Hungary, but in other countries too, including France, Great Britain and Germany.⁵ The incident led the German press to focus on the neighboring Empire much more than it had previously. Unsurprisingly, most papers expressed indignation at what the Catholic daily *Germania* called a 'truly terrible act' and 'one of the most detestable crimes in world history.'⁶ They generally expressed sympathy, although without fully grasping the incident's dangerous potential. Yet while the Berlin government concentrated intensively on the Balkan question and—in an attempt to prevent the destabilization of its only reliable ally and to gain political prestige—finally urged the Habsburg Monarchy to react rigorously, the general public soon lost interest.⁷ The topic only received renewed attention after 23 July, in connection with the delivery of the Austro-Hungarian ultimatum. Overall, the attitude of the German press was relatively uniform; most papers supported the Austrian ally in its uncompromising attitude towards Belgrade, underestimating Serbian resistance and misunderstanding the Russian position. Indeed, a strong response was often viewed as the guarantee of a peaceful solution. The

⁵ Söseman (1996). For the German press in the July Crisis see Raithel (1996), pp. 139–203, and Rosenberger (1998), pp. 239–90. For Austrian reactions see Ehrenpreis (2005), pp. 31–64.

⁶ 'Das Attentat von Serajewo,' *Germania*, 30 June 1914, evening edition, p. 1.

⁷ For recent discussions see Mombauer (2002), Mombauer (2007), Hewitson (2004), and Williamson and May (2007).

majority did not really want a European confrontation, hoping instead for a diplomatic settlement or at least the localization of the conflict if war proved unavoidable. Nevertheless, the Habsburg ally was promised German loyalty and support if intervened, although such interference was not expected.⁸

Only a few papers, the Social Democratic press together with some left-liberal publications, expressed a different view. Criticizing the hasty and biased condemnation of Serbia in the majority of German newspapers, some even blamed Austria-Hungary itself and its failed Balkan and nationality policies for the crisis. For example *Vorwärts*, in its first article on the assassination, argued that Franz Ferdinand had in fact died 'as the victim of a wrong, outdated system.'⁹ Disapproval of the situation within the multinational Empire went hand in hand with a request for democratic reforms without which, it was claimed, the Dual Monarchy would have no right to exist and would continue to pose a threat to peace in Europe.¹⁰ Stressing that 'only a deeply humiliated state could accept the ultimatum,' these papers continued to attack the Habsburg standpoint after 23 July and flatly refused any German support.¹¹ Instead they demanded that the German government exercise restraint and act as a moderating influence on the decision-makers in Vienna. However, it was in vain that the *Hamburger Echo* declared: 'It costs neither the most sacred goods nor the slightest sacrifice in self-confidence or prestige to speak a powerful word for peace.'¹²

Thus towards the end of July the Catholic press, as well as most liberal and conservative broadsheets, unconditionally backed the Danube Monarchy. With regard to Reich German support, these papers hardly ever referred to treaty obligations—the Habsburg Empire had not been attacked by a third party—but instead to Germany's own interest in the continued existence of a strong and internationally acknowledged coalition partner. The influential journalist Paul Rohrbach, for instance,

⁸ For the attitude of generally moderate papers see the editorial in the *Vossische Zeitung*, 24 July 1914, evening edition, p. 1, or Theodor Wolff, 'Die Bemühungen zur Lokalisierung des Krieges,' *Berliner Tageblatt*, 27 July 1914, morning edition, p. 1.

⁹ 'Der österreichische Thronfolger und seine Frau erschossen!' *Vorwärts*, 29 June 1914, p. 1.

¹⁰ See, for instance, 'Tu felix Austria!' *Neue Zeit*, 10 July 1914, pp. 649–52.

¹¹ Editorial, *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 24 July 1914, evening edition, p. 1.

¹² 'Ruhe vor dem Sturm?' *Hamburger Echo*, 28 July 1914, p. 1.

made it clear that 'by defending Austria-Hungary we defend ourselves.'¹³ Similarly, the national-liberal *Kölnische Zeitung* maintained that Germany had to remain faithful since any damage to its ally would ultimately mean the 'undermining of our own position on the world stage.'¹⁴ Yet whereas these comments reflected rather soberly on alliance politics, international entanglements and potential repercussions for the German nation state, Pan-German observers argued on ethnic grounds and were much more concerned with the standing of the Austrian Germans. By and large, the nationalist press was characterized by a particularly aggressive attitude to Serbia and the Southern Slavs, urging Austria-Hungary to act without hesitation.¹⁵ Even so, they also criticized the Habsburg ally heavily (albeit from a viewpoint diametrically opposed to that of the Social Democrats), for the extreme Right attributed the whole crisis to the Austrian government's over-lenient nationality policy. In accordance with the notion that the Habsburg Empire, as a German-led entity, was a bulwark against Pan-Slav tendencies and guaranteed German authority in Central and South-Eastern Europe, the assassination was simply seen as another example of Slav terrorism and a challenge to the whole German nation. In this regard, they perceived Imperial Germany's commitment not only as a matter of *raison d'état*, but also as a moral and *völkisch* duty, a question of self-defense in the 'long expected, inevitable fight between Germandom and Slavdom.'¹⁶

Nonetheless, this emphasis on the ethnic aspect of the alliance still remained a minority position, notwithstanding enthusiastic Reich German letters of encouragement to the editors of diverse Austrian newspapers or the passionate telegrams which academic fraternities and gymnastic clubs dispatched to their sister organizations in the Dual Monarchy, such as the one sent to the Graz *Akademischer Turnverein* by the *Alemannia* in Leipzig: 'Blood brotherhood at this solemn moment,

¹³ Paul Rohrbach, 'Nur keinen Schritt rückwärts!' *Das Größere Deutschland*, 1 August 1914, pp. 471–3 (p. 472).

¹⁴ 'Die Interessen Deutschlands,' *Kölnische Zeitung*, 25 July 1914, evening edition, p. 1.

¹⁵ See, for instance, 'Vervollständigung des Ultimatus—Intervention Rußlands,' *Deutsche Tageszeitung*, 25 July 1914, morning edition, p. 1, and 'Serbien vor der Entscheidung,' *Tägliche Rundschau*, 24 July 1914, evening edition, p. 1. Compare with 'Habsburgische Gewaltpolitik,' *Rheinisch-Westfälische Zeitung*, 24 July 1914, evening edition, p. 1.

¹⁶ 'Vor der Entscheidung,' *Alldeutsche Blätter*, 1 August 1914, pp. 277–8 (p. 277).

faithful to Austria!¹⁷ This was also the case regarding public assertions of sympathy and support for the Habsburg Empire on the streets of several German cities.¹⁸ As is well known, young people, students, and members of the educated middle classes (amongst them a considerable number of Austrian citizens) gathered in so-called 'patriotic parades' and vociferously articulated their solidarity with Austria-Hungary in the last days of July. In a letter to the Bavarian Minister-President Georg von Hertling, attaché Hans von Schoen reported the events in Berlin on 25 July:

Berlin's population welcomed the news that Serbia has rejected the Austrian demands, which became known here yesterday evening, with warm sympathy for the allied Danube Monarchy. Everywhere crowds of people formed, later converging in large processions and rallying in front of the palace, the palais of the Reich Chancellor and the Austro-Hungarian embassy, singing patriotic songs and cheering the allied Houses of Hohenzollern and Habsburg.¹⁹

Such demonstrations also occurred in Cologne and Hamburg, whereas in smaller German towns Austrophile incidents were limited to coffee-houses and pubs. While similar rallies took place over the following days, it must be remembered that many more people participated in the numerous anti-war campaigns organized by the SPD. Against this backdrop, the right-wing interpretation of pro-Austrian acclamations as a clear indication that the majority of Germans unconditionally supported their ally and were enthusiastically ready for war must be regarded as incorrect. These crowds did not represent the German public. Moreover, the participation of many younger people and the gatherings' often carnivalesque appearance suggest that a desire for sensation and excitement rather than a profound *gesamtdeutsch* sense of togetherness motivated the agitation. In contrast to Schoen's claim, there

¹⁷ 'Zustimmungskundgebungen aus dem Deutschen Reiche,' *Grazer Tagblatt*, 27 July 1914, special edition, p. 2. For a reader's letter see 'Ein Kampfgruß aus Dresden,' *Ibid.*, 3 August 1914, evening edition, p. 6.

¹⁸ For a detailed account of public reactions during the July Crisis see Raithel (1996), pp. 227–77 and Verhey (2000), pp. 26–57.

¹⁹ Schoen to Hertling, 26 July 1914, in *Briefwechsel Hertling-Lerchenfeld 1912–1917. Dienstliche Privatkorrespondenz zwischen dem bayerischen Ministerpräsidenten Georg Graf von Hertling und dem bayerischen Gesandten in Berlin Hugo von und zu Lerchenfeld*, ed. Ernst Deuerlein, 2 vols (Boppard am Rhein: 1973), I, pp. 311–2.

was no broad awareness that the Austro-Serbian conflict was about the 'repulse of the Slavic surge against Germanic existence.'²⁰

'Hurrah Germania': The Outbreak of War

The Austro-Hungarian declaration of war on 28 July 1914 set off the disastrous chain of mobilizations and ultimatums which turned Europe into a war zone. In Germany, the last critical voices fell silent on 1 August, which marked not only the declaration of war against Russia but also the first implementation of press censorship.²¹ The latter, however, proved relatively superfluous. As had already become obvious in July, governmental agencies played little role in fostering a consistent tone in the media. The absence of unfavorable comment was less due to official attempts to influence the press than to the self-mobilization and self-regulation of a majority of journalists, who blamed Serbia and Russia for the conflict's escalation and backed the German government in its loyal stance towards Austria-Hungary. It was in this context that the prominent essayist Maximilian Harden, who took an opposing point of view, reproached them for warmongering which would forever 'stick as a blot on the robe of the German press.'²² In any case, the entire German press unconditionally supported official policy from the outbreak of hostilities onwards, not least because of the widespread conviction that Germany was fighting a defensive war.

The civil truce (*Burgfrieden*) not only brought domestic political strife to an end. It also applied to Germany's external relations: a uniform tone developed regarding the Habsburg ally, which had become even more important with the Italian declaration of neutrality. Even the Social Democrats, who, as late as 30 July, had asked whether 'madness should triumph,' proved to be conciliatory and expressed solidarity with the Danube Monarchy.²³ In this regard Eduard Bernstein, one of the leading Social Democratic theorists, stated that it had been 'incorrect' to 'blame the Austrian thrill of power for the conflict between

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 312.

²¹ A state of siege had been declared the day before. For censorship, official propaganda, and press policy see studies by Koszyk (1968), Fischer (1973), Deist (1990), Creutz (1996) and Welch (2000).

²² Maximilian Harden, 'Principes,' *Zeitung*, 4 July 1914, pp. 1–34 (p. 30).

²³ 'Soll der Unsinn siegen?' *Vorwärts*, 30 July 1914, p. 1.

Serbia and Austria.²⁴ Instead of criticizing Habsburg warmongering, the Left now condemned Eastern ‘barbarism’ and despotic rule in Tsarist Russia, while stressing that it was in Germany’s own interest ‘to defend and strengthen the existence and power of its only reliable ally since... Germany on its own could not resist the forces which push forward from the East.’ As this editorial in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* concluded: ‘By standing behind Austria we stand for ourselves.’²⁵

However, while Germany experienced a wave of patriotism and national solidarity at the outbreak of the conflict, many newspapers went beyond a more or less rational assessment of the situation and enthusiastically expressed their confidence in winning the war, which was expected to be a short affair. The fact that Reich Germans were going to war together with 12 million Germans under Habsburg rule was widely noted in this upsurge of collective emotion, as the following comment published in the *Kölnische Zeitung* on 2 August (before the British entered the war) proves: ‘Hurrah Germanial! Two Germanic *Völker* against the Russians and French, two powerful, viable *Völker* against megalomaniac cultural barbarism and an already overripe civilization... Hurrah Germanial!’²⁶ Efforts to emotionalize and glorify the alliance by highlighting the ‘old cultural community of both Empires,’ as Wilhelm II did in his address at the opening of the Reichstag on 4 August, represented a significant element of German war nationalism in the press and in intellectual debate in the early weeks of the war.²⁷ Many professors, journalists and other members of the cultural elite, who contributed to the spiritual mobilization (*geistige Mobilmachung*) of 1914, proved receptive to the ethno-cultural interpretation and declared the coalition of convenience a Greater German union of fate. For example, Gustav Roethe, Professor of Medieval Literature at the University of Berlin, expressed his deep delight in a speech on 3 September that ‘in this hour Greater Germany stands together faithfully, that today we fight together with our old rivals, the Austrians, who once were separated from us by bitter necessity.’ To him it was unquestionable that the settlement of political and social differences for the sake of national camaraderie,

²⁴ Eduard Bernstein, ‘Der Krieg, sein Urheber und sein erstes Opfer,’ *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, 13 August 1914, pp. 1015–23 (pp. 1017–8).

²⁵ ‘Wir müssen siegen, wir werden siegen!’ *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 4 August, 2nd morning edition, p. 1.

²⁶ Editorial, *Kölnische Zeitung*, 2 August 1914, 1st morning edition, p. 1.

²⁷ Monarch’s Speech in *Verhandlungen des Reichstags. Stenographische Berichte*, Vol. 306, 4 August 1914, pp. 1–2 (p. 2).

the new sense of community which became celebrated as the 'spirit of 1914,' was not a phenomenon restricted to the boundaries of the German Reich but a Greater German experience: 'The world, and what is more, German history, the German mind, have never experienced a time in which Germans were so unreservedly and completely united, from rock to ocean, from Graz and Bozen down to Flensburg and Hadersleben.'²⁸ Similarly, Adolf Rapp, a young historian from Tübingen, spoke of a 'Greater German war,' whilst Martin Spahn, a Catholic who taught history in Strasbourg, praised the Austro-German alliance as the 'rebirth of Greater Germany.'²⁹

This romanticizing of the war coalition was not restricted to intellectual opinion leaders. It was also supported and popularized on a more trivial level—in war poetry, on postcards and through war souvenirs. In fact, several of the countless poems composed in the first months of the war celebrated this comradeship-in-arms, with contributions written by some of the most popular poets, novelists and playwrights of the day. Richard Dehmel, for instance, celebrated '*Alldeutschlands* awakening,' while Hermann Sudermann's poem 'To the Austrians' praised 'the brotherhood of our blood.'³⁰ Other writers included Ludwig Fulda, Ferdinand Avenarius and Ludwig Ganghofer, a close friend of Wilhelm II, but the great majority were written by amateurs, mostly excited members of the educated middle classes. The motivation for this enormous artistic commitment is complex and hard to pin down. The wish to participate in and contribute to the war effort at a time of general excitement played an important part, as did the desire for self-assurance and the need to come to terms with the events. However, just like most affirmative war poetry, the majority of 'comradeship poems' stood out because of their aggressive tone and warmongering rather than their artistic or creative quality.³¹

²⁸ Gustav Roethe, *Wir Deutschen und der Krieg. Rede am 3. September 1914* (Berlin: 1914), pp. 16, 3.

²⁹ Adolf Rapp, 'Der großdeutsche Gedanke einst und jetzt,' *Süddeutsche Monatshefte*, October 1914 (special issue: 'Das neue Deutschland'), pp. 46–51 (p. 49); Martin Spahn, 'An den Pforten des Weltkrieges,' *Hochland*, October 1914, pp. 13–29 (p. 20).

³⁰ Richard Dehmel, 'Alldeutschlands Erweckung,' *Berliner Tageblatt*, 18 August 1914, evening edition, p. 2; Hermann Sudermann, 'An die Österreicher,' in *Der deutsche Krieg in Dichtungen*, ed. Walther Eggert Windegg (Munich: 1915), pp. 58–9 (p. 59).

³¹ For an interpretation of the wartime commitment of several prominent German writers and artists, as well as some amateur poets, see Koester (1977), Philippi (1979) and Fries (1994–5).

The allies' common identity was often affirmed through antiquated and quixotic symbols which conveyed a romantic image of war, sharply in contrast to the anonymous and merciless mass death of the trenches. For example, Germany and its Habsburg ally were portrayed as 'dauntless warriors in shining armor' or as a defiant pair of eagles (the heraldic animals of both Empires) 'rising... to stars and to victories.'³² References to colors and flags were also popular, while other poems fell back on the Emperors or on military leaders (Hindenburg and Conrad), recalled prestigious historic battles or praised celebrated war heroes like Prince Eugene in order to link contemporary events with a common triumphant past, thus sustaining confidence in a victorious outcome. The same symbols were used to represent the alliance on postcards or war kitsch, such as knick-knacks or specially shaped household tools. Passionate supporters of the Austro-German coalition could purchase 'fraternization' badges and cockades in the colors of Germany and Austria-Hungary, commemorative medals, miniature versions of monarchical busts, two-piece cruet sets endowed with eagle depictions, or so-called 'patriotic' vases, plates or cups with a common portrayal of both monarchs or army chiefs. More discerning collectors bought elaborate porcelain figures portraying a German and an Austrian soldier in joint action or showing both combatants shaking hands.³³ Of course, not all of these were 'ethno-centrist' in the sense that they portrayed the war as a Germanic venture or defined the alliance as a representation of Germanness. In fact, most were easily later extended to include the Bulgarian and Turkish allies. It is also perhaps worth noting that similar objects and symbols (flags, heads of state, soldiers in their characteristic uniforms) were produced to represent and celebrate the *Entente's* alliance against the Central Powers. However, in contrast to Russian, French and British cooperation, the ethnic aspect

³² Karl Ettlinger, 'Die Waffenbrüder,' in *Liebesgaben aus dem Deutschen Reiche*, ed. Karl von Amira (*Österreichische Rundschau*, 15 February 1915), pp. 51–2 (p. 51); Georg Reicke, '1914,' *Berliner Tageblatt*, 15 August 1914, morning edition, p. 2. See also some of the contributions in the following anthologies: *Wir und Österreich: Kriegsdichtungen 1914/15*, ed. Gustav Falke (Hamburg: 1915) and *Deutschlands Kriegsgesänge aus dem Weltkrieg 1914*, 2nd ed., ed. Carl Peter (Oldenburg i. Gr.: 1915), in particular pp. 204–12.

³³ For typical examples of postcards representing the war alliance see Weigel *et al.* (1983), pp. 51–2, 103, 105, 114–5, 129 and 133. For war kitsch, see the reprint of a page of a department store catalog in *Kunst- und Kulturwart*, 1st December issue 1915, p. 194, and Loidl (2004), in particular pp. 62–77. A small collection can be seen in the *Heeresgeschichtliches Museum*, Vienna, First World War section, display case F.

remains foremost in accounting for the widespread popularity of the Austro-German fellowship.

The Rhetoric of Unity

Depicting the war coalition as a 'band of genuine, German character' called for a re-affirmation of Austria's Germanness.³⁴ This required some effort in Germany, for the prewar period had been characterized by a lack of interest in and growing estrangement from the neighboring state. Despite the close political, economic and cultural ties between the Danube Monarchy and the states which were to form the German Reich, Prussian historians before Sadowa had tried to undermine the Habsburg claim to supremacy in Germany by exposing the Austrian Empire as a non-German power, an unfortunate Slavo-Catholic jumble of nationalities. For example, Treitschke argued in 1866 that it was 'foolish to speak of a German Austria.'³⁵ Even after 1870/71 and the conclusion of the Dual Alliance in 1879, the multinational Empire still appeared as a *Völkerchaos*, an exotic anomaly in an 'age of national passions, ideas, differences,' deliberately surrendering its German character and thus doomed to pass away sooner rather than later.³⁶ However, after the outbreak of war Austria-Hungary represented Germany's most important ally, indispensable for 'survival,' and contempt was replaced by commitment. Commonalities now counted instead of differences. It was in this context that Paul Feine, Professor of Protestant Theology in Halle (Saale), who had lived and worked in Vienna for several years, stressed that Austria was basically 'German cultural territory' and Vienna *urdeutsch*:

Science and education, architecture, music, poetry; literary, aesthetic, and related cultural phenomena connect Germany and Austria in a spiritual [*geistiger*] unity. In all these areas Vienna has often led the way or at

³⁴ Max Hayek, 'Deutschland—Österreich (Zum heutigen Geburtstag Kaiser Franz Josephs),' *Neue Preussische Zeitung* (Kreuzzeitung), 18 August 1914, evening edition, p. 2.

³⁵ Heinrich von Treitschke, 'Der Krieg und die Bundesreform,' in *Heinrich von Treitschke, Aufsätze, Reden und Briefe*, ed. Karl Martin Schiller, 5 vols (Meersburg: 1929), III: *Schriften und Reden zur Zeitgeschichte I*, pp. 251–71 (p. 257). On Prussian historiography see Fellner (1982), Hardtwig (1990), Brechenmacher (1996).

³⁶ J. J. Ruedorffer [i.e. Kurt Riezler], *Grundzüge der Weltpolitik der Gegenwart* (Stuttgart: 1914), p. 59.

least provided a significant strain of German intellectual life. Grillparzer, Anastasius Grün and Nikolaus Lenau, Mozart, Beethoven, Haydn and Schubert belong to the whole German nation.³⁷

In a similar way Erich Jung, Professor of Civil Law and the Philosophy of Law in Strasbourg, emphasized that Austro-German unity was 'not an ordered, political unity,' but was instead rooted in the shared traits and aims of a single 'cultural community.'³⁸

Two elements in particular were highlighted in this glorification of the alliance: loyalty and unity, propagated as core virtues which would lie at the heart of the affinity between Germans in both Empires. It was repeatedly asserted that a new fellow-feeling had finally replaced a tense relationship characterized by ignorance and discord, or, as popular theater playwright Ludwig Fulda put it, 'all defiance of narrow peculiarity' and 'petty whinging, quarreling, mocking.'³⁹ In Germany, many authors and poets praised the renaissance of a Greater German sense of togetherness and the experience of fraternity and community with the Austrian Germans as a 'wonder which the earth has never seen,' celebrating the war as the initiator of authentic Germanness and Germany's return to her true path.⁴⁰ It was in this context that the prominent art critic Karl Scheffler described the moment as 'Germany's second unification' after 1870/71, while Friedrich Naumann proclaimed: 'Now 1866 is completely over: a *Volk* of brothers!'⁴¹

Naumann's evocation of the brotherhood topos was not uncommon; Austria and Germany were indeed often depicted as members of one family, as brothers who stick up for each other. In this reading, mutual support appeared as a moral necessity, while disloyalty or betrayal was a crime against one's own family (that is, the German people), an anti-German act. For instance, Roethe perceived in the Austro-German alliance 'nothing but the simple brotherly loyalty which the German owes

³⁷ [Paul] Feine, 'Deutschlands und Oesterreichs Geistes- und Kulturgemeinschaft,' *Neue Preussische Zeitung* (Kreuzzeitung), 20 March 1915, morning edition, supplement, p. 1.

³⁸ Erich Jung, 'Von deutscher Kultur und deutscher Freiheit. Auch eine Kriegsbetrachtung,' *Grenzboten*, 26 May 1915, pp. 235–44 (p. 236).

³⁹ Ludwig Fulda, 'Der Feind im Hause,' in *Liebesgaben*, p. 68.

⁴⁰ Ferdinand Avenarius, 'Deutsches Kampflied,' *Kunstwart und Kulturwart*, 1 September issue 1914, pp. 313–14 (p. 313).

⁴¹ Karl Scheffler, 'Der Deutschen zweite Einigung,' *Vossische Zeitung*, 27 August 1914, evening edition, p. 2; Friedrich Naumann, 'Der Krieg,' *Hilfe*, 6 August 1914, pp. 513–4 (p. 513).

the German.⁴² Here, the imagined community of the aligned monarchies was based on the idea of common descent or origin, something eternal, obligatory and inescapable—an interpretation close to *völkisch* ideology. In fact, it was not only Pan-Germans but also Catholic and liberal voices who alluded to 'national kinship [*Stammesverwandtschaft*].' *Germania*, for example, enthusiastically declared that 'Blood is thicker than water!' and added: 'We not only feel ourselves allies of the Danube Monarchy, but realize that we are related to the Austrians as brothers who arose from the same parental home and stand together in unwavering loyalty.'⁴³ Two weeks after the outbreak of war, Johannes Bell, a Center Party Reichstag deputy and later a signatory of the Versailles Treaty, went even further when he spoke of a '*völkisch* war of decision' and appealed to the Flemings in Belgium to acknowledge their 'blood relationship' with the Germans, already united with their Austrian kinsmen by the Faith of the Nibelungs, the *Nibelungentreue*.⁴⁴

Here we encounter another strategy for providing comradeship-in-arms with a unique quality: references to a dim and distant shared Germanic past, to the well-known myth of the *Nibelungentreue*, a concept coined by Chancellor Bülow in March 1909 when he cited it to counter reproaches that Germany was too close to Austria-Hungary.⁴⁵ This strategy was quickly taken up again after the war's outbreak. For example, Franz von Liszt, Professor of Law at the University of Berlin and left-liberal member of the Reichstag (though born an Austrian citizen), applied it to the war and inscribed the narrative with the very values and norms essential to sustain faith in the coalition's stability and superiority. Basing his argument on typical Prussian and Austrian stereotypes, Liszt envisaged 'powerful [*waffengewaltige*], proud, furious Hagen on one side, the symbol of Prussian Germany, and Volker the cheerful minstrel on the other, skilful in battle and chant, the symbol of song-loving and belligerent Austria-Hungary.' Liszt added that the

⁴² Gustav Roethe, 'Nibelungentreue,' in *Deutscher März. Zweite Liebesgabe deutscher Hochschüler* (Kassel: 1915), pp. 66–75 (p. 68).

⁴³ 'Kaiser Franz Joseph an Kaiser Wilhelm,' *Berliner Lokalanzeiger*, 27 August 1914, morning edition, p. 1; 'Österreich-Ungarn und wir,' *Germania*, 27 August 1914, evening edition, p. 2.

⁴⁴ Justizrat Dr. Bell, 'Zum europäischen Völkerkrieg,' *Kölnische Volkszeitung*, 19 August 1914, morning edition, p. 1.

⁴⁵ See his speech of 29 March 1909, quoted in *Fürst Bülow's Reden nebst urkundlichen Beiträgen zu seiner Politik*, eds Johannes Penzler and Otto Hoetzsch, 3 vols (Berlin: 1907–09), III: 1907–1909 (1909), pp. 179–98.

Nibelungenlied—this ‘hymn of heroic courage and heroic loyalty’—had never before been so close to the German heart. It was now necessary to maintain this loyalty, this Germanic commitment.⁴⁶

However, the underlying fatalism of a concept signifying unshakable resolve right down to defeat or, in Roethe’s words, ‘loyalty to death, down to the last man and the last drop of blood, unbreakable by danger or seduction,’ was inescapable.⁴⁷ This might account for the fact that references to the *Nibelungentreue*, as a mythical interpretation of Austro-German companionship, were not widespread in German war nationalism: they proved less popular than family imagery.⁴⁸ Obviously, the motif of unwavering steadfastness even to the bitter end did not suit the optimistic and animated atmosphere of awakening at the war’s beginning, when most Germans expected a quick and victorious outcome. In fact Liszt tried to separate the exemplary *Nibelungentreue* from the defeat of Hagen and Volker, to modify or adjust the story to evade the awkward, disastrous end: ‘Victory not downfall will be the outcome of the joint fight.’⁴⁹ Roethe’s commentary concluded with a similar attempt to distract from the ‘tragedy’ and the ‘moral gloominess’ of the theme: ‘We want to go forward courageously, arm in arm towards a praiseworthy peace, not the hopeless downfall which all devout followers of the Saga of the Nibelungs are willing to accept.’⁵⁰ While the catchphrase was repeatedly used in a simple, superficial way in newspaper articles (for example, when giving accounts of the Central Powers’ joint military campaigns) or in war poetry, detailed commentaries aimed at political and ideological mobilization such as those written by Liszt and Roethe remained relatively rare.

The ‘Austrian Miracle’

A similar tendency to portray the war as a Greater German endeavor was also noticeable in Austria. However, this was less surprising given the Slav nationalities’ constant opposition to the supremacy of the Austrian

⁴⁶ Franz von Liszt, *Von der Nibelungentreue. Rede am 18. November 1914* (Berlin: 1914), pp. 16, 26.

⁴⁷ Roethe, ‘Nibelungentreue,’ pp. 72, 66.

⁴⁸ Yet this is somewhat implied by Wapnewski (2001), and Münkler and Storch (1988), pp. 73–85. Compare with See (2003).

⁴⁹ Liszt, p. 22.

⁵⁰ Roethe, ‘Nibelungentreue,’ p. 68.

Germans, and the strong *deutschnational* tendencies evident before 1914.⁵¹ Whereas before the war Imperial Germany's elite were more interested in colonial aspirations than in their co-nationals under Habsburg rule, in Austria almost all political camps retained a strong sense of solidarity with the Reich Germans, despite a certain tension between Habsburg state patriotism and the sense of forming a vital part of the German nation. At the outbreak of hostilities, however, even Social Democrats displayed a Greater German attitude. The editor-in-chief of the *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, for instance, declared 4 August 1914 the 'day of the German nation.' 'Now,' he wrote, 'German life is at stake and there shall be no wavering and no hesitation! The German nation is united in its iron and uncompromising resolve not to let itself be subjugated, and neither death nor the devil will succeed in bringing down this great, capable nation, our German nation.'⁵² Before long, many intellectuals replaced their inclination to profess a separate collective identity with a forceful affirmation of Austria's German character. Stefan Zweig, for example, denied the existence of 'Austrian' as opposed to 'German' literature, and Hermann Bahr, one of the most fervent prewar advocates of an individual Viennese cultural movement that was clearly distinct from Berlin, declared: 'The German appeared to us... For the first time we now know who we really are... Now we are nothing but German.'⁵³ Often, joint military action was interpreted as a final triumph over 1866's cruel stroke of fate and as the hopeful beginning of a common future with the Reich Germans. Again, we find the concepts of brotherly camaraderie and of the 'thousand-year-old heroic loyalty' of the Nibelungs, the same images of the Rhine and the Danube, of flags, eagles, or entangled oak trees representing the idea of unity.⁵⁴

Yet another tendency was evident alongside this Greater German euphoria, which demonstrated that to some extent the dilemma of Austrian identity remained unsolved: the propagation of the so-called

⁵¹ In contrast to Reich German reactions, Austrian attitudes have already been studied. See Streim (1998) and relevant paragraphs in Kirchhoff (2001), in particular pp. 171–238. For a broader picture see Ramhardter (1973), Kann (1977), Sauermann (2000) and Ehrenpreis (2005).

⁵² Friedrich Austerlitz, 'Der Tag der deutschen Nation. Die Sitzung des Reichstages,' *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, 5 August 1914, p. 1.

⁵³ Stefan Zweig, 'Vom "österreichischen" Dichter. Ein Wort zur Zeit,' *Das literarische Echo*, 1 December 1914, cols. 263–5; Hermann Bahr, 'Das deutsche Wesen ist uns erschienen!' *Berliner Tageblatt*, 14 August 1914, evening edition, p. 2.

⁵⁴ Richard von Kralik, 'An Deutschland!' *Reichspost*, 5 August 1914, morning edition, p. 1.

'Austrian miracle' as something signifying not just a cross-party truce but even more a cross-national one, which had finally overcome the seemingly hopeless friction between the numerous nationalities of the Habsburg Empire.⁵⁵ Germans, Czechs, Poles, Magyars and all the other ethnic groups, it was claimed, had prudently settled their differences and rallied together for the common defense of the fatherland. As the Social Democrat Engelbert Pernerstorfer declared: 'The Dual Monarchy has become united. Everywhere there is nothing to see and hear but unity. The distinction between nations seems to have vanished... What has happened here is almost a miracle. A miracle we want to praise.'⁵⁶ For Richard Charmatz, a close friend of Friedrich Naumann, the Habsburg Monarchy had risen 'like one man': 'No nation remains behind the other; in all blazes the readiness to make sacrifices and the love of one's country.'⁵⁷

The extent to which this represented reality or was merely propagated for tactical reasons cannot be discussed here. What is relevant is that the Reich German press consequently revised its pre-1914 view of the Habsburg Monarchy as a shattered *Völkerchaos* heading for inevitable collapse, seeing it instead as a domestically stable and thus reliable ally. While *Germania* detected 'Austria's rebirth,' the *Historisch-politische Blätter* confirmed: 'There is an Austria again.'⁵⁸ This new belief in Austria's vigor was not restricted to Catholic papers. To quote just one example, the left-liberal Reichstag deputy Conrad Haußmann pointed to it as well: 'In Austria-Hungary the state's fabric has suddenly become firmer. The destructive conflict of nationalities has given way to a sense of loyalty to the state which is of great significance for the war and almost even more so for the peace.'⁵⁹ German loyalty to the alliance,

⁵⁵ The catchphrase was coined by Hermann Bahr. See his *Das österreichische Wunder: Einladung nach Salzburg* (Stuttgart: 1915). For a similar tendency see Hugo v. Hofmannsthal, 'Die Bejahung Österreichs. Gedanken zum gegenwärtigen Augenblick,' *Österreichische Rundschau*, 1 November 1914, pp. 97–9.

⁵⁶ Engelbert Pernerstorfer, 'Ein fester Bund,' *März*, 5 September 1914, pp. 289–92 (pp. 290–91).

⁵⁷ Richard Charmatz, 'Österreich und Deutschland,' *Hilfe*, 8 October 1914, pp. 668–9 (p. 669).

⁵⁸ 'Österreichs Wiedergeburt,' *Germania*, 13 August 1914, morning edition, pp. 1–2; 'Der Weltkrieg,' *Historisch-politische Blätter für das katholische Deutschland*, 16 August 1914, pp. 303–5 (p. 304).

⁵⁹ Conrad Haußmann, 'Europas Krieg,' *März*, 22 August 1914, pp. 246–52 (p. 249). For another liberal voice see 'Das Erwachen des Staatsgefühls in Österreich,' *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 1 August 1914, 2nd morning edition, p. 2.

to comradeship-in-arms with the Danube Monarchy, thus appeared justified, and every doubt was dispelled. As the historian Friedrich Meinecke argued: 'And by supporting Austria we do not fight for a rotten and doomed entity! These days have shown that the cooperative forces within Austria are stronger than those which dissolve. Austria's nationalities want to stay together!'⁶⁰ Adolf von Harnack, a renowned theologian and church historian at the University of Berlin, came to the same conclusion: 'We have in Austria, as Austria has in us, the most loyal and strong ally.'⁶¹

However, this rediscovered common spirit, this peaceful cohabitation of diverse ethnic groups within Austria-Hungary, was interpreted in a very particular way. All non-German nationalities—'all those little nations and petty nations [*Natiönchen*],' as the Heidelberg economist Alfred Weber put it—had finally realized 'that on the one hand their true independence and on the other hand their voice in European politics can only be saved in such a state.'⁶² Many claimed that in reality the Slav nationalities had simply acknowledged the correctness and necessity of German supremacy, instead of continuing to make unjustified demands which threatened the multinational Empire's stability. The notion of a new-found Habsburg harmony—openly questioned only by the extreme Right, which denounced it as propaganda by 'flirtatious dreamers and political dilettantes of Austrian descent'—thus did not contradict the Greater German interpretation, but served as its starting point: the Habsburg Monarchy was perceived as a German-led entity, or, as a German-Bohemian essayist put it, as 'the Germany outside the German Reich.'⁶³

Conclusion: The Myth of the Greater German Alliance

Highlighting the German bond between the Central Powers, as numerous articles in newspapers and magazines, speeches and literary works

⁶⁰ Friedrich Meinecke, 'Deutschland und der Weltkrieg,' *Das Größere Deutschland*, 29 August 1914, pp. 617–22 (p. 620).

⁶¹ Adolf v. Harnack, *Was wir schon gewonnen haben und was wir noch gewinnen müssen. Rede am 29. September 1914* (Berlin: 1914), p. 7.

⁶² Alfred Weber, 'Gedanken über die deutsche Sendung. Tagebuchblätter,' *Neue Rundschau*, November 1915, pp. 1441–65 (p. 1442).

⁶³ 'Kleine Mitteilungen,' *Alldeutsche Blätter*, 3 February 1917, pp. 61–2 (p. 62); Hermann Kienzl, 'Das neue Deutschland,' *Türmer*, 1st October issue 1915, pp. 1–6 (p. 4).

did, made Austro-German comradeship-in-arms seem to be a firm, quasi-natural and self-evident band of brothers, a true union of hearts. This special quality was believed to give them an advantage over the *Entente*, which was depicted as an artificial coalition of cold deliberation, a partnership of convenience connecting reluctant partners and unrelated interests. 'Russia and France are a disparate couple who could only come together temporarily because of their common hatred of Germany, yet between Austria and Germany ancient ties of common tradition subsist,' the *Berliner Tageblatt* claimed on 4 August 1914, concluding that 'the Greater German union will resist the storms with a completely different firmness.'⁶⁴ References to key topoi such as the *Nibelungentreue* and the idea that comradeship-in-arms rested on more than just plain necessity fostered a highly emotional and irrational faith in the alliance's superiority, which undermined the rational calculation of military capabilities and resources. The myth of fraternal union reduced the complex reality of alliance politics, international relations and war strategies to easily graspable categories of 'good' and 'evil.' It legitimized the German Reich's loyalty to the Habsburg Monarchy, made sense of the war and justified casualties and sacrifices in the name of the whole nation. In this reading, the 'German war' was fought not for states or dynasties but for the survival of Germandom, defended by Germany in the West and the Dual Monarchy in the East.

War thus seems to have changed the collective identity of the Reich Germans and to have redefined the boundaries of the German nation, which a majority of the educated classes in Imperial Germany had come to identify with the nation state before 1914. Austria-Hungary was certainly perceived differently. With the outbreak of war disparaging remarks were replaced by considerable sympathy for the multinational entity which was, however, more or less reduced to its Western half and its German-speaking population. The alliance's glorification and its interpretation as a Germanic partnership did, in fact, rest on the idea that the Danube Monarchy was a German state or at least dominated by Germans—a conviction fostered by a misreading of the 'Austrian miracle.' On the other hand, the contribution of the Magyars and other non-German nationalities to the common cause could not be completely ignored; Germany was not allied to the Austrian Germans

⁶⁴ 'Die Thronrede des Kaisers,' *Berliner Tageblatt*, 4 August 1914, evening edition, p. 1.

but to the whole Habsburg Empire, and Reich German observers were well aware of this. It would therefore be an overstatement to speak of the prevalence of *völkisch* thinking in German war ideology, at least as far as the Austro-German relationship is concerned. On the whole, the concept of a struggle between Germandom and Slavdom was not very common.⁶⁵ In contrast to the Pan-Germans and other radical nationalists, most commentators did not refer to racial categories but to a common culture, language and history, and were thus able to 'integrate' the Western Slavs by alleging that they belonged to the German cultural area. The relatively open concept of *Großdeutschland* proved more suited to the actual situation than *Alldeutschland*, which embraced other supposedly Germanic tribes like the Swiss-Germans, Scandinavians or Flemings, while excluding the Slavs.

Furthermore, it seems useful to distinguish two notions. On the one hand, references to the Greater German spirit of the coalition served many intellectuals, professors, poets and journalists as a useful paraphrase for the alliance, as a rhetorical tool and historic reminiscence without concrete substance. For them, drawing on a latent sense of togetherness re-activated by the extreme situation of the war—perhaps comparable to the Badeni Crisis in 1897—did not represent a thoroughgoing shift: the greater part of the Reich German intellectual elite did not dispute the 1866/71 solution to the German question. Soon, in fact, they moved on to other topics. In terms of war ideology Great Britain, or 'perfidious Albion,' received most attention. On the whole, the protagonists of the *geistige Mobilmachung* were much more interested in interpreting the world war as a war of principles, as a struggle between Western democracy and the German conception of the state or between the 'ideas of 1789' and those of 1914, than they were in the alliance with the multinational Danube Monarchy, which soon represented only one (albeit the most important) ally alongside Turkey and Bulgaria.

On the other hand, there were more detailed conceptions associated with the idea, especially amongst Catholics. Here, *Großdeutschland* represented an attempt to enforce an alternative idea of the German nation. It was they who in due course tried to challenge the dominant Prusso-Protestant reading of German history and, especially in the *Mitteleuropa* debate, brought the Reich myth with its Christian and

⁶⁵ On this, adopting a broader approach, see Hoeres (2006).

federalist connotations back to the fore—an endeavor I am studying in more detail in my thesis. What I wanted to do here, however, was to provide evidence for the idea that the Austro-German alliance—at least in 1914 and early 1915—was not only hugely popular with Austrian commentators but also with the great majority of Reich German intellectuals.

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SECTION III

INTERPRETING WARFARE

CHAPTER EIGHT

TOYS, GAMES AND JUVENILE LITERATURE IN GERMANY AND BRITAIN DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR. A COMPARISON*

Sonja Müller

Introduction

The 'wartime experience' is an important field of research in First World War studies. For example several publications have dealt with women's experiences and soldiers' lives at the front, while more recent studies have examined children's experiences during the war.¹ However no comparative study of the latter topic has been undertaken for Germany and Britain until now. This chapter will focus on German and British children's daily lives during the First World War, particularly emphasizing their wartime experiences.² The question of how the war affected children's everyday lives is central to my doctoral thesis and opens up a number of avenues of exploration. Firstly, there was the impact of the war itself, of the bombing and food shortages, not to mention the absence or loss of fathers, brothers and uncles.³ Mothers forced to work to provide for their families found it harder to look after their offspring, while children on both sides were also forced out to work, helping to win the war on the home front.⁴ Secondly, the war impacted on children's lives through schools and youth organizations. Schools naturally sought to keep children informed of and interested in the conflict, for example by emphasizing the righteousness of their

* This project is supported by the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, Berlin.

¹ For women's experiences see, for example, Braybon (1981); Daniel (1989); Markmann (1988); Schwerin (1999). For soldiers see for example Latzel (1997). For children, see Urli (2003); Audoin-Rouzeau (1993); *Ibid.* (2003).

² Using children's diaries, letters and school essays as sources.

³ For bombing see Fegan (2002); Süchting-Hänger (2000), pp. 73–92. For food shortages see Huggett (1985).

⁴ Andrews (1921); Daniel (1989); Flitner (1927), pp. 217–356.

countries' causes in history lessons.⁵ Children were themselves used as propaganda tools, as the patriotic formation they received at school was passed on to parents and siblings. British public schools aimed to 'melt the boys down and run them all out of the same mould like bullets.'⁶ Youth organizations such as the Boy Scouts, Boys' Brigade or Sea Scouts in Britain or the *Deutscher Pfadfinderbund* in Germany supported a patriotic belief in 'King and Country,' drawing boys into a world which extolled patriotism, honor and teamwork as manly virtues.⁷ Thirdly,—and this is the part I emphasize in this chapter—children's lives were affected by the 'patriotic' spirit of the time and by the creation of what can be described as a 'war culture' for children. The war's outbreak inspired a new phenomenon, as businessmen in France, Britain and Germany began producing toys and books inspired by the conflict. It also created new opportunities for the toy-making industry and for publishers specializing in children's books and juvenile literature. This article draws on individual toys and games produced during the war; in addition to printed sources, such as toy industry publications (the *Deutsche Spielwarenzeitung* and the *Toy and Fancy Goods Trader*), as well as children's books and juvenile literature from both countries.

The Impact of the War on Children's Games: Toy Production in Prewar Germany and Britain

Various existing German studies dealing with children's games and childhood during the First World War stress that most toys produced in Germany during the prewar period were militaristic, intended to prepare children (especially boys) to defend the fatherland.⁸ However, while Imperial Germany's militaristic spirit did influence toy production, militaristic toys were not made in large quantities. The 'central significance of military values,' an everyday phenomenon in Imperial Germany, affected the toy industry much less than might be expected.⁹

⁵ Germany: Lemmermann (1984); Bendele (1984). England: Huggett (1985); Parker (1987).

⁶ Parker (1987), p. 17.

⁷ See, for example, MacDonald (1993); Fiedler (1989); Flitner (1927), pp. 217–356.

⁸ See, for example: Weber-Kellermann (1989), pp. 201–204; Weber-Kellermann's main sources are the memoirs of adults, which cannot provide a representative picture on their own; Binger (1989), pp. 38–48; Lauterbach (1987), pp. 280–285.

⁹ For the 'central significance of military values' see Chickering (2002), p. 13.

Manufacturers did produce toy soldiers, who fought historical wars, such as the Franco-German War of 1870/71, and enthusiasm for the fleet was mirrored in toy warships and board games. But this not only had a martial significance. It also reflected contemporary 'manly' virtues.¹⁰ The idea of a future war was nevertheless present. In 1903, the leading toy manufacturer Otto Maier (today Ravensburger Spiele AG) invented *World War: A War Game for Boys*, which resembled a vision of an imminent world war.¹¹ As an advertisement for the game explained, nineteen of the world's most powerful nations participated, including Britain (John Bull), France (Jean Crapeau), North America (Uncle Sam), Japan and Russia.¹² However, the game was not particularly popular, selling only 337 copies between 1904 and 1906.¹³ On examining the company's entire game production between 1900 and 1914, we find that only seven (or 4%) of the 176 new games produced had militaristic themes.¹⁴ In conclusion, the imperialistic political and social discourse of the pre-war period *was* partially transferred to the world of play, but militaristic games were much less widely produced than traditional toys such as dolls and balls or model and clockwork trains.¹⁵

The situation in Britain was very similar. Before the war militaristic toys and games were much less common than traditional ones, as advertisements in the *Toy and Fancy Goods Trader* show. In 1913 the magazine observed that the British toy industry was especially strong in producing educational toys and games.¹⁶ Thus, for example, the toy producer Chad Valley did not invent a single war-related or militaristic game between 1910 and 1914. Most of its products were traditional indoor games such as *Home Tea Shop* or *Home Post*, *Aladdin* and *Table Hockey*.¹⁷ Naturally, the contemporary spirit of imperialism was mirrored in game production. One example, *The Imperial Compendium*, contained a small collection of games with imperialist themes. However Chad Valley only

¹⁰ See Hoffmann (2001), 158 f. For evidence of the same tendency see Mielke (2001), 70 f.

¹¹ Otto Maier Verlag, Nr. 111 (1903) [cited below as: O. M., Nr. (Jahr)]. See also the advertisement in the catalog of the Otto Maier Verlag, p. 34. [cited below as O. M. Spielwarenkatalog (1905)].

¹² See O. M. Spielwarenkatalog 1905, p. 34.

¹³ Erbe (1998), 111 f.

¹⁴ O. M. Index of all games produced in 1884–1919.

¹⁵ See Hermann Kurtz toy catalog [cited below as H. K. Spielwarenkatalog (1912)].

¹⁶ *The Toy and Fancy Goods Trader* (December, 1913), p. 162.

¹⁷ Museum of Childhood, London/Makers Files: Chad Valley.

started producing militaristic and war-related games after the conflict broke out, most of them in the years 1915–16.¹⁸ Although militaristic toys were not particularly popular, the possibility of a future war was also noted in Britain. In July 1913 (one year before the outbreak of war) a toy producer called the Pealland Company, advertised war games in the *Toy and Fancy Goods Trader*, including a militaristic game of attack and defense called *The Great Siege*.¹⁹ However, it is noticeable that the Pealland Company had ceased advertising war games by December 1913, returning instead to more peaceful, traditional items such as *Billiard Table*.²⁰ This probably indicates that demand for war games was less than expected.

Toy Production during the First World War

The outbreak of war naturally curtailed the German toy industry's substantial prewar exports, encouraging manufacturers to look for other ways to make money. Although they experienced a minor crisis shortly after the conflict began, toy producers soon recouped most of their losses through increased domestic demand. The more commercially minded soon grasped the new opportunities created by the war, identifying a gap in the market as demand for war-related items soared. They soon started producing war-related toys and games which brought the military struggle into children's play. As the *Deutsche Spielwarenzeitung* stressed on the eve of war, a conflict would actually help overcome a depression in toy production, rather than shatter economic growth. The war could lead to a 'new and undreamt of blossoming'.²¹ Toy companies advertised new war-related games in time for Christmas 1914, with the *Deutsche Spielwarenzeitung* predicting that companies producing war-related items would do a roaring trade at Christmas.²²

It is obvious that most war games produced during the First World War had an educational significance, which was especially evident in the board games invented during the conflict, and the following discussion centers on these games. While boys were supposed to enjoy playing

¹⁸ Museum of Childhood, London/Makers Files: Chad Valley.

¹⁹ *The Toy and Fancy Goods Trader* (July, 1913), p. 236.

²⁰ *The Toy and Fancy Goods Trader* (December, 1913), p. 165.

²¹ *Deutsche Spielwarenzeitung* [cited below as *DSZ*], 1914, H. 16 (1.8.1914), p. 3.

²² See Hoffmann (1997), p. 330.

war-related board games, they were also meant to learn the possible consequences that a wrong move could have in order to prepare them for later life. The rules of the *Viktoria Kriegsspiel* (Viktoria War Game), produced by Otto Maier in 1914, warned that the wrong tactic not only benefited the enemy, but also had fateful consequences for one's own troops.²³ Most producers of strategic board games stressed how the games copied the war's real tactics: 'The method of play is worked out according to a tactical military point of view and is as close to reality as possible. It is easy to play and understand and avoids all complications.'²⁴ While their ability to accurately imitate the reality of war was important, so was their educational value. The rules of the game *Artilla*, produced in 1915, stressed that it forced boys to think about their next move and to choose between stratagem and commands. The publishers claimed that *Artilla* was not just educationally valuable. It was intended to influence boys' entire upbringing.²⁵ This kind of game drew boys into a world of militaristic rules and commands which might prepare them for a future military career.

Another characteristic of board games produced during the First World War was their use of particular events from the real war, outside the children's experiences. For instance the game *UBRA*, whose initials stood for *Umzingelung, Besiegung, Russischer Armeen* (Encircling, Defeat, (of) Russian Troops), referred to the Battle of Tannenberg in late August 1914.²⁶ The battle had cost Russia nearly 120,000 soldiers and saved East Prussia from invasion, while turning Hindenburg into a universally acclaimed popular hero.²⁷ Some games, such as *Die Jagd nach der Emden* (Chasing the Emden), were intended to glorify wartime heroes or particular episodes from the conflict.²⁸ The *Emden* had managed to sink many ships in the early months of the war, despite being pursued by numerous Allied opponents. It finally fell victim to an Australian cruiser on 9 November 1914.²⁹ As its rules stressed, the game was intended to

²³ O. M. Nr. 270 (1914), rules of the game.

²⁴ Jeanmaire (1986), [cited below as *Neuheitenverzeichnis der Leipziger Lehrmittelanstalt* (1915)], p. 20.

²⁵ *DSZ*, 1915, H. 1/2 (16.1.1915), pp. 9–11, cited after Hoffmann (1997), p. 331; See also Mielke (2001), p. 82.

²⁶ *Neuheitenverzeichnis der Leipziger Lehrmittelanstalt* (1915), p. 20.

²⁷ Chickering (2002), p. 91.

²⁸ The game *Die Jagd nach der Emden* was invented in 1915 and produced in Stuttgart. The rules of the game are conserved in the Deutsches Spiele-Archiv in Marburg/Lahn. See also Mielke (2001), p. 71.

²⁹ See Keegan (2000), pp. 302 ff.

remind children and young people of the heroism evident in the *Emden's* battles and voyages. It is worth noting that the game made the German warship much more mobile than its pursuers, while those playing it had much better equipment. In addition, the rules had only two objectives, to destroy every hostile cruiser or to make peace.³⁰ Thus the German warship could never be sunk, at least in the sphere of play.

British toy producers also faced many problems at the start of the conflict. Many toys were imported from Germany before the war, but, as stocks of German toys were mostly sold by the end of 1915, British manufacturers had to act quickly to fill the gap in the market, building a new wartime toy industry to compensate for the loss of German imports.³¹ There were shortages of materials, especially after 1916, and supply was often unable to match demand. It is not surprising that many companies went bankrupt and did not survive the war.³² However, the conflict did create a demand for war-related items and the British toy industry was also well aware of this gap in the market. In early August 1914, the *Toy and Fancy Goods Trader* advised its readers that 'present circumstances, however, make it fairly safe to say that patriotic lines will be good during the coming season; flags, war games, cannons, toy battle ships, everything with a martial flavour will be in good demand.'³³ Toy manufacturers spotted new opportunities as the war gave them a chance to weaken Germany's grip on parts of their home market (especially in dolls, dolls' heads and mechanical tin toys).³⁴ The Germanophobia which accompanied the declaration of war also affected the toy industry. British toy magazines gave the following advice to customers: 'Little girls and little boys/Never suck your German toys/German soldiers licked will make/Darling Baby's tummy ache/Parents, you should always try/Only British toys to buy.'³⁵

The British toy industry was also quick to produce board games and puzzles related to the war, advertising their new games right on time for Christmas 1914. In November 1914, the *Toy and Fancy Goods Trader* stated that 'even the dolls are mostly military. The Red Cross nurse

³⁰ *Die Jagd nach der Emden*, rules of the game.

³¹ The war saw a lot of newcomers enter the market. For example, British Metal and Toy Manufacturers Ltd, registered in September 1914. Some producers also switched to toys when the war broke out. See Brown (1996), p. 84.

³² See Brown (1996), 88 f.

³³ *The Toy and Fancy Goods Trader* (August, 1914), p. 246.

³⁴ See Brown (1996), p. 89.

³⁵ Brown (1996), 79 f.; See also Van Emden, Humphries (2003), 56 ff.

threatens to oust the fine-lady doll from the nurseries [...].³⁶ Here too, patriotic games brought home the reality of war, but the topics of the games were different.

One important characteristic of war games produced in Britain during the First World War was their tendency to concentrate on one particular enemy, namely the German Emperor. Badges with war-related rhymes were popular:

Kaiser Bill, to hack his way/with his troops went out one day/thinking
that he had a chance/to sneak through Belgium into France/After that
he meant to be/Lord of earth and air and sea/Sad to say a well aimed
shell/Knocked poor Billy into—Berlin.³⁷

The toy industry followed Allied propaganda in identifying Wilhelm II as an aggressive warmonger, the perfect example of a man addicted to conquests.³⁸ Thus in September 1914 the *Toy and Fancy Goods Trader* extolled the 'Latest Kaiser Novelty' as a 'streetseller'.³⁹ This 'latest addition to patriotic novelties,' a game of skill, was called *Bitter pills for Kaiser Bill*. It consisted of the Kaiser's head embossed in relief, with channels provided to convey red, white and blue balls to his mouth. 'The puzzle is "to make him take 'em,"' as the advertisement explained. The '*Punch the Kaiser*' Dummy was also invented in 1914, intended to 'represent well-known personages': 'Thus we have the Kaiser and it is, surely, every boy's ambition to have a punch at him,' the advertisement suggested. The game was especially intended to keep the boy fit, 'strong and muscular'.⁴⁰ The Kaiser and his contribution to the war were also popular topics in children's and juvenile literature.⁴¹

Many toy producers emphasized the capture of Berlin, suggesting that this optimistic hope was widespread in contemporary Britain. Thus *The Dash to Berlin* was produced in 1914, the advertisement promising 'all the excitement with none of the danger'.⁴² In one popular game of skill, *The Silver Bullet*, children had to maneuver a silver ball from one end of a board to the other without letting it fall into the intervening

³⁶ *The Toy and Fancy Goods Trader* (November, 1914), p. 105.

³⁷ 'The John Bull War Badge': *The Toy and Fancy Goods Trader* (November, 1914), p. 107.

³⁸ 'Wilhelm II,' see Hirschfeld, Krumeich, Renz (2003), p. 968.

³⁹ *The Toy and Fancy Goods Trader* (September, 1914), p. 91.

⁴⁰ *The Toy and Fancy Goods Trader* (September, 1914), p. 56.

⁴¹ See for example Lucas (1914); Dell (1919).

⁴² *The Toy and Fancy Goods Trader* (November, 1914), p. 117. *March to Berlin*, *Air Raid on Berlin* and *Allies' Invasion of Berlin* all dealt with the same optimistic topic.

holes. The aim was to guide the silver bullet 'home' to Berlin, which was painted at one end.⁴³ No doubt these games had a psychological impact, reassuring children in the early stages of the war that the city's capture was only a matter of time. The hope would ultimately be realized, even if the British or Allied troops lost a 'battle' or had to retreat from time to time.⁴⁴ Of course, the capture of Berlin would end the horrors caused by the war. Finally, it is significant that the real war outside the children's play was identified as a 'game.' Although the publishers made children aware of the war through play, they tried to play down the horrors of reality by implying that it was only a 'game' too.

As in Germany, some games were inspired by real events. This was especially true when British victories could be won again and again in play and thus embedded in children's thoughts and memories. For example, 1916 saw the publication of *The New Game of Jutland*.⁴⁵ The game was named after the great Anglo-German naval battle of that year, which ended with the retreat of the German fleet. Its prompt appearance shows how quick and up-to-date toy production was. Unsurprisingly, naval war games were produced in especially large numbers in 1916.⁴⁶ The main reason why toy makers could produce war-related games so quickly was that the 'new' games were copies of ones long since on the market, but with different scenery.⁴⁷ Other games focused on zeppelin air raids. The German Graf von Zeppelin's 'new invention' was used mainly from 1915 onwards, partly for strategic reasons but also partly to undermine the morale of the British people.⁴⁸ The zeppelins' bombs killed 550 civilians, mainly women and children. These 'baby killers,' as zeppelins were known in British propaganda and the press, particularly targeted London and the South-East Coast in 1915–1916.⁴⁹ Games produced in 1916 included *Bombarding the Zepps* and *The Anti-Zepp*, and were offered as 'the very latest.'⁵⁰

⁴³ Huggett (1985), p. 46.

⁴⁴ *The Toy and Fancy Goods Trader* (November, 1914), p. 117.

⁴⁵ Opie (2002), p. 52.

⁴⁶ See for example the advertisement in the toy magazine *Games and Toys* (November, 1916), p. 256: *War-ter-War. A New Naval War Game* or the game *Sinkum*.

⁴⁷ *The Toy and Fancy Goods Trader* (September, 1914), p. 136.

⁴⁸ 'Zeppelin,' see Hirschfeld, Krumreich, Renz (2003), p. 976.

⁴⁹ See for example Süchting-Hänger (2000), pp. 73–93; for Britain, see especially pp. 83–86.

⁵⁰ Opie (2002), p. 52; *Games and Toys* (March, 1916), p. 599.

The *Deutsche Spielwarenzeitung* stated that the toy industry was suffering a depression in 1916. It warned manufacturers not to produce war-related toys and games in high quantities as demand was falling.⁵¹ However the same publication pointed out a year later that companies selling war-related items were still doing well, suggesting that its earlier fears and warnings were overly pessimistic.⁵² New products (especially board games) continued appearing in 1917 and the *Deutsche Spielwarenzeitung* noted the availability of 'many novelties in board games related to the war,' including games such as *Auf zum Sturm* ('To the Attack') and *Kampf in den Lüften* ('Fight in the Air').⁵³ Although the German toy market was well equipped with war games and toys in 1917, production levels were lower than in previous years, partly due to shortages of raw materials and increased production costs (metal production was particularly badly affected).⁵⁴ However the creeping slump in the production of new war games did not become apparent until 1918, when there was a noticeable return to traditional toys. In 1919 the *Deutsche Spielwarenzeitung* identified a 'natural over-saturation of all military and war-related items.'⁵⁵

Meanwhile in Britain the number of advertisements for war games and toys had decreased by 1916. All toys and games rose in price during the war, mainly due to an increase in the cost of labor and materials, but also because supply could not keep pace with demand. The fall off in advertisements for war games can thus be attributed to rising prices, as well as to a decrease in patriotic feeling among toy producers and customers. It is also important to remember that it was usually only children from the higher social classes who could play at war with industrially produced toys and games.

For example, the British toy company Chad Valley produced most of its war-related board games (such as *The Invasion of Europe*, *Bombo* and *In the Trenches*) in 1915–16. By 1917 war games had vanished from its index-list and *Bombo* was no longer being produced.⁵⁶ However,

⁵¹ *DSZ*, Nr. 3/4 (10 February 1916), p. 3.

⁵² See *DSZ*, Nr. 19/20 (20.9.1917), p. 4.

⁵³ *DSZ*, Nr. 3/4 (10 February 1917), p. 15.

⁵⁴ See Hoffmann (1997), p. 334.

⁵⁵ *DSZ*, Nr. 5 (2 February 1919), p. 11.

⁵⁶ Museum of Childhood, London/Makers Files: In 1917 the company noted that: 'Full particulars of the various lines will be found in our 1915/6 catalogue; but we do not bind ourselves to strictly adhere to details, as, in some cases, through being unable to obtain material, we have had to modify patterns in some degree.'

the magazine *Games and Toys* still advertised the *Ally Bears* as ‘the most fascinating toy of the season’ in 1916 and praised a new naval game called *Sinkum*.⁵⁷ Yet a ‘sensational novelty’ of December 1916, a zeppelin called the *Fairy Airship*, dropped sweets and presents for children rather than bombs to annihilate the enemy.⁵⁸ Most toy producers had ceased inventing new war games, while those war-related items still being advertised were obviously remaining stocks. While the *Toy and Fancy Goods Trader* had recorded inquiries for soldier helmets, toy soldiers, special war games, soldier outfits and lead soldiers in previous years, there were only a few in 1916–17 and none in 1918. By then the latest novelties were dolls’ heads and games such as *Piggy Wig* and *Fool of the Family*.⁵⁹

*The Impact of the War on Children’s Literature in Germany and Britain:
The Growing Acceptance of Militaristic Literature during the Prewar Period*

The themes evident in young people’s literature in prewar Germany show that the production and acceptance of patriotic and martial juvenile literature had increased since the late nineteenth century.⁶⁰ A wide range of patriotic, militaristic books were available, including some dealing with the idea of a future war. Juvenile historical literature, featuring wars and battles of the past, was a growing subgenre, although books on contemporary history were also popular. Titles such as *Um Freiheit und Vaterland* (For Freedom and Fatherland), *Helden des Burenkrieges* (Heroes of the Boer war), or *Der Weltkrieg. Deutsche Träume* (World War. German Dreams) show the range of militaristic literature on offer.⁶¹ The idea of a future war was already present in juvenile literature. Indeed the theme of an imminent conflict was particularly popular in Britain, France and Germany after 1880.⁶² This anticipation of imminent war was an ‘international phenomenon’: its manifestation in literature helped to mobilize the countries concerned. After the second Morocco Crisis in 1911, German publishers began producing ‘science fiction’ litera-

⁵⁷ *The Toy and Fancy Goods Trader* (February, 1916), p. 29.

⁵⁸ *The Toy and Fancy Goods Trader* (December, 1916), p. 12.

⁵⁹ *The Toy and Fancy Goods Trader* (February, 1918), p. 150.

⁶⁰ Christadler (1978), p. 67.

⁶¹ Christadler (1987), pp. 122–128.

⁶² Christadler (1987), p. 177.

ture, most of which dealt with futuristic technological inventions.⁶³ For example in 1903, *Scherls Jungdeutschland-Buch* published an article entitled 'A battle in the Air on the First Day of Mobilization—a Dream of the Future.'⁶⁴ In August 1914 these war utopias became reality.

Juvenile literature as a whole became more popular in Britain in the prewar years.⁶⁵ These books pleased children by reducing the world to their proportions, with little to frighten them and nothing disturbing. Hans Christian Anderson's *Fairy Tales*, Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, the *Peek-a-Boos* and stories by Charles Dickens were all popular. In addition, adventure stories for boys which encouraged 'patriotism, manliness, and a sense of duty to Crown and Empire' were widely read and admired.⁶⁶ As Gillian Avery has highlighted, 'the urge to provide security and loving understanding and safely exciting adventures was the main pre-occupation of the featureless years of juvenile publishing that stretched between 1910 and the 1940s.'⁶⁷

However, while this may be true of most juvenile literature, a new subgenre of the adventure story had become popular in prewar Britain too: the war story. War fiction was largely based on past conflicts or contemporary imperial struggles. The most famous war fiction author was G. A. Henty, an ex-soldier and war correspondent. This genre shows that the prewar period's imperialistic spirit was also mirrored in literature for young children. In 1914, before the outbreak of the war, adventure books and historical stories like *Out on the Pampas*, *The Young Francs-Tireurs* or *The Story of Jeanne d'Arc* were published.⁶⁸

The First World War was rather unspectacular from a publishing point of view, with labor and paper shortages restricting output. However, this co-existed alongside an element of 'business as usual' and publishers made good profits due to a substantial demand for their products, especially juvenile literature.⁶⁹ The war fiction subgenre grew in Britain during the war. Henty, who died in 1902, was replaced by

⁶³ Dülffer (1986), p. 794.

⁶⁴ Christadler (1987), p. 195.

⁶⁵ *The Bookseller* (2 January 1914), p. 11. The number of children's books published increased between 1911 and 1913. Adult fiction was the leading genre in terms of production, followed by religious books, 'essays and belles lettres' and then children's books and minor fiction.

⁶⁶ Paris (2004), p. xiii.

⁶⁷ Avery (1975), p. 161.

⁶⁸ *The Bookseller* (1914), prewar years.

⁶⁹ Blackie (1959).

younger authors such Captain F. S. Brereton, Herbert Strang, Percy F. Westerman, Angela Brazil and Bessie Marchant, who wrote war-related stories for young boys or girls.

Juvenile Literature During the War

As noted above, there was an increase in the production of war-related books between 1914 and 1918 as the war provided a new context for juvenile literature.⁷⁰ In November 1914, for example, a German publisher noted that it would be advisable to have a good stock of war-related fiction. Although German publishers mainly sold books relating to historic wars, they had started to produce literature featuring the current conflict by Christmas 1914.⁷¹ Picture books for younger girls and boys depicted their protagonists as little defenders of the fatherland, mainly 'playing' war.⁷² Juvenile literature was clearly divided into books for boys and books for girls. Some of the main topics featured in children's and juvenile literature will be outlined below.

Picture images can transmit information without a descriptive text. The information children get from picture books is suggestive and is therefore more easily internalized and retained in the memory. The suggestive effect which pictures have on children was—and still is—used by authors of children's literature. For example, Paul Telemann's *Der Sieger* (The Winner), one of the most impressive wartime picture books, carefully portrayed Germany as surrounded by enemies.⁷³ Children could easily identify Germany's greatest enemy, 'England,' because of his size and ugliness in the illustrations, although the individual Englishman or Scotsman (drawn in a more feminine posture) was depicted smoking a pipe and looking quite harmless. France's lesser importance was easily grasped, as the Frenchman was drawn smaller than the Englishman. France, Germany's traditional enemy, appears to have changed roles with England during the war.

This idea that Germany was surrounded by enemies, '*Feinde ringsum*' (encircled by enemies), was one of the most popular topics in juvenile literature, as epitomized by the book *Viel Feind, viel Ehr* (Many enemies,

⁷⁰ Schug (1988), p. 42.

⁷¹ For examples see, Schug (1988), p. 42.

⁷² See for example: Kutzer (n.Y.); Flatscher (1916).

⁷³ Telemann (1914).

much honor).⁷⁴ The author asserted that Germany would still emerge victorious from the war, even though seven enemies had slyly united to attack her out of their own base and petty motives. Britain was once again identified as Germany's main enemy and accused of provoking the war because of envy.⁷⁵ Images of Germany's enemies were an important and popular component of youth literature and, most of the time, authors simply adapted pre-existing stereotypes spread via German propaganda. While different enemies were invested with virtually identical strength in the prewar period, they were no longer portrayed as equals after August 1914. A distinction was made between enemies that were depicted as strong and superior, and those who were presented as inferior.⁷⁶ While Britain had allegedly planned the war all along, an idea propagated by the book *The Emden*, France and Russia were merely portrayed as her weak-willed puppets.⁷⁷

In France, many people believed that the war would fulfil an educational function, creating an elite generation. Magazines such as *Revue de l'enseignement primaire* propagated the idea that war would call forth virtues such as the 'readiness to make sacrifices, sensitivity [and] support of charity.'⁷⁸ War pedagogy in Germany responded with similar enthusiasm: 'Never again will a time come which will have such a deep moral effect. The war will be instructive and educational for our country and especially for our children.'⁷⁹ German youth was a symbol of hope for adults. It was the youth who would 'implement the virtues created by the war,' even if they were not able to play a heroic part in the conflict itself.⁸⁰ The war's new morality would encourage what were termed manly virtues, such as stamina, discipline and responsibility, and perceived female virtues like compassion, thankfulness, love and selflessness. The war would also promote love of king and country, which was considered highly desirable.⁸¹ These convictions were widespread during the conflict and were apparent in many books written

⁷⁴ Falke (1915), third edition. Almost 100 cheap books were produced in a series published by a German publisher under this title, selling very well. See Jugendschriften-Warte (cited below as JSW) (23.6.1916) front page.

⁷⁵ Falke (1915), p. 222.

⁷⁶ Buchner (1997), 75 f.

⁷⁷ Mücke (n.Y.), pp. 8–11. This popular topic can also be found elsewhere. See for example Gellert (1915), p. 149.

⁷⁸ See Audoin-Rouzeau (1996), p. 181.

⁷⁹ Schultheß (1914), 283 f.

⁸⁰ Foerster (1916), 13 ff.

⁸¹ Schultheß (1914), 283 f.

for young people. The book *Nesthäkchen und der Weltkrieg*, largely written for young girls, particularly emphasized the cultural mobilization of youth.⁸² In a chapter entitled 'For our defenders of the fatherland' all school lessons focus on the war and the teachers' main task is to fill the children with patriotic fervor. The 'readiness to make sacrifices for the soldiers in the trenches' is particularly encouraged.⁸³ For example, virtues such as fraternal love and selflessness encourage *Nesthäkchen* to help East Prussian refugees.⁸⁴

Themes relating to the virtuous nature of German youth were popular, especially as the war was believed to have called forth the virtues in question. Some books featured young people called upon to help with the harvest, which of course they did enthusiastically.⁸⁵ Little Heini Will sends his new knife to the front as a 'gift parcel' because his only wish is to help the soldiers, while the youngsters in Paul Baumann's story '*Das Erreiten des Friedens*' spend all their money on war loans.⁸⁶ It is the youngsters who urge the adults to give away their beloved keepsakes to aid the war effort, leading a father to tell his son that it is the youth who are really winning the war. Baumann's book portrayed the conflict as a war of youth, who were creating a 'new Germany, a new Europe, a new realm of freedom.'⁸⁷ In contrast the adults in the story seem discontented and are losing their confidence in the war, and particularly, in the military leadership. Thus a young boy is filled with indignation when the adults talk about dead bodies in Galicia and Germany's immense casualties, stating: 'Do they know that the casualties are mainly dependent on the command and that we Germans have a command far superior to that of our enemies? The true German does not listen to them [...] they are talking nonsense.'⁸⁸

It is important to realize that the protagonists of these stories were intended as exemplars for German youth. Their main purpose was to encourage enthusiasm for the war among children and young people. Most authors of juvenile literature thought it important to encourage youngsters to support the war with 'stories, pictures, songs' and 'through

⁸² Ury (1916).

⁸³ Ury (1916), p. 36.

⁸⁴ Ury (1916), 56 ff.

⁸⁵ For example: Clement (1915), p. 201.

⁸⁶ Lorenzen (1915), pp. 24–27; Baumann (1915).

⁸⁷ Baumann (1915), p. 263.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 266.

brave field post letters, which we read to them [...].⁸⁹ This cultural mobilization of youth through juvenile literature was an important factor in the war.

In Britain, as in Germany, literature for girls can be divided into two types. Firstly, many stories were written for magazines which simply used the war as an exciting backdrop for love stories with an inevitable happy ending. Secondly, mainly female authors created little patriotic heroines whose greatest desire was to aid the war effort. While juvenile labor increased in Britain during the war, girls and boys employed as munitions workers suffered from deteriorating health.⁹⁰ However, the young fictional heroines these authors created were always able to deal with the problems and difficulties they faced as munitions workers or participants in the V.A.D. (Voluntary Aid Detachment).⁹¹ For example, *Munition Mary* sought to show that gender roles were changing during the war, while offering a positive role model for young readers, the majority of whom were girls. It centers on a young female protagonist who becomes a munitions worker. She explains her reasons to her mother as follows:

Mummie, she [Mary] pleaded, don't you see that is the reason I must go. Everyone takes it on hearsay that it is hard, and stays away. You can't know whether you can do it or not until you have tried. So I am going to try. It will be so glorious if I make a success of it, because if I am able to do it I can recruit hundreds of others. It's going to make all the difference to England, if women can work the lathes.⁹²

Although Mary encounters some difficulties during her time as a munitions worker (discovering a German spy, for example), the factory owner is eventually convinced that gender roles are changing, rendering his traditional ideas about working women obsolete. In conclusion Mary's mother points out to him that: 'The girls' output has exceeded that of the men's by over five hundred shells.'⁹³ Books published by Angela Brazil also sometimes suggested that the positive role women played

⁸⁹ Zurhellen-Pfleiderer (1915), p. 6.

⁹⁰ See especially Andrews (1921), p. 159: A report by the Department of Juvenile Education stated that 'Many children have been withdrawn at an even earlier age than usual from day schools.' Evidence of a breakdown in health was found among children working as munition workers.

⁹¹ Van Emden and Humphries (2003); Robb (2002) chapter 2.

⁹² Grivin (1918), 44 f.

⁹³ Grivin (1918), p. 282.

during the war would continue after it ended. In *A Patriotic Schoolgirl* the schoolmistress reminds the assembled girls that

Though we mayn't realize it, we're all playing our part in history, and though our names may never go down to posterity, our influence will. The watchwords of all patriotic women at present are "Service and Sacrifice." In the few years that we are here at school let us prepare ourselves to be an asset to the nation afterwards.⁹⁴

The war's heroes and heroines were also a popular topic in juvenile literature. The author of one pamphlet, published in 1917, posed the question 'What shall the children read today?' concluding that they should be told about the war's heroism and sacrifice but not about its terrible reality.⁹⁵ Many books about war heroes and heroic deeds were published during the conflict, with real figures such as the Allied generals Kitchener, Joffre, Jellicoe and Haig juxtaposed in stories alongside manly, fictional heroes, in addition to real or fictional heroines.⁹⁶

While German fiction portrayed Britain as the main enemy, Germany naturally filled this role in British juvenile literature. Most British stories portrayed Germany as a hostile nation which Britain and her allies had to overcome. Spy mania was widespread in Britain during the First World War and it was commonly believed that Germans had infiltrated even the highest levels of British society.⁹⁷ The wartime popularity of spy novels amongst both adults and young people reflected the conviction that the country was beset by enemy agents. Authors combined spy mania with growing anti-German sentiment to create the archetypal 'German spy.'⁹⁸ In *The Iron Sacrifice* 'the rumour of the mysterious man on the motor-bicycle spread everywhere throughout the country.'⁹⁹ The 'mysterious man' in the story is a German spy, who sets stacks of hay ablaze week after week until he is caught by a young English boy.¹⁰⁰ *The Hero of Liège*, relates the story of a young Englishman in Belgium wrongly thought to be a spy who uncovers a genuine German spy planning to set fire to British trains.¹⁰¹ The theme

⁹⁴ Brazil (1918), p. 135.

⁹⁵ Avery (1975), p. 161.

⁹⁶ See for example: Walters (1916); Kenyon (1917); Brereton (1916); Strang (1917).

⁹⁷ See Playne (1931), pp. 265–269; Van Emden and Humphries (2003), pp. 65–68; Robb (2002), p. 163.

⁹⁸ See Paris (2004), p. 131.

⁹⁹ Bone (1917), p. 159.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 170–174.

¹⁰¹ Strang (1916).

of spies also appeared in Angela Brazil's stories. In *A Patriotic School Girl* the heroine and her friends suspect the headmistress of being a spy, only to discover that it is actually their friend Chrissie Lang (wickedly anglicized from Lange) who is constantly signalling to the enemy with a bicycle lamp. In the end she runs away, leaving behind a list of gun and tank emplacements. 'Is it right to forgive the enemies of our country?' Chrissie's friend asks the headmistress. 'When they are dead,' is the headmistress's grim answer.¹⁰²

For most Britons, especially women and children, it was the zeppelin 'that more than any other event brought the war in the air to their attention.'¹⁰³ The zeppelin, known as the 'baby killer' after its first air raids, was also a popular topic in juvenile literature. In *Under Jellicoe's Command* British marines destroy a German zeppelin by firing at it.¹⁰⁴ The commander survives and is interrogated by the English Captain Wilkinson:

"What places have you destroyed to-day?" Captain Wilkinson asked. "I have not been to England to-day," the German officer answered; "I was on my way there when this unfortunate accident occurred." "Unfortunate accident you call it?" Captain Wilkinson said. "I think, for your soul's sake, it was fortunate that our men brought you down, and prevented you from murdering more women and children." The German shrugged his shoulders, but said nothing.¹⁰⁵

This shows how authors adapted and reproduced a theme which was drawn from reality and based upon widespread fears in British towns, for zeppelin pilots were ordered to raid civilian targets to cause demoralization. In addition, as the story implies, the German Emperor honored the pilots responsible with the Iron Cross.

While in reality the British press and the government were unable to decide whether to downplay zeppelin attacks or to use them to condemn the German killing of women and children, the authors of juvenile literature had already made up their minds.¹⁰⁶ Some encouraged children not to be frightened, explaining the reasons why zeppelins were sent to England and reminding them that 'every Zeppelin raid

¹⁰² Brazil (1918), p. 161. Brazil's book *The Mad-Cap of the School* (1917) also deals with a German spy who is discovered by the girls.

¹⁰³ Paris (2004), p. 59.

¹⁰⁴ Moore (1917).

¹⁰⁵ Moore (1917), p. 185.

¹⁰⁶ See Van Emden and Humphries (2003), pp. 150–172.

only strengthened the determination of the nation to continue the war to a victorious end.¹⁰⁷ It is likely that the zeppelins, which symbolized German technological prowess, help explain why British authors like P. F. Westerman published books about British secret inventions such as the *The Secret Battleplane*.¹⁰⁸ Westerman's battleplane is not invented by the War Office, but by an engineer called Desmond Blake and two patriotic boys, although as the author points out it should have been the work of the former. The reasons for inventing it are stated as follows:

The German newspapers were full of bombastic rejoicing over the Zeppelin visits to our undefended towns; the Kaiser weeps copious crocodile tears when the Allied airmen knock his beloved Karlsruhe about a bit. I'd go a jolly sight farther than the precepts laid down in the old Mosaic Law. "An eye for an eye; a tooth for a tooth." By Jove! three British shells for every German one, and a ton of high explosives for every kilogramme of T.N.T.¹⁰⁹

Desmond Blake's statement above dealt with a real life problem, for there was no adequate warning system to notify the British people that a raid was imminent. Towns were mainly undefended, as Blake observed in the story, although eight Warning Control Centers were built and huge searchlights were placed along the East Coast of Britain.¹¹⁰ As Michael Paris points out, *The Secret Battleplane* is one of the few books which criticize the military authorities for negligence in their waging of the air war.

Conclusion

With the outbreak of war, toy manufacturers in Germany and Britain saw a new opportunity to produce war-related items for their own internal markets. The German toy industry was relatively well prepared, as it had expanded greatly in previous years and was able to compensate for losses caused by a decrease in exports after August 1914. In contrast, a large gap opened up in the British market with the outbreak of war. Most toys sold in Britain before 1914 were German imports, particularly

¹⁰⁷ Parrot (1917), p. 174.

¹⁰⁸ Westerman (1917). The same topic also appears in Grahame-White/Harper (1915); Henry (1916).

¹⁰⁹ Westerman (1917), p. 173.

¹¹⁰ Van Emden and Humphries (2003), p. 154.

items such as mechanical tin toys (mainly produced in Nuremberg) and dolls etc. Although they also suffered from shortages of material after 1916, German toy manufacturers still did well in comparison with their British counterparts, even if some companies such as the Bing Werke in Nuremberg were transferred over to war production in the latter part of the conflict. In addition to shortages of materials, increased labor and output costs contributed to the British situation.

The war created a gap in the market in both countries and toy producers were only too happy to seize the new opportunities created by the conflict and the greater demand for war-related toys to maximize their profits. It is noticeable that the German market offered a wider variety of war-related games and toys, both in terms of overall production, as well as in relation to the board games discussed here. However, it is important to remember that manufacturers in both countries were still producing more traditional toys than war-related ones. Demand for the latter only outstripped demand for traditional toys for a short period, up to the end of 1915. Toy producers stopped inventing new war games after 1916, a trend which was particularly noticeable in Britain. This was due to a heightened sense of gloom among customers and a loss of enthusiasm for the conflict, as well as obvious production problems caused by the war. Finally, it should be noted that numerous families could not afford many of the toys and games discussed here. In both countries it was usually only children from the higher social classes who got to play at being at war with industrially-produced toys.

Board games were only a small part of the overall supply of war-related games and toys. In Germany, most of the newly invented board games had an educational value, while manufacturers also stressed the fact that boys could gain strategic and military knowledge during play. Most advertisements pointed to the games' accurate imitation of reality. It is probable that these games were intended primarily to instil military thinking and habits into future defenders of the fatherland at a young age. They drew German boys into a world of military activities and tactical considerations in childhood, bringing them into contact with the adult world in a safe and secure way. However, this endeavor to educate children in military values and skills was not apparent in Britain, where producers did not emphasize games' strategic or tactical significance. Instead, one of their primary aims was to 'teach' children about Britain's greatest enemy, in a way that could be easily retained in the memory, while the capture of Berlin was also a popular theme. This ensured that children knew exactly who had caused wartime

suffering. They learned to ‘hate’ the enemy and placed all their hopes on capturing Berlin, which would naturally terminate the horrors of the conflict. In both Britain and Germany, the glorification of particular wartime heroes and battles through board games imitated reality and provided children with important facts about the war. The same battles were fought and won, again and again, in play, in a world where, in contrast to reality, wartime heroes never died. Although German games sought to remind children of particular heroes and events, British games reflected problems faced on the home front such as zeppelin raids. It is plausible to argue that the games’ inventors offered simple solutions to problems which had proved insoluble in reality, thus suppressing a growing sense of anxiety and helplessness in a country which had traditionally thought of itself as impregnable. Children, to overcome their fears, could shoot every little ‘baby killer’ in the world of play, even if not in reality.

As we have seen, war stories had already appeared as a subgenre of children’s fiction in both countries before 1914. However, while many prewar books with militaristic themes were produced in Germany (12% of book production for children), particularly after 1911, the subgenre was much less popular in prewar Britain. Although both sides were affected by paper shortages after the outbreak of war in August 1914, business held up well during the period, not least because of the increased demand for war-related children’s fiction. The war had little impact on children’s picture books in Britain. As Gillian Avery has highlighted, one reason for this may be that ‘the natural instinct of adults at such times is to reassure and to protect, and the temptation to escape into a world where everything goes on as in happier years is very strong.’ Yet it is noticeable that while only a handful of war-related picture books for children appeared in Britain in 1914–1918, many were published in Germany, especially for younger children. This suggests that demand there was much higher.¹¹¹ German parents obviously found them more attractive than their British counterparts.

However, the war did affect the British fiction publishing market. It also began to produce patriotic, war-related books for older children and adolescents, although publishers in both countries reacted much more slowly than toy manufacturers and most war-related books on sale at Christmas 1914 still dealt with historic events. Although both

¹¹¹ This underlines Avery’s theory. Children did not buy picture books themselves.

countries' publishing markets were well supplied with war-related fiction for adolescents (and younger children) by 1915, British and German authors chose different topics. Germans focused on the different enemies who had 'attacked' and 'surrounded' their country. Thus all boys (even the very young) were taught about their enemies, particularly Britain, and these books incorporated many of the stereotypes already found in German propaganda. In contrast, British publishers preferred to focus on one enemy, Germany. The German spy was particularly popular, appearing in many books even when he was not the main protagonist. Many British authors also used themes apparent, or often discussed, on the home front, such as the zeppelins referred to above. They invented 'secret battleplanes' able to fight the zepps, connecting reality with pure 'science fiction,' even if there was little prospect of these wonderful inventions appearing in the real world. By the time British planes were technically able to reach Berlin in November 1918, the war had already ended.¹¹² However the hope that these battle planes would one day destroy the nasty 'baby killers' remained in children's minds.

In Germany, many authors adapted the ideas of war pedagogy. Written especially for girls and boys who were too young to play an active part in the war, these stories dealt with youthful protagonists in similar situations to the children left behind on the home front. They featured boys whose inability to fight did not allay their intense patriotism and girls who faced losing their male relatives and being called upon to help with the war effort. The authors endowed their young fictional heroes with all the virtues which war pedagogy claimed the conflict would instil, while the adult characters placed all their hopes upon them. Although girls mainly played a passive role, the assertive little heroines created by some British authors reflected the influence of contemporary debates about gender. Indeed fictional British girls were more patriotic than their parents and played active roles as V.A.D.'s, Red Cross heroines or patriotic schoolgirls who uncovered German spies.

Neither country's government planned the production of war-related games and toys as an extension of official propaganda. This war culture for children was created by commercially minded toy producers, anxious to maximize profits, an idea which also holds true in the realm of juvenile literature. Admittedly exceptions existed in Britain. A book by Herbert Strang appeared on the Schedule of Wellington

¹¹² Süchting-Hänger (2001), p. 86.

House Literature (a catalog of British propaganda publications), while Michael Paris has pointed out that many popular authors of juvenile literature were associated with Wellington House.¹¹³ In addition to the economic reasons behind such wartime products, there was also a cultural mobilization factor: children also had to be won over and *mentally* attracted to the war. This was particularly the case in Germany, where a self-styled ‘war-pedagogy’ aimed at children propagated those noble virtues it believed the conflict promoted.

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¹¹³ Strang (1916, 1918); Paris (2004), 8 ff.

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CHAPTER NINE

THE *MATER DOLOROSA* ON THE BATTLEFIELD— MOURNING MOTHERS IN GERMAN WOMEN'S ART OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR

Claudia Siebrecht

A predominant theme in women's art of the First World War is that of maternal sacrifice. Contemporary women's literature, short stories and poetry also present the experience of mothers sacrificing their sons for the fatherland as the most important and drastic of women's wartime experiences. In the images reproduced in this chapter, the son's departure for war is not only portrayed as the soldier's sacrifice, but also as that of the mother, who gives her own flesh and blood for her country. The iconography in these images was employed to emphasize the mother's loss rather than focusing on the fate of the soldier. Women primarily understood wartime sacrifice, and thus the war itself, by viewing themselves as key victims, alongside, if not ahead, of their sons.

Interpretations of the *mater dolorosa* and the *pietà* were composed by female artists regardless of whether or not they had a son at the front, and irrespective of whether or not they had a son at all. The figure of the dead soldier-son embodied all the tragedy associated with the casualties of war. Whereas fallen fiancés or husbands could be replaced, there was 'nothing earthly to console a mother's love.'¹ The finality of the loss was reinforced by, and linked to, the laws of nature—laws that prevented most middle-aged mothers from bearing another child.² In addition, mothers burying their sons understood this to be in contrast to the natural course of life in which sons laid their mothers to rest.³ Accordingly, the figure of the dead soldier-son became a template used in women's art and was understood as a symbol reflecting the overall death toll of the war.

¹ Tube (1915), p. 4.

² Schulte (1998), p. 133.

³ Meerheimb (1916), pp. 189–94.

By portraying soldiers as the sons of the nation, women turned themselves into, and presented themselves as, mothers of the nation. Like the figure of the dead soldier-son, the mother not only represented the biological relationship between mother and child, but embodied every woman who was anxious about the well-being of someone at the front. The 'sharing' of this ordeal was an important element in the female experience of the war and was often referred to as the only form of consolation. The creation of art was one way in which women shared their emotional responses to the war, and the construction of an inclusive mother-figure in art gave all women a figure they could identify with. This 'kinship' of women's experiences is linked to a specific concept of motherhood prominent in German society at the time, which was not solely based on biological maternity, but proclaimed a more spiritual understanding of the role.

Since the late eighteenth century, the intellectual concept of 'maternalism' had been at the center of feminist discourse in the German women's movement. The traditional understanding of maternity as simple childbearing was extended to include a general concern for children's welfare, the familial tradition, and an overall social and collective responsibility for the younger generation.⁴ Motherhood, moreover, was seen as the basis of a specifically feminine ethical position of care, and the mother-child bond was understood as the very bedrock of social morality. Biological motherhood was not a prerequisite for exerting this moral influence, as women could transfer their maternal outlook to the relationship between individuals and society or other communal bonds, so that childless women could also identify with the role of mother. Consequently, values associated with motherhood became a source for ethical authority and the basis of a claim to social prestige.⁵ It was the figure of the mother, therefore, who became the overarching representative of women during the war. The mother was the least contested of women's wartime identities and the high social standing of a 'soldier's mother' was contrasted with the bad reputation of soldiers' wives (*Kriegerfrauen*) in the eyes of many other German women. Soldiers' wives were seen as wartime profiteers, whose material gain from the state allowed them a comfortable existence.⁶ In a similar

⁴ Allen (2000), pp. 15–17; Allen (1982), pp. 319–39.

⁵ Allen (2000), pp. 19–33.

⁶ Davis (2000), p. 36.

manner, sympathy for soldiers' widows was limited, as they were 'compensated' for their husbands' death by a state pension. The mother's sacrifice, on the other hand, was understood to be the purest, most selfless, and most final of all.

In addition, the prewar years had witnessed a heightened public debate about women's fertility and the falling birth rate which had in turn contributed to a widespread awareness of the value of motherhood. Whereas the debate (which continued throughout the war) focused on women as mothers of 'future soldiers,' this idealization of motherhood influenced the way in which women, and mothers of current soldiers, shaped their wartime identities. Concerns about mothers and their reproductive obligations to the nation were publicly expressed in newspapers and wartime pamphlets. Members of the women's movement engaged actively in the debate and attempted to spread a vision of women's roles that combined biological and spiritual motherhood and would guarantee women an influential position in society.⁷ Government figures, in particular, lamented the decline of the birth rate, an issue that raised exaggerated concerns regarding the manpower required to defend Germany in the future.⁸ Hence, politicians outlined a legal framework to guarantee a higher birth rate, regulate women's reproduction, and criminalize the use of contraception.⁹ These measures did not encourage women to have more children, however, and by 1916 it was estimated that Germany had 'lost' 680,000 births, based on prewar figures. This number had more than doubled by 1917 and, as a result, the welfare of mothers and children gained political importance and further measures were introduced to combat infant mortality.¹⁰ Yet these changes were not motivated by concern for women in their own right, but by interest in the health of future German generations. This was another factor which influenced the perspective from which women interpreted their wartime sacrifices and subsequently led mothers to view themselves as 'victims' of the war.

Mothers of sons of fighting age became the target of wartime propaganda, the production of which was dominated by leading members of the women's movement who claimed a natural authority on the subject of motherhood. Their published pamphlets and articles expressed

⁷ Lange (1915); Metzdorf-Techner (1914).

⁸ Usborne (1988), p. 389.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 392–95.

¹⁰ Weindling (1988), p. 424.

a strong national focus, asserting that ‘the claims of the fatherland exceed the rights of motherly love.’¹¹ Public appeals and propaganda, outspokenly formulated by figures such as Gertrud Bäumer, leader of the *Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine (BDF)*, the umbrella organization of the German women’s movement, and Agnes von Harnack, women’s activist and daughter of theologian Adolf von Harnack, outlined guidelines for mothers confronted with their son’s national duties. The advice given was very much in line with the pro-war attitude publicly stated by the BDF in August 1914. Many organized female intellectuals turned the question of the mother who supported her son in going to war into one of national survival. Whether their publications were meant to offer advice, guidance, or direction they were all one-dimensional in their demand for maternal sacrifice. The style and format of these publications varied between appeals directly encouraging mothers to face their son’s departure with composure and exalted treatises highlighting the momentous nature of the war and stressing that the survival of the nation was more important than women’s feelings.

The following poster from 1918 (Figure 9.1), produced by the artist Gerda Luise Schmidt, summarizes the way in which the concept of a general female maternalism was used to stir up female willingness to make sacrifices for Germany’s war. The design was part of a poster campaign for the ninth war loan in 1918 and amounts to a moral appeal directly addressed *To the German Women and Girls* and subtitled *The Admonition of a German Woman*. The inscription heightens the dramatic element in the poster, leaving no room for doubt about the vital contribution of women to the national war effort.

The three silhouettes are introduced with the request ‘Prove your worth,’ followed by the instruction ‘that you can turn the whole nation into your child by sacrificing what needs to be sacrificed!’ The image in the middle shows a woman on a hill, bending down and reaching out to three young men. This scene is accompanied with the inscription ‘And all of them are your children because you are a German woman.’ Above all, this poster illustrates how the idea of a spiritual motherhood was put into practice during the war. The female figure in the poster represents the maternal care of German women, just as the young males symbolize their sons. The series of silhouettes illustrates the grace and courage expected of German mothers. Although she laments her fate in the first image, the woman rises to send ‘the sons’ off to war, a

¹¹ Bäumer (1914), p. 6.



9.1. Gerda Luise Schmidt, *To the German Women and Girls*, 1918.¹²

¹² Gerda Luise Schmidt, *An die deutschen Frauen und Mädchen*, silhouette (1918), Stadt-Archiv München Z-Slg. 220/2.

burden she carries with grace and her head held high, as shown in the third image. The three images hint that women go through a process of sacrifice, while the impression of a continuing, cyclical evolution was reinforced by the trees' indication of changing seasons.

Wartime art depicting women sacrificing sons for the war amounts to a rich historical resource and allows for a detailed analysis of perceptions of motherhood in wartime. Such material shows an evolution within women's experience of maternal sacrifice which can be structured into three main phases. The first phase is marked by the son's departure for the war, also the end of his nurturing relationship with his mother. The second stage reflects on mothers' attempts to come to terms with reality, a phase characterized by maternal insecurity, fear, and often confrontation with death. In the final stage, mothers seek to make sense of their sons' sacrifices and the sacrifice they themselves have made. This phase is characterized by attempts to fill death with meaning, to make the sacrifice worthwhile and to come to terms with filial loss. Taken together, the images in this chapter offer an account of maternal sacrifice, enriched by written reflections in the diary of Käthe Kollwitz and the correspondence of Ida Dehmel, both of whom lost sons during the war.¹³

The Departure of the Soldier-Son

When analysing the prevalence of the theme of maternal sacrifice in women's art, the impact of the sheer quantity of deaths which mothers faced has to be emphasized. Between 1914 and 1918, soldiers' mothers amounted to a substantial section of the female population, as almost 40% of German war deaths in these years were young men between the age of 20 and 24.¹⁴ Overall, this age group experienced the highest number of casualties. The next most heavily affected age group, men aged 25–29, experienced 23% of casualties. In contrast to these high figures, those aged 40–44 accounted for only 3.5% of war deaths and those over 45 only 1%. This meant that many of the men killed during the war had mothers young enough to have witnessed their son's departure and death at the front.

¹³ Kollwitz (1999); Dehmel (1914–1918).

¹⁴ *Statistik des Deutschen Reiches* (1922), quoted in Winter (1988), p. 27.

Motherhood in wartime was also a theme of primary significance in women's wartime poetry, especially in amateur compositions. The stanza of the poem *We Mothers*, reproduced below, is typical of such poetry in its thematic representation of a mother facing her son's departure for the front. The poem was written in the form of a mother's monologue and its powerful language and pathos is typical of much wartime poetry. Whereas the style and lyrical quality suggest the work of an amateur, the undisguised, raw emotions conveyed leave a powerful impression. This poem was published in 1917 in a collection of women's writings with the telling title *Women's Comfort and Women's Duty in Wartime*. The prose and poetry in the collection is dominated by an overall appeal to stir women's 'courage to sacrifice' and 'joy of offering' as demanded by the fatherland.

We Mothers
 Who in the world is as proud as we are?
 Our sons marched out to the fields
 For Kaiser and country, to defend and defy
 —Germany's offspring for Germany's honor—
 To stand or to fall—whatever God's will,
 Every youth a man, every man a hero!
 Lord have mercy on them!
 —Mine is out there, too!¹⁵

Overall, the words express a sense of duty, and seem to say that 'this is what mothers should be feeling.' Nonetheless, a genuine feeling of pride and an acknowledgement of wartime duty seems to have played an important part in mothers' consent to their sons' departure for war. The line 'every youth a man, every man a hero' reads like an adaptation of wartime appeals and propaganda. Yet the fact that many women genuinely believed that sacrificing their sons was part of their wartime duty, and that these formulations were not simply empty propaganda but very much part of the language used by women at the time, should be taken into account. Käthe Kollwitz, whose sons both volunteered in August 1914, offers a striking example of this attitude in her attempt

¹⁵ Wer ist so stolz wie wir in der Welt?/Unsere Söhne zogen hinaus ins Feld,/Für Kaiser und Reich, zu Trutz und Wehr/—Deutschlands Blüte für Deutschlands Ehr'—/zu steh'n oder fallen—wie's Gott gefällt,/Jeder Jüngling ein Mann, jeder Mann ein Held!/Daß Gott ihnen gnädig sei!/—Meiner ist auch dabei! First stanza of the poem 'Wir Mütter!' by T. Resa (female author), Blanck (1917), pp. 6–7.

to reconcile her sense of duty and willingness to sacrifice her sons with her maternal feelings.¹⁶

In early August 1914, Käthe Kollwitz convinced her husband Karl, who was reluctant to allow their under-aged son Peter to volunteer for military service, to sign the parental approval form required for military conscription.¹⁷ Kollwitz recorded her husband's arguments in her diary. In essence, her husband felt that if the fatherland needed their son he would already have been called up. While she appreciates that her husband 'is fighting' for their son, she herself has already accepted the inevitable. She describes Peter's glances and his attempts to enlist her support in his wish to go to war. She also recalled embracing her son and telling him that she was not a coward and would be ready. Acting on a clear sense of duty and in the firm belief that she was acting according to the will of her son, she pleaded with her husband on his behalf: 'This one [momentous] hour. This sacrifice to which he [Peter] pressured me and to which we pressured Karl.'¹⁸ This entry reveals that Kollwitz understands her son's departure for war as her own sacrifice, a feeling that is likely to have been reinforced by her own engagement in the process of her son's enlistment.

The Frankfurt artist, Lina von Schaueroth, acted with a similar sense of obligation to the fatherland. She went out of her way to enable her under-age nephew, with whom she had a strong maternal relationship, to enlist for military service. Her late husband had been a high-ranking official in the army and von Schaueroth used his contacts on her nephew's behalf.¹⁹ These two examples demonstrate an active involvement by women in military mobilization, which had implications for the interpretation of their sacrifice. As the mother has become actively involved, the soldier's departure is her sacrifice as well as his, as she lets her son go in spite of fears and presentiments. The following quotation highlights the fact that women portrayed their sons' departure as being within their realm of influence, making mothers active contributors in the sacrifice. As Lily Braun wrote in 1915, 'Behind every one of these hero-boys stands a mother who let him go!'²⁰

¹⁶ Kollwitz (1999), pp. 149–394.

¹⁷ Kollwitz (1999), 10 August 1914, p. 152.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Schaueroth, ed. (1984) *Lina von Schaueroth. Eine Frankfurter Künstlerin* (Frankfurt M.: Kramer, 1984), p. 26.

²⁰ Braun (1915), p. 10.

Admiration for the sons who were prepared to ‘give themselves so freely’ was an important element of the sacrifice. Kollwitz’s diary conveys the impression that she was witnessing something special that deserved admiration and support.

The heart of the boys is undivided. They give themselves in jubilee. They give themselves like pure cinderless flames, rising steeply to the sky. To see them this evening, [...], saddened my heart, but it also was very, very beautiful.²¹

Both of Kollwitz’s sons had been active in the German Youth Movement before the war’s outbreak.²² Their certainty that the hour had arrived in which their ideas of a rejuvenated Germany could be implemented was transferred to their mother. Their conviction of the righteousness and importance of their actions was stronger than her doubts. Reading Kollwitz’s diary entries, one catches a glimpse of an adult envy of the strength of youthful faith—a faith unspoiled by any hesitation, uncertainty or indecision.

Another element that overwhelmed mothers was a genuine feeling of pride that their sons were part of a highly recognized and much admired German Army: ‘Yes, German women are proud, despite all pain, that their sons are called upon to fight for *Kaiser* and Reich.’²³ By fitting in, the sons proved that they possessed qualities, or the ability to develop qualities, which were needed in time of war. Ida Dehmel wrote to her sister Alice Bensheimer in October 1914 to report her son’s progress, and self-improvement, in the army: ‘Imagine, Heinz wrote in his last letter that he felt really great, like never before—is that not wonderful? With him, this was not to be expected.’²⁴ Even if it was not expected, the son’s decision to volunteer for military service was certainly anticipated, as is illustrated by a postcard the poet Richard Dehmel wrote to Heinz-Lux, his wife’s son from her first marriage. He congratulated him on his decision to volunteer and wrote that he himself had been sure that he [Heinz] would not have acted ‘unnaturally.’ He continued: ‘Mother [Ida Dehmel] did not believe you would act differently. However, she saw it as her duty to present the state of affairs to you as

²¹ Kollwitz (1999) 13 August 1914, pp. 153–54.

²² Fiedler (1989), pp. 166–87.

²³ Blanck (1915), p. 6.

²⁴ Dehmel (1914–1918) Ida Dehmel—Alice Bensheimer, 25 October 1914.

impartially as possible. She is delighted in you.’²⁵ This illustrates the way in which sons fulfilled a social expectation, and how their reaction after the outbreak of war became a test of their character, directly linked to their upbringing and hence a reflection on their mothers.

Wartime publications by leading women intellectuals understood the ‘mothers’ war tax’ as a natural contribution to the war effort, where the years of solicitude and careful upbringing of their sons were put to the test.²⁶ Drawing on a moral obligation to the nation, women were expected to meet the soldier’s sacrifice with grace and appropriate conduct. Any displays of emotion, such as crying and lamenting, were dismissed as weaknesses, damaging to the war effort and unworthy of the ‘greatness of the time.’ However women’s reactions and mothers’ responses to these appeals were more complex and a constant oscillation occurred between the belief that their sons should fight in the war and doubts as to whether they really had to.

Käthe Kollwitz reflects in her diary on the sort of publications which attempted to define women’s role in wartime. A piece by the successful novelist and essayist Gabriele Reuter, published in the newspaper *Der Tag*, made a particularly strong impact on her. Reuter described women’s wartime behavior and wrote about the ‘voluptuousness of women’s sacrifice.’ Commenting on this article in late August 1914, Kollwitz wondered how these women, who had brought up their sons and cared for them for many years, were able to send them in front of the cannons. She asked herself how they were able to muster the will to commit this heroic act.²⁷ Tellingly, she avoided making the connection to her own sacrifice, as she herself was one of those who mustered the strength to send her son to war. Her son had not yet left for the front. He was still training in Berlin, not yet exposed to the dangers of war. Whereas she realized that the death of so many young men would cause terrible despair, she saw herself to be far removed from the situation, showing a certain degree of denial. This entry is especially interesting as it provides a good example of how wartime publications were received by educated middle class women. Kollwitz felt as if Reuter’s article spoke to her personally and it drove her to re-evaluate her own attitude to the conflict in her writing.

²⁵ Dehmel (1914–1918) Richard Dehmel—Heinz-Lux Auerbach, 25 February 1915.

²⁶ Bäumer (1914), p. 11; Braun (1915), pp. 10, 31; Herbert (1916), pp. 35–37.

²⁷ Kollwitz (1999) 27 August 1914, p. 158.

The son's departure for war evoked feelings in women that were described as comparable with the separation of mother and child after birth. The termination of physical connection with her son was outside the woman's control, caused by biology on the one hand and war on the other, the latter representing another major force beyond her control: 'as if the child is cut off from the navel again. The first time for life, now for death,' was how Kollwitz described her feelings in a goodbye letter to her son Peter in October 1914.²⁸ This powerful parallel, which was also used in artistic responses, attempted to conjure up a time when mothers nurtured their sons and were able to protect and take care of them. One example of an image that deals with this theme is an oil painting by Charlotte Berend with the title *The Mothers*, which was reprinted in 1916 in *Die Jugend*, a weekly cultural magazine published in Munich. The painting depicts mothers nursing and holding their infant children. This maternal scene, along with the title of the piece, takes up the influential ongoing pro-natalist debate in German society as well as symbolizing a stage in the mother-child relationship when the child is fully dependent on the mother.

In the center of the painting, a mother breastfeeds her infant, thereby emphasizing the strong physical link between mother and child. The painting is not a joyful depiction of mothers and their young children. Instead, earnest facial expressions hint at something looming over the group, an impression that is intensified by all the mothers embracing their children protectively. No fathers are present in the scene, which could illustrate a scenario where the men are on duty somewhere else, possibly at war. The fact that a group of mothers is represented, and not an individual mother, is important as it hints at women's shared experiences of motherhood. The scene above does not take place in a traditional family setting, but focuses on a group comprised only of women and their small children. The role of woman as mother was thereby accentuated, whereas men as fathers were actively excluded.

The nurturing role of the mother is also a central theme in the following woodcut by Sella Hasse, entitled *War Christmas 1914* (Figure 9.2). The title suggests a double meaning. On the one hand, the image presents the birth of Jesus, the religious setting signifying a specifically Christian interpretation of the conflict. Christmas had been proclaimed as the point by which the war was supposed to end, yet the image

²⁸ Kollwitz (1999) 5 October 1914, p. 168.

suggests that Christmas was the time when those at war and on the home front began to understand the extent of the wartime sacrifice. The idyllic conventional image in the stable, usually associated with the birth of Jesus, is replaced by martial surroundings.

Mary, the mother, holds an infant with an adult face in her arms. Next to her kneels a male figure in armor, pausing to glance at the child but ready to leave, ready to fight with a sword in his hand and a helmet on his head. A star casts light on mother and child, and the mother and infant's halos are clearly visible. In the background, corpses ascend to the sky, guided by the rays of light. They are skeletons, possibly dead soldiers—martyrs of the time who have fulfilled their duty on earth and now float towards their paradisiacal afterlife.

The religious symbolism employed by the artist contributes to a striking composition, which uncovers how the roles played by mothers and their sons were interpreted in wartime. The use of light and shadow in the woodcut draws the viewer's attention to the mother and the child, both cast lighter and in stark contrast to the dark surroundings. As with Charlotte Berend's *The Mothers*, a woman nursing her child constitutes the centerpiece of the image. One of Mary's breasts is exposed, drawing attention to the act of mothering a child, something only a woman can do. This again emphasizes the physical bond between mother and child and draws attention to childbirth and nursing as universal experiences shared by Mary and all mothers. These distinctly female experiences allow women to identify with Mary as depicted in the woodcut.

One feature of Hasse's woodcut which contrasts with Berend's painting is the presence of a male figure. Whereas stylistically the knight in the image forms a part of the holy family and his physical appearance and closeness to mother and child suggest a protective role, his figure represents a fascinating but separate story. He could represent Joseph and thus complete the picture of a family. The miracle of the Immaculate Conception, however, decreases the importance of biological fatherhood, as Joseph is excluded from the mother and son bond. The male figure could also represent the Archangel Michael in armor, which would support the interpretation of the conflict as a crusade. Another possibility is that the figure stands for a timeless warrior, a Teutonic knight whose armor is neither of the time of Jesus' birth nor of the First World War. Whether the figure represents either one or all three figures, it is startling that he is clearly not associated with the same notion of sacrifice and emotion as the son, despite a martial



9.2. Sella Hasse, *War Christmas 1914*, 1914.²⁹

²⁹ Sella Hasse, *Kriegsweihnacht 1914*, woodcut (1914), Kupferstichkabinett Berlin.

outfit which suggests fighting and danger. Again, the special nature of the sacrifice of a son is emphasized.

The antagonism between life and death present in the image was also discussed with particular attention in women's wartime pamphlets and publications. Many of these attempted to reconcile women's life-giving power as mothers with their national duties in time of war. 'Women and war—rarely are two terms combined that sound so incompatible, so disparate! Women should give life, tend and protect life! What is their task in mortal war?' asks Anne-Marie Tube, author of numerous wartime pamphlets concerning women and war.³⁰ She insisted that a woman's primary goal should be to find and reach an inner attitude to the war that freed her from all constraints and allowed her to respond to the demands of the conflict with loving grace.³¹ Interestingly the women's activist Helene Stöcker, who had obtained a doctorate in philosophy in 1901 in Berne, viewed women's work as mothers, along with their activities as nurses and helpers, as equal to men's wartime service. Although she later became an outspoken pacifist, Stöcker proclaimed motherhood as a service and duty to the fatherland in the early stages of the conflict.³²

The importance of maternity is also reflected in artist Sella Hasse's choice of the nativity scene as the first scene of her multi-themed war cycle. The parallels in life and work between Sella Hasse and Charlotte Berend are worth noting: both artists had children, yet neither had a son of military age. In their depictions, both women direct the viewer's attention to the mothers and their unique role in bearing and nursing children, drawing on a common female experience. Both scenes explicitly depict the act of mothering a child, the attempt to hold on to a child who has grown up to be a soldier. The underlying pain of departure in the images contrasts with a contemporary statement by the writer Marie Diers, who expressed what was considered to be the true and right spirit of mothers at the time: 'Take my child, I did not give birth for my sake. It is yours, my fatherland.'³³

Wartime images depicting the Annunciation, the announcement of the Incarnation by the Archangel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary, emphasize the sacredness attached to motherhood. These thematic choices disclose

³⁰ Tube (1915), p. 3.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

³² Stöcker (1916), pp. 92–94.

³³ Diers (1916), p. 133.

that some women attached a sacral element to their maternal role and status in wartime. The woodcut by Katharina Heise, reproduced below, depicts a pregnant woman in a long gown (Figure 9.3). Simple forms are used to accentuate the shape of the body. No religious insignia identify the woman as Mary, nor is the Archangel Gabriel present in the scene. Only the title of the image, *The Annunciation to Mary*, marks the depiction as the moment when Mary was told that she would bear the son of God. Mary's face, moreover, is left blank, enabling every woman to see herself in Mary's place, suggesting that mothers as well as their sons had been chosen for a special task. Some women believed at the time that 'great sacrifices were only demanded of exceptional souls.'³⁴ The Annunciation images therefore elevated the status of the individual mother and allowed women to believe that they were carrying a Christ-like child.

A further example of this iconographical choice is the oil painting *Annunciation* by Ida Kerkovius, which depicts Mary receiving the divine messenger, Gabriel. It is a colorful depiction, rendered in a modern, almost naïve style. There is no religious pathos in the image and the halos of Gabriel and Mary only hint at the sacred nature of the scene. This allowed ordinary women to see themselves in the place of Mary, and consequently interpret their sons' sacrifices as akin to that of Jesus—selflessly and willingly made for a greater cause.

Confronting the Reality of Warfare

For mothers who had watched their sons march off to war, the phase following the filial departure was marked by uncertainty, fear and an unavoidable confrontation with reality. The second stanza of the aforementioned poem 'We Mothers' by T. Resa, captures suppressed feelings of anxiety. According to wartime codes of conduct, such feelings could not be publicly expressed. Emotion and despair could only be admitted to in the presence of another mother, someone who could empathize with the enormity of the sacrifice.

We all know, it had to be;
We carry the lot bravely and resigned

³⁴ Herbert (1916), pp. 35–37.



9.3. Katharina Heise, *The Annunciation to Mary*, 1918.³⁵

³⁵ Katharina Heise, *Maria Verkündigung*, woodcut (1918), *Die Aktion*, special issue Karl Luis Heinrich Salze [pseudonym of Katharina Heise], 23/24 (1918) Kreismuseum Schönebeck.

Only sometimes—when passing by—
 Two will halt together;
 With eyes burned by secret tears,
 Stretch out their shaking hands—
 From the heart leaps their cry:
 —Mine is out there, too!³⁶

Yet Resa neither questions nor rejects the war itself; instead she asserts that ‘We all know, it had to be.’ Thus the supremacy of wartime demands over maternal feelings is accepted, as is the form in which the sacrifice had to be delivered—‘bravely and resigned,’ with dignity and pride. The shared nature of these emotions and experiences is presented as a consolation—mothers do not ‘carry the lot’ alone, but together.

The next drawing (Figure 9.4) was produced by one of the most well-known German artists of the period, Käthe Kollwitz, and attempts to artistically represent the immobility and paralysis felt by mothers after their son’s departure for war. The image is entitled *Anxiety* (*Das Bangen*) and was published in the compilation of war art pamphlets *Die Kriegszeit* in October 1914.³⁷ The drawing features a woman’s torso, possibly Käthe Kollwitz herself. The posture of the body is upright, a pose expressing pride and strength, resisting submission to the turmoil of emotions. As Gabriele Reuter made clear in an article that was published in a later issue of *Die Kriegszeit*, women’s emotional conduct was understood as a component of national strength.

[...] this fight against the supremacy of a world of enemies can only lead to victory if no fear and no weakness arise. Those with the strongest nerves will be victorious—well let us have strong nerves.³⁸

The woman’s hands in the drawing are crossed, lying immobile in front of her. Her eyes are closed, as if she does not want to see reality. The closed eyes allow for pausing, they seem to buy time and signify the hope that her son might be spared his all too predictable fate. *Anxiety*

³⁶ Wir wissen alle, es musste sein;/Wir tragen’s tapfer und schicken uns drein./Nur manchmal—so im Vorübergehen—/Bleiben wohl zwei beisammen stehen;/Mit Augen von heimlichen Tränen verbrannt/Reichen sie sich die zitternde Hand—/Da bricht’s aus der Brust wie ein Schrei:/—Meiner ist auch dabei! Second stanza of the poem ‘Wir Mütter!’ by T. Resa (female author), in Blanck (1915) *Frauentrost und Frauenpflicht*, pp. 6–7.

³⁷ *Die Kriegszeit*, 28 October (1914), p. 10.

³⁸ *Die Kriegszeit*, 21 April (1915), p. 36.

represents women's paralysis in wartime, a mixture of fear and anxiety, of hope and denial. The appearance of the figure is depicted in a dream-like scenario as parts of the drawing appear unfinished, adding to the impression that the current situation was only a bad dream that would pass. This drawing seems to reflect Käthe Kollwitz's own emotional conflict at the time.

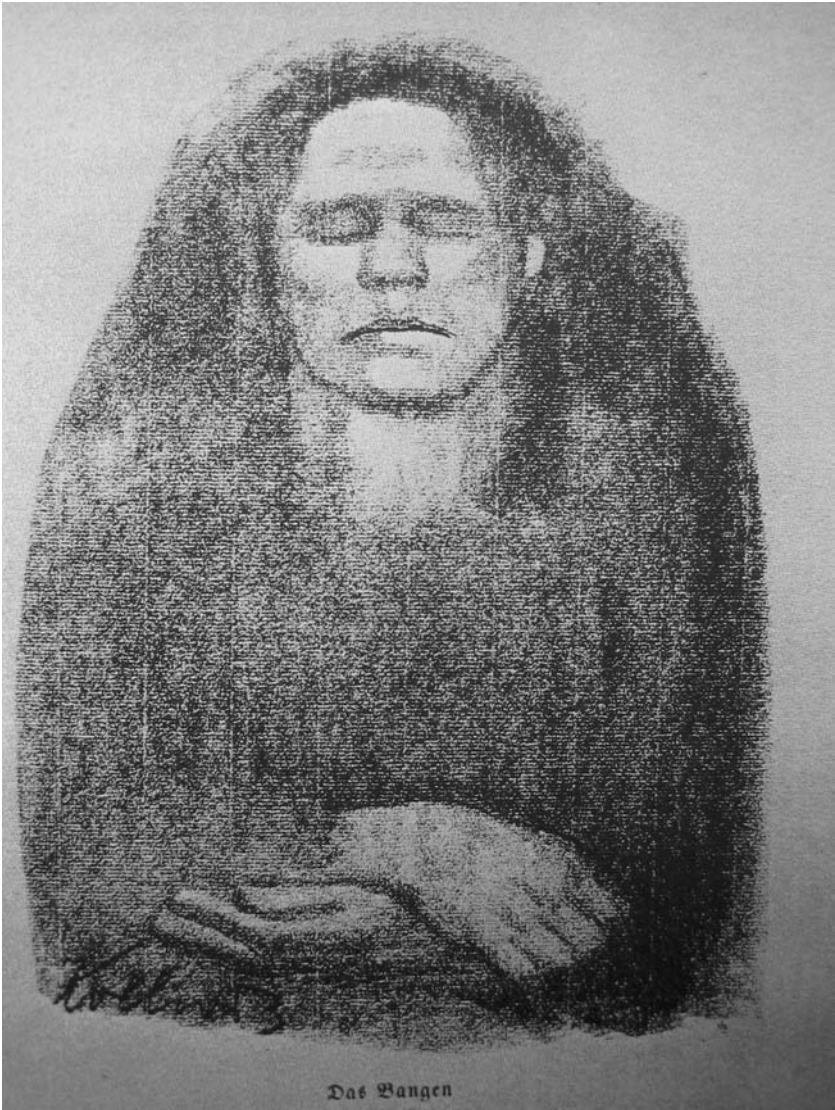
The image was published before Kollwitz learned of the death of her 18 year old son Peter on 30 October 1914. Her diary entries preceding the publication of the drawing vary between despair and a feeling of confidence that things were not that bad and that the boys would return from the war. These statements can be directly linked to the 'good war news' from France which formed a regular part of Kollwitz's diary entries and which led her to believe that it would all be over in a few weeks.³⁹ Small acts of patriotism appear as attempts to evoke military victory as a guarantor of her son's return. The weekend before Peter's departure, on the day the news of Antwerp's fall reached the home front, the Kollwitz family hoisted the German tricolor flag for the first time in their lives. As Kollwitz wrote "This is for our Peter and for Antwerp. Above all, yes, above all this is for our son."⁴⁰ At this stage, the diary and the drawing *Anxiety* suggest that the artist believed that fate could still turn either way; the hope for life still prevailed over an underlying fear of death.

Yet death, more specifically the death of a son, was a daily occurrence and meant many mothers' worst fears became reality. A striking treatment of this theme can be found in the following image by Sella Hasse (Figure 9.5). Her woodcut *Mater Dolorosa on the Battlefields* is the fourth piece of her war cycle, produced in 1916, and another dramatic example of the combination of traditional religious symbolism and imagery in a very modern, expressionistic style.

The center of this woodcut depicts a disoriented woman, staggering among corpses on the battlefield. The title, *Mater Dolorosa*, indicates that this figure represents Mary mourning for her crucified son Jesus. Yet the Mary in the woodcut is not only mourning for one dead body, but for heaps of corpses forming a path to Calvary, the white hill in the background marked by crosses of salvation. The large number of dead bodies portrays the rising death toll. The mother figure seems to

³⁹ Kollwitz (1999) 27 August 1914, p. 157.

⁴⁰ Kollwitz (1999) 10 October 1914, p. 169.



9.4. Käthe Kollwitz, *Anxiety*, 1914.⁴¹

⁴¹ Käthe Kollwitz, *Das Bangen*, lithograph (1914), printed in *Die Kriegszeit* October (1914).



9.5. Sella Hasse, *Mater Dolorosa on the Battlefields*, 1916.⁴²

⁴² Sella Hasse, *Mater Dolorosa auf den Schlachtfeldern* (1916), Kupferstichkabinett Berlin.

illustrate a widely used wartime phrase that every soldier who marched out and every soldier who died had been 'a mother's son.'⁴³

The viewer's attention is consequently drawn away from the mass of dead bodies to the suffering, traumatized woman, clad in the dark robes of mourning. The woman endures pain—her naked feet are pierced by swords—which exceeds even that of the soldiers. The soldiers are dead already and cannot feel pain anymore. It is interesting that death is depicted in a clean and undisturbed manner. The dead soldiers seem almost to be sleeping. Their bodies are intact, there are no broken limbs or disfigured faces; there are no wounds and no blood visible. The only physical wounds are Mary's pierced feet, with the underlying meaning that she endures what her son endured. Yet she continues to feel the pain after his death which draws the attention to her, the mother's, suffering. Mary's pierced feet, moreover, underline the shared nature of the sacrifice and suggest that her son's sacrifice is also her own. Here, Hasse deliberately draws a parallel with the feet of Jesus, which were pierced and nailed to the cross.

In visual representations, the motif of the mourning mother Mary and her dead son developed as an independent theme in German convent art at the end of the thirteenth century. It was a further development from Byzantine liturgical icons representing the burial of Jesus.⁴⁴ The image of the mourning Mary is deeply rooted in German medieval mysticism. Whereas different variations of the *Vesperbild* exist, the medieval composition experienced no change in the baroque period. Many modern representations also adopted the medieval framework for representations of Mary and her dead son, often in front of a cross, at the hill of Calvary or in front of the burial chamber.⁴⁵ In early twentieth century art, Käthe Kollwitz's sculpture *Pietà*, completed in 1903, represented a very emotional interpretation of the motif, focusing on the group of mother and child and disregarding the surroundings. The woodcut by Sella Hasse, placing the mourning Mary in a wartime scenario, was a radical variation of the theme. This work was also one of the earliest pieces in German wartime art to use the *mater dolorosa* motif in response to the immediate experiences of war. After 1918, the *pietà* was a widely used motif on war memorials in Germany.⁴⁶ Considering

⁴³ For example, Bäumer (1914), p. 11.

⁴⁴ Apostolos-Cappadona (1994), p. 278; Kirschbaum (1972), pp. 450–51.

⁴⁵ Kirschbaum (1972), p. 451.

⁴⁶ Probst (1986). In France, different iconography dominated over the *pietà* motif, see Becker (1989).

that common interpretations of the traditional *Vesperbild* agree that its function was not only to highlight Mary's pain, but also to emphasize the salvation brought about by the grief, another dimension is added to the meaning of the woodcut: an expectation that something positive will come out of death.⁴⁷

The tragedy of death was followed by an immediate phase of helplessness and emptiness for the woman, marked by grief and mourning. For days, the only sentence Käthe Kollwitz dedicated to the death of her son Peter was taken from the telegram received from the army 'Your son was killed in action.'⁴⁸ The regular and extensive correspondence Ida Dehmel produced during the war years became extremely fragmented after her son Heinz-Lux was killed at the Western Front in January 1917, with no sign of either trivial correspondence or long letters. The loss of life these women experienced triggered the search for an interpretation to make the sacrifice worthwhile.

Interpreting the Sacrifice

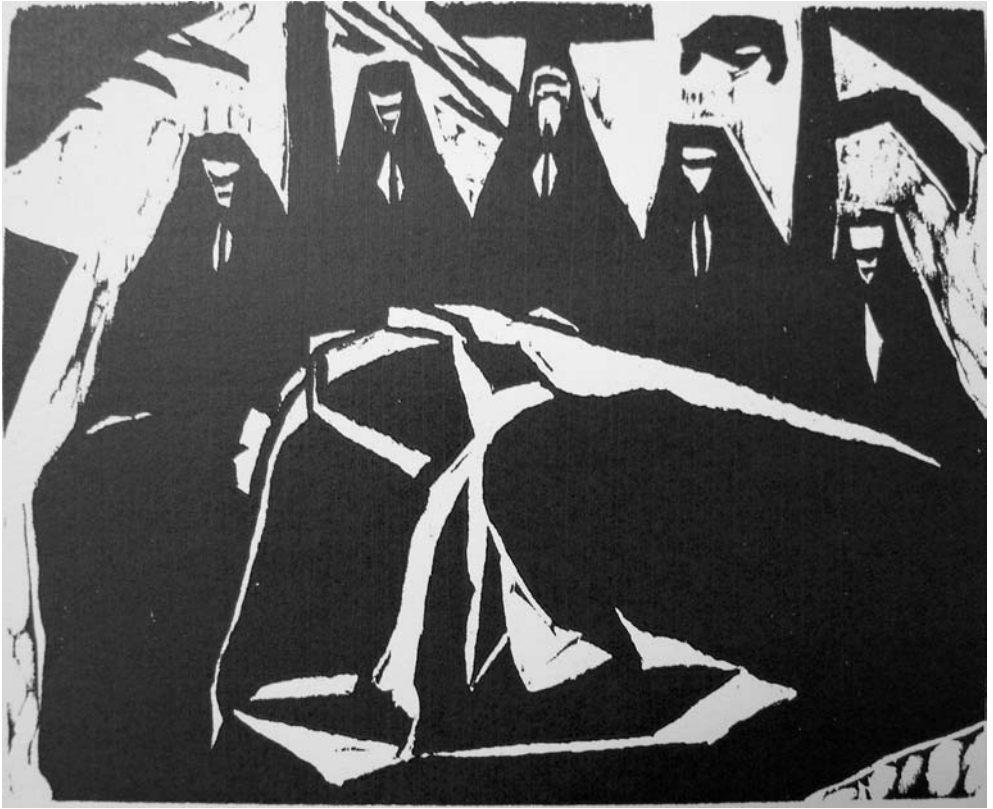
The essence of the third stanza of T. Resa's poem also illustrates the third phase of the experience of sacrificing a son to the fatherland. It is marked by the search for a cause which matches the value of the son's death. This poem voices a despairing appeal to God, pleading that Germany's further existence (identified as the cause that the sons fought and ultimately died for) will be guaranteed. The line 'A single thought that keeps us going' underlines the need to give the sacrifice a meaning. In order to be able to accept fate and continue life, the sacrifice had to be worthwhile; it had to have a meaning.

O times so hard—O times so great!
 We all carry the same lot.
 A single thought that keeps us going,
 A belief—a hope—a prayer:
 'Lord, don't let Germany be ruined,
 the land for which our sons bleed and die
 Lord, listen to the mother's cry!
 —Mine is out there, too!⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Kirschbaum (1972), p. 450; Minkenberg (1986).

⁴⁸ Kollwitz (1999) 30 October 1914, p. 174.

⁴⁹ O Zeit so hart!—O Zeit so groß!/Wir alle tragen das gleiche Los./Ein einz'ger Gedanke mit uns geht,/Ein Glaube—ein Hoffen—ein Gebet:/“Herrgott, laß Deutschland



9.6. Katharina Heise, *Lamentation*, 1918.⁵⁰

nicht verderben,/Für das unsere Söhne bluten und sterben!"—/Herr, höre der Mütter Schrei!—/—Meiner ist auch dabei! Third stanza of the poem 'Wir Mütter!' by T. Resa (female author), in Blanck (1915), pp. 6–7.

⁵⁰ The woodcut *Beweinung* by Katharina Heise was printed on the front page of *Die Aktion* under the pseudonym K. L. Heinrich-Salze 11/12 (1918), NL Katharina Heise, Kreismuseum Schönebeck.

The last stanza of the poem suggests that the future of the fatherland, of Germany, was the cause for which the sons sacrificed themselves. A mother's pain might have been easier to bear knowing that her son's death had not been in vain. The search for meaning was thus an integral part of mourning and coming to terms with death.

The artistic evidence suggests that women utilized the death of the nation's sons to publicize a reading of the sacrifice that asserted women as active participants rather than passive minor bystanders watching their sons' sacrifice. The above woodcut by Katharina Heise portrays five women who appear to surround 'their' offering, a body draped over an altar-like stand (Figure 9.6).

This woodcut by Katharina Heise, which was published in both *Die Aktion* in 1918 and as a portfolio, is part of a series responding to the impact of war. The women are dressed in the black gowns of mourning, similar to the one worn by the *mater dolorosa* in the woodcut by Sella Hasse. The women's hands are held chest high and their heads appear bowed as if in prayer. The women form a row, all looking at the corpse in front of them. The body is lying on a slab; torso and limbs hang down lifelessly. His legs are stretched, indicating the suspension that the body once had, and which now contributes to a grace in death. A dead body bent to the back in an extreme angle, to the limit of its flexibility, is an expression of physical pain, as often applied in baroque versions of the *pietà*.⁵¹ It is likely that Katharina Heise used the same technique to refer to the pain the man had endured and his violent and painful death on the battlefield.

The women make a determined impression; they present 'their' sacrifice which is laid out on the altar of the fatherland. The group of five women refer again to the shared women's experience and their companionship in the process of mourning. As before, the dead body represents every mother's son. Although this woodcut does not contain any direct religious symbols, the layout of the image and formation of the women and the body resemble a Christian burial scene as well as a pagan offering. The staging, the presentation of the dead body as a sacrifice, is very important, implying that there was a reason for dying. The perception that death for a particular cause was meaningful and

⁵¹ Probst (1986), p. 21.

worthy was a powerful concept, which meant that women and mothers had to believe in the same cause as their sons to make sense of their deaths. Käthe Kollwitz, in her diary, periodically agonizes over the attempt to live her life in a true and upright manner to uphold the ideas her son Peter died for. She also reflects on his beliefs, such as love of the fatherland, which she openly shares.⁵²

Yet Kollwitz's diary entries were not primarily concerned with the loss of life and future for Peter himself, but the deprivation his death meant for her. In January 1916, Kollwitz wrote that with one son dead and another far remote in the war, everything had changed for ever: 'My life has become poorer. And my whole life as a mother actually lies behind me already.'⁵³ Kollwitz thus concentrates on her own pain, and the extent of her own sacrifice in relation to Peter overshadows any other emotion in her diary. As Regina Schulte has argued, the assertion of Kollwitz's own victimhood remains a central theme in her diary for years to come. She cannot afford to think that the sacrifice might have been wrong and senseless.⁵⁴ The following image, *The Sacrifice*, which Kollwitz drew in 1915, exactly reflects her understanding of Peter's death as part of her own sacrifice (Figure 9.7). Although the face of the woman who offers her infant is not shown, no attempt is made to disguise her emotional pain, as Kollwitz herself relates in her diary: 'Now she no longer stands upright. She bends down very low and holds out her child, in deepest humility.'⁵⁵ The child is represented as an infant, turning the mother into the active force. The drawing appears to have been a means for Kollwitz to express and interpret her emotions and to re-live the sacrifice of her son.

The death of her son Peter had a profound impact on Kollwitz and the struggle to fill his sacrifice with meaning hindered her own creativity. For almost twenty years, she worked and agonized over a sculpture to honor her son's death. The finished piece, unlike earlier drafts, does not depict her son Peter. Instead, it features both of the parents in clear,

⁵² Kollwitz (1999), for example, 31 December 1914, p. 180; 11 June 1915, p. 190; 15 August 1915, p. 195; 2 January 1916, p. 207.

⁵³ Kollwitz (1999), 17 January 1916, p. 214.

⁵⁴ Schulte (1998), p. 146.

⁵⁵ Kollwitz (1999), p. 185.



9.7. Käthe Kollwitz, *The Sacrifice*, 1915.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Kollwitz, *Das Opfer* (1915), Käthe Kollwitz Museum, Cologne.

visible pain.⁵⁷ The sacrifice of the survivors takes precedence over the sacrifice of the dead, turning the attention to Kollwitz herself and what the loss of her son meant to her.

The sacred nature accorded to bereaved mothers is the theme of the lithograph by Hannah Höch below (Figure 9.8). The image, entitled *Pietà*, is a plain drawing that simply depicts the contours of the mother and the corpse. While the mother is wearing a long gown, the body of the son is naked, emphasizing its vulnerability. Höch's design lacks all pathos and overt religious symbolism, turning the scene into a more private one. The scene could again resemble any woman mourning for her son as both Mary and Jesus seem to have a more symbolic character. The image, moreover, enables the mother to enjoy a last moment of bodily contact with her dead son, whom she hugs closely. This gesture hints at an important function of wartime art in allowing for the fictional projection of actions, wishes and dreams that could not be carried out in real life. Art represented a medium to help women to come to terms with loss and bereavement.

The status of victimhood claimed by women who lost someone in the war is illustrated by the fact that many wartime paintings and poems were directly dedicated to mothers. One example is the poem examined above, by T. Resa, which is entitled '*We Mothers*' and not '*Our Sons*.' The theme is the suffering of women, not the suffering of their sons in wartime. The next woodcut reproduced below provides a similar example (Figure 9.9). The Berlin based painter, Auguste von Zitzewitz, explicitly honors mothers for their sacrifice. The artist depicted a crucifixion scene and prominently dedicated her woodcut to 'The Mothers.' Although the wartime scenario is not an obvious element of the woodcut, the memorial-like design appears to have been inspired by wartime experience. Significantly, the image does not commemorate the dead but the living.

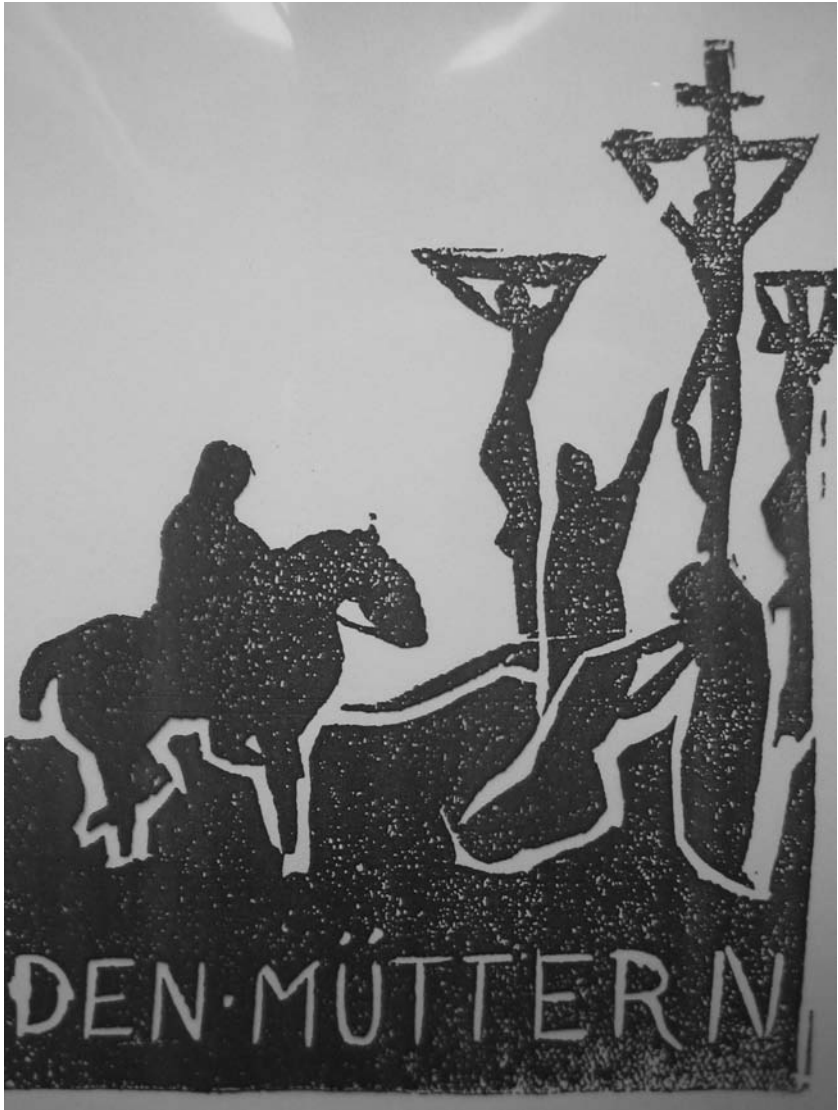
Although the crucified men are also depicted in the woodcut, their physical pain and sacrifice is not the primary concern of the artist. Instead the scene is interpreted from the perspective of the bereaved mothers. It should be stressed that the strong emphasis placed on female bereavement represents a departure from many of the crucifixion scenes produced during the war years. The design does not show the explicit suffering or physical pain of the men and allows for a change

⁵⁷ Winter (1996), pp. 109–14.



9.8. Hannah Höch, *Pietà*, 1918.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Hannah Höch, *Pietà*, lithograph (1918), Verein der Berliner Künstlerinnen Archive, Berlin (VdBK).



9.9. Auguste von Zitzewitz, *To the Mothers*, 1918.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Auguste von Zitzewitz, *Den Müttern*, woodcut (1918), printed in *Die Aktion*, special issue, 'Golgatha' 11/12 (1918).

in focus towards the female group. Mourning is thus presented as a more painful experience than dying. The parallel drawn by the artists between the sacrificial death of Jesus and that of the soldiers was the subject of numerous images produced during the war by both male and female artists. Yet none of these give women such a prominent role. It seems that the image is also used as a reminder to request public acknowledgement for mothers' roles in the sacrifice of their sons, as it was published in *Die Aktion* in 1918.

Male Artists and Images of Mourning Mothers

The theme of mourning mothers is, perhaps understandably, a much less common theme in wartime art produced by male artists. Only a few examples exist, highlighting the significance of this motif for women's wartime art and their understanding of the conflict. Instead of sympathizing with women's loss or highlighting the mother's sacrifice, the examples offered by the images *Mater Dolorosa* by Otto Dix and *To the Mothers of Europe* by Hans Richter are quite aggressive in their style and meaning and appear to be accusatory in tone, blaming mothers for their complicity in the waging of war.⁶⁰ While the title of Dix's drawing, *Mater Dolorosa*, evokes the theme of maternal sacrifice, the general style and violence of the image ensures that it bears little resemblance to the images of the same subject produced by female artists. Dix reverses the scenario and gives an explicit account of the appalling wounds and violent nature of death on the battlefield caused by the technology of war. In Dix's design it does not seem as if the violence represents the pain of losing a son. Unstoppable violence is instead the main theme of the drawing. Mary is not represented as a dignified grief-struck woman, but as an ugly, grimacing figure, who turns away from her son on the cross. The image represents chaos, a world where the conventional order of things has been disrupted. It seems full of anger and aggression but does not focus on depicting the pain of a mother.

Richter's design, published in the cultural magazine *Zeit-Echo* in 1915, is a very cynical piece and amounts to an even more drastic portrayal

⁶⁰ Otto Dix, *Mater Dolorosa*, ink and chalk (1918), in Conzelmann (1983), p. 104. Hans Richter, *An die Mütter Europas*, *Zeit-Echo* (1915/16).

of the human cost of warfare than Dix's painting. The artist dedicated his design to the mothers of Europe in a somewhat desperate attempt to reveal the brutal results of a war so readily accepted by many women. In thematic terms, the drawing *To the Mothers* by Max Slevogt is markedly different from these two designs.⁶¹ While not enhancing the status of the mourning mother or comparing her fate to that of Mary, Slevogt shows compassion and sympathy for the bereaved women who had lost sons in the conflict. In this image, an endless queue of women walks along an endless trench filled with the dead bodies of their sons. The women are visibly distressed, wailing and crying due to their loss and their emotional pain. It seems, therefore, that the idealization of the mourning mother was distinct to women's art of the First World War.

Conclusion

The emergence of iconographical depictions of mourning mothers in women's art in a wartime setting represented an artistic innovation. The *pietà* and the *mater dolorosa* were taken out of their conventionally pious context and adapted to reflect women's immediate experiences during the conflict. Depictions of the mourning Mary are the oldest existing visual manifestations of a mother's grief in art history. Mary's mourning, in medieval as well as in more modern religious artistic compositions, is depicted with respect and honors the mother of Jesus and her pain. The worship of Mary in popular religion increased the attraction of this motif for women during the war years, as the heightened status of Mary is based on the sacrificial death of her son.

The images discussed in this chapter succeed primarily in depicting the loss and bereavement of the mothers: the actual sacrificial death of the son does not represent the main focus of this art. The emphasis placed on the mothers' loss serves to raise, enhance and also publicize their grief and sacrifice. By portraying soldiers as sons, women turn themselves into and depict themselves as mourning mothers of the nation whose contribution to the war effort came at a great cost to themselves. Perhaps, by expressing women's anxiety and pain, artistic interpretations of the mourning mother were a way of coping with

⁶¹ Max Slevogt, *Die Mütter*, etching (1917), in Jürgens-Kirchhoff (1993), plate 83.

the realities of warfare and attempting to find consolation. The omission of the person who is mourned for in women's art could also reflect a psychological state within the mourning process. As Freud observed in 1917, overcoming the loss of the 'loved object' represents a stage in coming to terms with the loss.⁶² In the art German women produced during the First World War, this phase was mirrored in the iconographical focus on the bereaved, on the mourning mothers, and not on their dead sons.

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⁶² Freud (1917), p. 442.

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CHAPTER TEN

INFORMATION, CENSORSHIP OR PROPAGANDA?
THE ILLUSTRATED FRENCH PRESS IN THE
FIRST WORLD WAR*

Joëlle Beurier

The French illustrated press was quick to recognize that the thousands of personal photographs taken by those involved in the war could be used to satisfy the public appetite for information about the conflict. On Sunday, 16 August 1914, the following announcement appeared in one illustrated paper: ‘*Le Miroir* is willing to pay any price for interesting photographs relating to the war.’¹ Photography was ideally suited to convey different aspects of life at the front to those living safely back at home. Although the actual reality of the war experience was impossible to communicate, the French illustrated press developed ways of conveying aspects of the daily routine of the front, thus linking the home front with its soldiers.²

Among the tens of thousands of images published between August 1914 and November 1918 in *L’Illustration* and *Le Miroir*, three themes emerge: death, the battlefield and combat. Each of these themes is closely related to the question of extreme violence. In fact, these illustrated newspapers were often unexpectedly candid in their choice of photographs, which frequently represented very harsh aspects of the conflict and were sometimes almost indecently gruesome. By investigating how images were censored, it is possible to explain the publication of such material. This chapter will therefore compare different photograph collections in order to enhance our understanding of photographic propaganda during the Great War.

* This chapter was translated from French by Heather Jones. It is part of a larger doctoral thesis, entitled “Images, violence et masculinités. Les presses illustrées française et allemande en Grande Guerre,” completed by Joëlle Beurier at the European University Institute, Florence, December 2007.

¹ French text in the original quotation: ‘*Le Miroir* paie n’importe quel prix les documents photographiques relatifs à la guerre, présentant un intérêt particulier.’ See: *l’Illustration*, 15 August 1914, p. 122; see also the call for photographs issued in *Le Pays de France*, 15 April 1915.

² Extreme experiences are often incommunicable using images: see Dagen (2002) on the work of art, or Didi-Huberman’s study (2003) on photography.

The Photographic Discourse of Wartime Violence

By their very nature, the two French fortnightly illustrated newspapers discussed here, *L'Illustration* and *Le Miroir*, were in the business of conveying the most dramatic aspects of the news, and during the war they focused particularly on representations of death. This allowed the reader to get close to the very essence of the war. The newspapers portrayed death in two different, yet concomitant, ways. *L'Illustration* adopted a kind of educational approach towards photographic images of death, for reasons of prudence, as well as because of problems in obtaining such material. Its photographic coverage was at first markedly restrained. Although the edition of 22 August 1914 did show a crude image of dead horses abandoned upon a road, it was not until 26 September 1914 that the newspaper published its first pictures of human corpses—enemy bodies of course. The photograph depicted the dead men at a distance, as shapeless forms, whose faces cannot be seen.³ Such images recurred regularly over the following months: during the fourteen weeks that followed between September and December 1914, fourteen photographs were published which depicted German corpses. During the same period, the idea of the death of French soldiers was represented symbolically: on twelve occasions it was conveyed through photographs of tombs or funerals. Together, these photographs provided the readership of *L'Illustration* with an average of over one and a half images per week which had death as their theme, thereby rapidly consolidating the idea in the public mind that war kills, albeit that it principally kills the enemy.

However, once this idea was well established, at the start of 1915 the newspaper began to include images of the corpses of French soldiers, its 'own' side. The first photograph of a dead French soldier showed the silhouetted body of a *zouave*, a soldier from the French colonies, abandoned after a victorious attack.⁴ This was followed in February 1915 by a photograph of two dead legs, attributed to a French corpse. Finally, eight months after the start of the war, a French corpse was shown in full in the edition of 13 March 1915. The image was graphic: even the face was shown, something which until this point had been

³ *L'Illustration*, 26 September 1914, p. 220.

⁴ *L'Illustration*, 16 January 1915, p. 56.

taboo and carefully avoided, even in the case of pictures of the dead enemy.

Images of corpses were nothing new in the illustrated press.⁵ Alongside the pristine print etchings of crimes, which often made the front page of illustrated supplements, the press had already published a number of photographs of dead bodies.⁶ Readers were therefore used to the macabre sensationalism of such images, and to a certain amount of representational realism. The context here, however, was very different. The war images shown in *L'Illustration* and *Le Miroir* were almost entirely photographs, which at this point had a reputation for reproducing 'reality,' in a way that drawings, engravings or etchings did not. In addition, they appeared very regularly, reinforcing the link between war and death. Finally, in the context of national mobilization and wartime violence, each photograph was invested with unprecedented emotional power. Images of corpses, whether they were of the bodies of enemies or dead from the allied side, thus had the power to propel the reader into a real war, beyond the imagination—regardless of the degree of sanitization, manipulation or even fabrication of the image involved.⁷ The reader experienced an immediate realization that 'war kills,' and gradually came to understand that this killing function encompassed his or her own loved ones at the front.

What the fortnightly illustrated papers, particularly *Le Miroir*, also revealed, however, was precisely *how* war killed. Following an initial period of caution regarding the depiction of death, it became possible

⁵ See Thiesse (1984) or Ambroise-Rendu (2004).

⁶ Particularly during the plague in Manchuria in spring 1911, there were numerous pictures of mass graves in *L'Illustration*. See the supplement from 18 March 1911.

⁷ Sanitization involved hiding the head or the face; it was enhanced by the fact that blood was not visible on the black and white images. As regards the manipulation of images, it lies outside the scope of this chapter to study the page layout of the photographs, the sequence in which they were presented on the page or the articles and texts that were placed next to them, all of which provided the image with additional meaning, allowing the paper to minimize the impact of an image or to increase its effect. For information on the falsification of images see Linsolas (2004). How realistic a photograph was is not at issue here—rather this chapter looks at how images were perceived. The very fact that a photograph showed death was in itself considered shocking regardless of how accurate the picture was. By showing death at all, the French press transgressed a clear boundary—as illustrated by a comparison with the German illustrated press which almost entirely excluded photographs of dead bodies. On violence in the German illustrated press see 'Les images de la violence et le Mythe de l'Expérience de Guerre dans les presses illustrées française et allemande en 14–18' in Hélène Guillon and Stéphanie Laithier, eds, *Cahiers Alberto Benveniste*, Paris, Le Manuscrit, n° 2, January 2007, pp. 67–80.

to portray extreme violence. From the beginning of 1915, such violence was depicted without restraint, displaying the full range of possible fates covered by the phrase 'death in war.' The death of civilians, for example, was depicted in an unadulterated image in *L'Illustration* on 16 January 1915.⁸ It showed a heap of corpses thrown into a wagon, a photographic image that omitted not a single grisly detail: the children's bodies were half-stripped and the rigid bloody corpse of a mother lay at the center of the photograph, her eyes still open.⁹ However, the body of the enemy remained the principal vector for conveying the effects of mechanized warfare and the death it produced. Photographed at close range, published in large format, images of corpses emphasized death in war primarily as an attack on the integrity of the body. Even when the dead body was presented in one piece, it was frequently carbonized, black and grubby.¹⁰ Often the reader was presented with body parts or fragments which punctuated the landscape of the photograph, such as in the following image of a foot abandoned on the ground, which was ignored in the text, but which the reader could not fail to miss (Figure 10.1). The black sole of the boot is particularly visible in the foreground of the photograph, standing out against the clear limestone background.

As the war continued, further examples of such photographic images appeared. Simply by turning a page, the reader might encounter a head emerging from the clay of a parapet: in the following example, he or she could almost make out its level of decomposition (Figure 10.2).¹¹ On occasion, 'German heads, arms and legs protruded from the earthen defensive ramparts' and could clearly be discerned in the inner wall of the trench.¹²

⁸ The caption states that the top photograph shows Serbian civilians massacred by Austro-Hungarian forces. The bottom photograph shows the carbonized body of an elderly French woman, 'transformed into a human torch' (*transformée en torche vivante*), in the village of Auve, in the Marne district.

⁹ In 1914, the general public was not used to this. The image of innumerable bodies jumbled together only became the symbol of total violence after the Shoah. It resulted from the liberation of the camps, and the photographic reportages and exhibitions which presented the horror of the Shoah for educational purposes and in order to highlight the guilt of the German population. See Chérout (2001); Delage (2006). The impact of this type of image must therefore be looked at in the context of a photographic visual culture that was still in an embryonic stage.

¹⁰ *Le Miroir*, 25 April 1915, p. 16.

¹¹ *Le Miroir*, 23 May 1915, p. 13.

¹² French text in the original quotation: 'Des têtes, des bras, des jambes d'Allemands sortent des remparts de terre.'

LE MIROIR

NOTRE MARCHÉ SUR MAUREPAS ET LE FOREST



10.1. *Le Miroir*, 8 October 1916, p. 5.

Surprise and a sense of horror appeared to be at their most extreme when corpses became such an integral part of the war landscape. However, the fortnightly illustrated papers continued to push the boundaries of what could be shown in their depiction of mass death, by including disturbing images of bodies lying at the bottom of a trench or, as in the following example (Figure 10.3), depicting corpses huddled and decapitated in an enemy trench 'which had been worked over by the machine gun on one of our assault tanks.'¹³

Perhaps this illustrates the most remarkable aspect about these war photographs: they allowed the spectator to see all the degradations that their loved ones' bodies were subjected to after death. The indifference of the living towards the dead is also immediately striking. Forced to co-exist alongside corpses, a morbid intimacy developed, to the extent that the dead were pushed into the parapet defenses to take up space, or worse, were trampled on in passing.¹⁴ When the dead were taken into consideration, they underwent numerous contortions before being buried: bodies were moved from the site of death because they were in the way and laid out to wait in rows; they were eventually interred in a collective grave.¹⁵ This grave was then covered with simple, rough crosses which might or might not correspond closely to the actual site of burial. Thus the corpses were rarely treated with dignity, but humiliated by this process. Worse, some corpses were not even accorded the basic collective burial. The desecration and degradation of the dead body appeared at its most extreme in images of men whose corpses had been thrown into the air, like disarticulated rag dolls, to rot on the trees, stripped naked by the force of the explosion. An example of one such photograph follows (Figure 10.4).¹⁶ Such bodies were doubly degraded by the brutal indignity of the position in which they were left and by their long exposure to the full gaze of passers-by.

This gallery of horrors stunned the reader, who was fully exposed to the visual impact of such violence. Despite other sources of information, such as descriptions by men on leave or soldiers' letters, readers

¹³ French text in the original caption: 'Travaillée par la mitrailleuse d'un de nos chars d'assaut [...]', *L'Illustration*, 3 August 1918, p. 118.

¹⁴ *L'Illustration*, 24 April 1915, p. 1; *L'Illustration*, 4 September 1915, p. 241.

¹⁵ *Le Miroir*, 26 June 1915, p. 1. *Le Miroir*, 7 November 1915, p. 4.

¹⁶ Here one can discern a decapitated foot, but one of the two photographs published in *Le Miroir* on 14 May 1915, pp. 4–5, also shows a corpse in a tree, its trousers blown away.



10.2. 'A "communication trench" marked out by corpses,' *Le Miroir*, 11 April 1915, p. 7.



10.3. *Le Miroir*, 26 June 1916, p. 11.

LE MIROIR

5

SUR LES LIGNES DE VÂUQUOIS : L'ÉPOUVANTAIL



(Droits réservés.)

Les Allemands n'ont jamais pu reprendre le corps de cet officier observateur

Aux approches du petit village, riant naguère, seuls quelques arbres dressent des bras de catastrophe sur la campagne désolée. L'un d'eux, dans ses branches déchiquetées par les balles et les éclats d'obus, tend vers le ciel un épouvantail

sinistre : c'est le cadavre d'un officier observateur allemand qui fut tué là, à son poste. Pendant trois semaines, les soldats ennemis, en dépit d'efforts répétés, et qui leur valurent des pertes sérieuses, ne purent jamais reprendre le corps de leur chef.

could not have imagined such crude and devastating images as they were now presented with in the illustrated press. As the war breached new thresholds of violence on the battlefield, the French illustrated press continued to push back the boundaries of what could be shown, creating new levels of tolerance for what was considered 'showable' or 'viewable.'

Alongside such hellish depictions of wartime horror, the illustrated fortnightly papers also dealt with the physical topography of the conflict.¹⁷ Defined here as 'war landscapes,' images of devastated countryside became increasingly frequent from 1916 on. They were used to provide an iconographic means of expressing the heightened intensity of the violence that was now unfolding on the Western Front from Verdun to the Somme.¹⁸ Such images served to create photographic stereotypes of the battlefield which drew attention to the extremely violent fighting that occurred there. The Verdun zone, for example, was depicted in the form of an apocalyptic site, a realm of destruction. This powerfully impacted upon the public imagination—an iconic impact which has lasted right down to the present day.¹⁹ 'Verdun' was conveyed using photographs of destroyed forests—mutilated trees without branches or leaves, reduced to their stumps—which rapidly became the standard background for every published picture of the battle.²⁰ These photographs displayed a uniformly dark ground covered by the famous mud, which epitomized the 'hell of Verdun,' a landscape that had been rapidly deformed by craters which extended to the very edge of peripheral vision. The human form was generally absent from these pictures. 60% of *Le Miroir's* photographs of Verdun, for example, were panoramas of empty, apocalyptic landscapes (Figure 10.5). The images appear as if frozen and a sense of order and clarity emerges from them, which serves to express the mechanized nature of the horror which has been inflicted upon humans there. In fact, humans have been reduced in agency and importance to the point of disappearing entirely from the photographed Verdun space.

¹⁷ On the link between representations of death and images of landscapes which acted as a metonym for death, see Beurier (2004).

¹⁸ Images of ruined buildings appear to have served a different purpose, with their own integral semantic function—that of stigmatizing the enemy and his use of unrestrained violence.

¹⁹ On the apocalypse as a war *topos*, see Winter (1998); on the representation of Verdun see Canini (1989).

²⁰ *Le Miroir*, 30 April 1916.

In contrast to the empty, ordered spaces of the images of Verdun, 74% of the photographs of the Somme in the two illustrated newspapers depict the battlefield as the locus of overwhelming, gigantesque human chaos. The key reason for the differing visual portrayals of the two battles is that 65% of the photos of the Somme selected by the press were photographs taken at close range, which often zoomed in upon one trench. The trench itself was frequently shown cluttered with diverse objects, such as spades, helmets, boxes, clothing or a variety of rubbish, which conveys the sense of an army's living quarters, hastily abandoned because of violence (Figure 10.6). Sometimes human remains form part of the clutter in these photographs; body parts such as legs or headless torsos were sometimes included as part of the general detritus of the Somme trench.²¹ In addition, the natural landscape served to reinforce the sense of surrounding confusion.²² Unlike Verdun, in the photographs of the Somme the trees were not mutilated into a uniform landscape of stumps, and the disorientating impact of the bombardment is marked by damaged branches lying in all directions. The intense bombardment has transformed the ground into a limestone mire, mixed with black earth which works to blur the sharpness of the photographic image. The whole effect is to project the image of the battlefield as a rubbish heap in which a human presence is visibly evident. Humans are thus shown as active participants and reintroduced in the illustrated newspapers' choice of photographs of the Somme, in contrast to those of Verdun.

These landscape photographs of the battlefield provided unique iconic images and the visual framework for the public to understand and imagine the battles of the Somme and Verdun. This spatial representation of events allowed readers to enter symbolically into the violence of the war; they could project the fighting into these photographed landscapes, which rapidly became associated with death since these images of war-torn topographies were clearly associated with numerous corpses during the first weeks of each battle.

²¹ *Le Miroir*, 15 October 1916.

²² One might think initially that this different photographic treatment of the two battles was due to the different geography of the combat areas with their contrasting types of soil and vegetation. However, other images that dealt with Verdun, particularly in the first editions of *le Miroir*, were very similar in form to those depicting the Somme—so the different patterns in the overall portrayal of the two battles were the result of editorial selection, not any innate difference in the actual battlefields. It was, in fact, the choice of perspective, close range or long distance photography, that changed the reader's view of the landscape.



10.5. *Le Mirail*, 13 August 1916, p. 10.



10.6. 'Two views of the Somme Battlefield,' *Le Miroir*, 3 September 1916, p. 6.

This process of projection was possible because readers had a clear understanding of the fighting. It is not true that combat was not photographed during the First World War. What was not photographed was hand to hand combat at close quarters—up to the present no photographic images of this kind have been discovered. This was for technical as well as moral reasons—it was impossible to fight an opponent at the same time as photographing the event and in close combat a soldier was likely to prioritize assisting comrades over taking a sensational picture.²³ Nevertheless, the illustrated press keenly sought photographs of combat, particularly images which showed someone at the moment of death itself. Drawings were used to depict such subjects, where photographs were not available.

Yet given the rarity of photographs of such subjects—as highlighted by the caption to the next example which states ‘this snapshot was taken by chance’ (Figure 10.7)—and given the mechanical nature of modern combat, the illustrated press developed new techniques in order to convey the battle experience. Thus photographic reportage displays were laid out in the newspapers, their sequence replicating that of a film projection, in order to recreate the different phases of an attack, thereby providing the reader with a visual narrative account of the fighting.

The technological development of cameras, which were able to take pictures without requiring a long exposure time, further enabled this kind of representation of the battle which appeared to the reader to capture it directly as it happened.²⁴ In the reportage shown below, all the details of the moment of attack are shown (Figure 10.8): the heads turned towards the photographer before the battle, the men with their legs bent and their backs bowed in order to clear the trench parapet, the atmosphere created by the smoke of exploding shells across no-man’s-land.²⁵ All these elements contributed to create a sense of the event unrolling before the eyes of the reader. Some of these reportages went to ingenious lengths to reproduce the war on paper and

²³ It was not until the interwar period—and specifically the work of Frank Capa during the Spanish Civil War—that the photo journalist emerged who took pictures of the fighting without participating in it.

²⁴ In fact, advances in photography meant that soldiers could use small portable cameras at the front, which used celluloid films that required a very short exposure time. See the illustrated book by Fage (1980), particularly chapter 12 on the development of cameras.

²⁵ *Le Miroir*, 19 November 1916, pp. 8–9.

LE MIROIR 7

CET INSTANTANÉ FUT L'EFFET D'UN HASARD

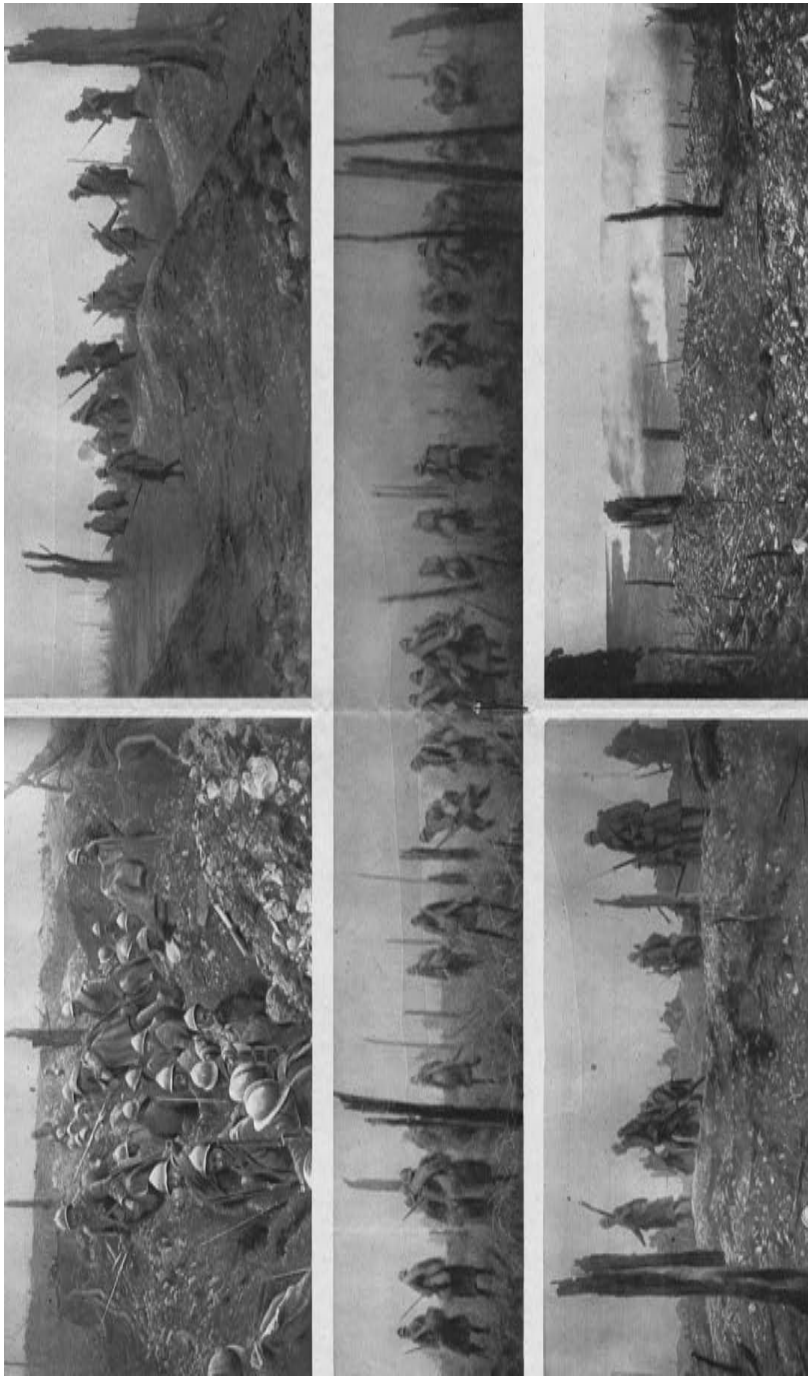


Dragon en reconnaissance, photographié alors qu'une balle l'atteint à l'épaule

Ils avançaient sans penser que l'ennemi fût proche. L'un des dragons photographiait. Un Allemand pressa sur sa gâchette un peu avant que le Français pressât sur son déclic. Entre temps, un dragon mettait en joue. Le document était-il authentique ?

Nous avons enquêté. Lieu : Forêt de C..... Date : 11 avril, 13 heures. Nom du blessé : Pierre Quér... Région dans laquelle il est soigné : le Midi. C'est le premier document de ce genre, et rigoureusement valable, que nous ayons eu entre les mains.

10.7. 'This snapshot was taken by chance' *Le Miroir*, 9 May 1915, p. 5.

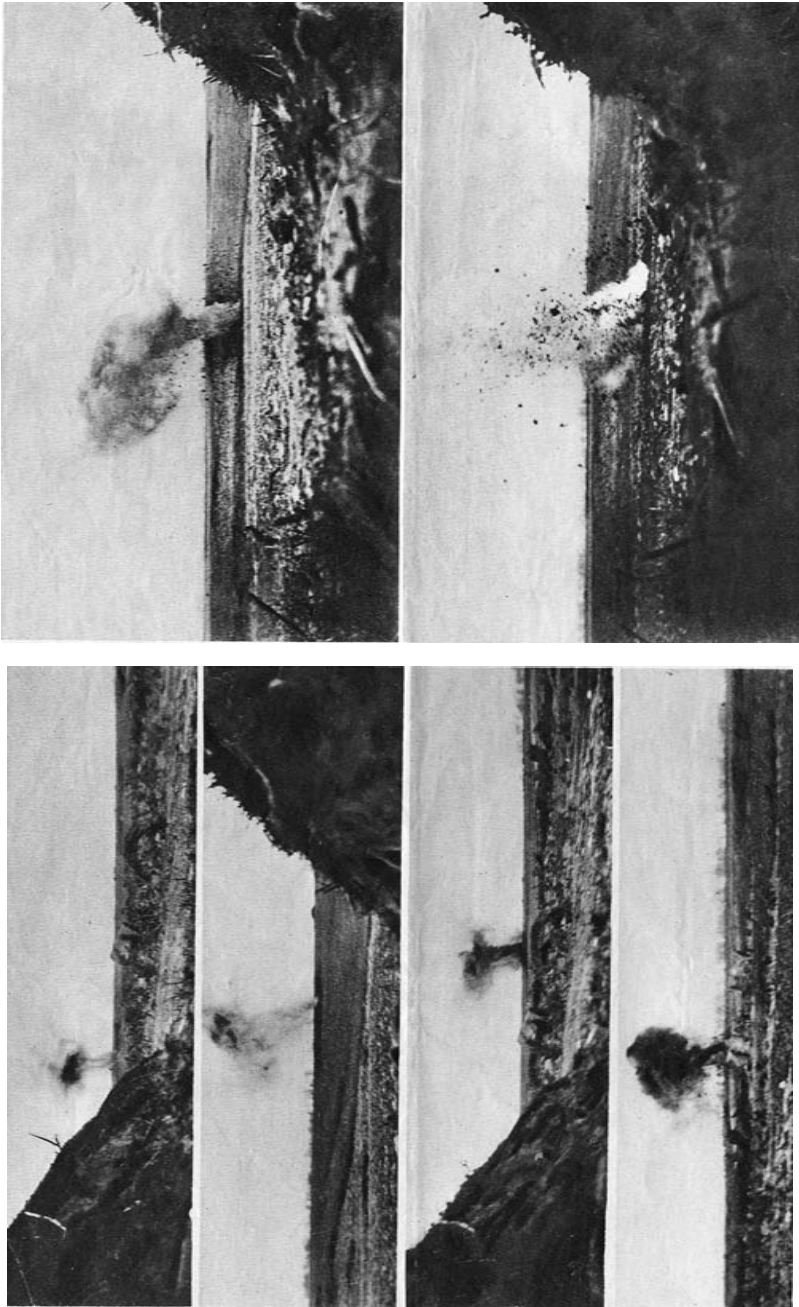


10.8. 'Several phases of the attack on 24 October which led to the capture of Fort Douaumont,' *Le Miroir*, 19 November 1916, pp. 8-9.

succeeded, through the way they laid out the images on the page, in replicating the rhythm of a bombardment, as well as the emotional intensity of battle.

The following reportage uses six photographs to recreate a shell explosion (Figure 10.9). The shells advance steadily towards the photographer who remains static, as evidenced by the fact that the countryside around him does not change, allowing the reader to enter into the photographer's experience on the battlefield. Faced with a plume of smoke (images 1 to 4) that increases in size as the bombardment draws nearer, until the point where it is possible to make out the hail of clay and shell fragments (images 5 and 6), the reader feels increasingly targeted. The corresponding text further enhances this sense of anxiety. By juxtaposing small formats, which the eye takes in rapidly, with the larger, close-range photographs which follow on the second page, the reader is drawn into the text's rendition of the bombardment. Whereas he or she was previously merely the spectator of a scene unfolding before his or her eyes, the reader is now transported to the very heart of the event and becomes caught up in the experience, thanks to this spatial-temporal reconstitution. Although these small reportages were not always as subtly presented, they all provided a momentary suspension of the physical barriers that separated the two worlds of front and home front to bring the reader directly into the battlefield experience. Not only did they vividly recreate modern battle but they managed to convey an emotional impact as well through the tension produced by the juxtaposition of text and the different sized photographs. While actual battlefield emotions essentially remained impossible to communicate, photo reportage from the heart of the action—whatever its limitations—succeeded in conveying elements of the emotional resonance of the front experience.

The three wartime themes that have been analyzed here allowed the reader on the home front to become habituated to the real consequences of extreme violence, which he or she could then simultaneously spatially contextualize within the visual space created by the photographs. At the same time, he or she could also share in the experience of extreme violence because of the way that reading created a temporal space that mimicked the lived reality of the soldiers. This completely new photographic experience epitomizes the attempts made by the French illustrated press to bridge the distance between the home front and the front line.



10.9. 'German 150" shells dispassionately approach the photographer,' *Le Miroir*, 6 June 1915, pp. 12-13.

How Did Such Images Appear?

Contrary to all expectations and in contrast to its foreign counterparts, the French illustrated press particularly emphasized photographs that showed the reality of soldiers' lives. This unique aspect of French photography is explained by the very specific photographic production and publication context that operated in wartime France.

The supply of photographs was crucial. The illustrated press obtained its images from diverse sources such as the Meurice agency, official photographs produced by France or her allies (Britain, Canada, Italy), photographs lent by individuals or provided by special envois, as well as photographs from the enemy press. However, a large amount of images were sent into the newspapers by individuals. While *L'Illustration* issued a once-off appeal to its readers to send in such material, *Le Miroir* developed a permanent system for individuals to make photographic submissions.²⁶ In fact, on 27 September 1914, *Le Miroir* issued its famous appeal, which was reiterated in almost all of its wartime editions, asking readers to submit any interesting photographs they had of the war. In this way, *Le Miroir* hoped to move away from the banal photographic fare of official portraits, pictures of anonymous crowds and, more generally, images which were limited to the home front. On 14 March 1915, it took its initiative one step further, launching a competition for 'the most striking photograph of the war,' with a first prize of 30,000 francs for the winner.²⁷ Two months later, on 23 May 1915, it inaugurated a monthly competition with prizes of 1,000, 500 and 250 francs for first, second and third place. These initiatives revealed a strong desire to inform the public as accurately as possible about the realities of the war, drawing upon a ready supply of photographs taken by soldiers with their own camera.²⁸ It was principally *sous-officiers* (NCOs) and officers who took photographs: the well-documented examples of Blaise

²⁶ *L'Illustration*, 15 August 1914, p. 122. See for example the appeal issued to amateur photographers in the second wartime edition of the paper (15 August 1914, p. 122); nevertheless there is evidence that readers sent in photographs spontaneously which reveals that the practice predated the appeal. See the example of René Pilette, an amateur photographer, who sent six snapshots to *Le Pays de France*, before this weekly launched a competition as well. Historial de la Grande Guerre (Péronne), fonds René Pilette.

²⁷ Original French text in the quotation: 'la plus saisissante photographie de la guerre.'

²⁸ See the advertisements for cameras which appeared, for example, in *L'Illustration* on 24 March 1917. The most maneuverable type cost 55 francs, which was the second

Cendrars and Henri Barbusse were not isolated cases.²⁹ The French censorship office even referred to the phenomenon which it tried in vain to prohibit.³⁰ Although the competitions launched by the illustrated press do not account for the enormous popularity of photography among soldiers, they did have an influence upon the choice of subjects photographed.³¹ It is also impossible to ignore the key role which the financial incentive of a prize played in the photographic act.³² The impact of the competition becomes clear when one looks at the wide thematic disparity between the large number of private photographs and the more sensational images published by the press. The major corpus of private photographs tends towards homogeneity. It is largely made up of photographs of war materiel, comrades, and landscapes and only rarely do macabre themes emerge.³³ For example, of the 239 images in the collection of photographs taken by Enrico Barbero, *sous-officier* in the Italian 55th Infantry Regiment, only one could be considered shocking. It is entitled 'A hero!' and shows a fully clothed corpse with its face in an advanced state of decomposition, almost skeletal.³⁴ The French illustrated press's photographic competitions encouraged ever more sensational photographs, which in content and frequency did not correspond with the more generally prudish, restrained subject matter that is found in private photographic collections from the war.

However, the most provocative of photographs would have been worthless to the newspapers had the censorship system lived up to its

cheapest price, equating to approximately a third of the average monthly salary of a Parisian worker.

²⁹ Blaise Cendrars (1946) and Henri Barbusse (1937). Even today, the huge number of individual photographic collections of the conflict that have recently been published reveals the extent of the interest in photography that existed during the war: Audoin-Rouzeau (2002). Tens of thousands of photographs also survive in numerous historical institutions, such as the Imperial War Museum in London, the Museo Storico della Grande Guerra at Rovereto or the Historisches Museum in Frankfurt.

³⁰ As late as 1918, the censor was still complaining about soldiers taking photographs at the front. See SHAT, 5N 363, Cabinet du Ministre, Section presse, 1914–1918.

³¹ Such competitions did not exist in the German press. However, this did not deter soldiers from taking tens of thousands of amateur war photographs. See Bodo von Dewitz (1989).

³² Cendrars (1946), p. 266 stated—in all likelihood to defend himself from any accusation of spying—how much *Le Miroir's* offer of a reward had motivated him to take unusual photographs or to mess about with his companions.

³³ Bodo von Dewitz (1992).

³⁴ This also applied in the case of Marcel Felser, see Audoin-Rouzeau (2002). The photographs by Ernesto Barbera are in a private collection belonging to Simonetta Michelotti whom I would like to thank here for her kindness in assisting me.

reputation for intransigence and acted to prevent their publication. In reality, the French censorship archives reveal an institution that was poorly organized. Multiple control structures led to confusion, inefficiency and overlap rather than greater stringency.³⁵ However, the principal problem was the actual task of censoring, which was far from easy or straightforward.³⁶ Those charged with censoring the illustrated press faced the particular problem of interpreting photographs which could have diverse meanings; the message depended as much upon the nature of the image as upon the context of its publication.³⁷ The instructions that were intended to unify censorship practices ultimately proved of little use as they were mainly concerned with the censorship of written texts. The few specific references to photography related primarily to war materiel and to the depiction of particular locations or military personalities, in other words to any 'information or article concerning military or diplomatic operations which might assist the enemy.' This meant censorship focused on placenames and the names of military personalities cited in the captions.³⁸ It did not prevent certain publications from publishing sensitive information, however, as the following note from the Ministry of War reveals:

I ask you to particularly alert the Service for Control of the Press, and the different newspaper editors, to the fact that the publication of photographs of areas within the range of enemy artillery can have serious repercussions. As one particular recent experience has shown, the reproduction of these photographs in the newspapers allows the enemy to ascertain the precise location of encampments or assembly points. The enemy immediately opens fire upon these points which could have remained unnoticed if photographs had not alerted him to their existence.³⁹

³⁵ SHAT, 5N 360, contrôle publications illustrées, Cabinet du Ministre, section presse, 1914–1919, 11 août 1918, Président du Conseil.

³⁶ Forcade (1998), chapter 3, from p. 150 on.

³⁷ SHAT, 5N 360, contrôle publications illustrées, Cabinet du Ministre, section presse, 1914–1919, 25 décembre 1915, section presse du ministère de la guerre, au général commandant en chef.

³⁸ Original French text in the source: 'Toute information ou article concernant les opérations militaires ou diplomatiques de nature à favoriser l'ennemi.' SHAT, 5N 59, *Le Miroir*, Letter of 6 May or 6 September 1915 from the Minister of War to the General.

³⁹ French text in the original quotation: 'Je vous prie d'attirer tout particulièrement l'attention du Service du Contrôle de la Presse et des Directeurs des Journaux sur les inconvénients graves que présente la publication de photographies prises dans les localités pouvant être atteintes par l'artillerie ennemie. La reproduction de ces photographies par des journaux est de nature à permettre à l'ennemi, ainsi qu'une expérience récente vient de le démontrer, de conclure à l'existence d'un cantonnement

These restrictions failed to deal with the actual content of photographs in any detail, leaving the individual censor to grapple alone with how to deal with the sensational images used by the illustrated press. He had only received the vaguest of instructions to prohibit anything 'likely to excite or lead to disorder,' or to 'impact badly upon the spirit of the army or the population.'⁴⁰ Even these instructions proved problematic as enforcing them required a good knowledge of mass psychology which was only in its infancy. Photography was generally understood as simply a reproduction of reality, without any developed awareness of its emotional potential.⁴¹ It was misunderstood as a form of communication throughout the war and the authorities adopted a *laissez-faire* attitude towards censoring it, relying upon the censor to use his own judgement. This pragmatic approach resulted in the censor preferring to pass photographs for publication rather than risk censoring too stringently.⁴²

In addition to these problems of selection, the censors found it very difficult to enforce the prohibition on publishing certain images. The archives reveal their powerlessness—their attempts at litigation were almost completely futile. There were numerous instances where the censor's rulings were disobeyed, often repeatedly by the same party.⁴³ Such disobedience was possible because proofs submitted for censorship were returned to the newspaper exactly as they had been submitted: prohibited items were left in place, with only a brief instruction as to which pieces were to be censored.⁴⁴ The illustrated press showed itself to be particularly inventive in circumventing the censor's prohibitions.

ou rassemblement sur tel ou tel point déterminé. Le feu est alors immédiatement ouvert sur des localités qui auraient pu rester indemnes si des documents photographiques ne les avaient signalées aux coups de l'ennemi.' SHAT, 5N 360, contrôle publications illustrées, Cabinet du Ministre, section presse, 1914–1919, Cabinet du Ministre de la guerre aux généraux, 26 février 1915.

⁴⁰ French text in the original quotation: 'de nature à exciter ou à entretenir le désordre'; 'à exercer une influence fâcheuse sur l'esprit de l'armée et des populations.' Law on press indiscretion in time of war of 4 August 1914, in Becker (1991).

⁴¹ SHAT, 5N 360, contrôle des publications illustrées, Cabinet du Ministre, section presse, 1914–1919.

⁴² SHAT, 5N 383–6, Le Ministre de la Guerre à Monsieur le Général, Commandant en chef. Emanant de la Direction Générale des relations avec la presse, 19 janvier 1916; Dossier 5N 360: contrôle publications illustrées, Cabinet du Ministre, section presse, 1914–1919, 11 août 1918, président du conseil.

⁴³ SHAT, 5N 59, *Le Miroir*, Lettre du 6 mai ou 6 septembre 1915 du Ministre de la Guerre au Général.

⁴⁴ SHAT, Le Bureau de la Presse, 28 October 1915.

For example, once a photograph had been approved by the censor for publication, the newspapers would sometimes publish it in a different context.⁴⁵ On other occasions, the papers did not follow the censor's instructions in their entirety, for example simply changing the caption of an image rather than withdrawing it from publication or only changing one caption out of a whole section due to be removed.⁴⁶ Often the newspapers excused their publication of prohibited material by claiming that the censor had taken too long to return the proofs and that the edition had already gone to press by the time they received his instructions.⁴⁷ Finally, a number of publications did not bother to apply for the necessary approval prior to publishing:

[...] This is not the first time that *le Flambeau* has published photographs or articles without taking account of the required permission from the Press Bureau which it has still not tried to obtain: in October alone, for example, it left a series of four proofs at the secretariat of the Bureau, and went on to publish this material without authorization.⁴⁸

Faced with such practices, the censorship office risked appearing ridiculous, especially given that certain publications flagrantly ignored its instructions, as was the case in the following example: 'The illustrated periodical *J'ai Vu* is a habitual offender and only rarely obeys the instructions set down by the *Service des périodiques*.' The only sanction open to the censor to combat such behavior was to issue 'severe warnings' (*sévères avertissements*) or 'strong reproaches' (*sévères observations*). This did not prevent *J'ai Vu* from re-offending: on 14 April 1916 a 'final severe warning' was issued to it when it was found to have once again published inappropriate material. Such actions had no effect. Even when the editor of *J'ai Vu* was called to the office of the Governor of Paris for a personal reprimand, the periodical continued to disregard the censor's instructions. It was only when the authorities threatened to seize offending issues of the periodical—which would have had a direct economic impact—that the editor of *J'ai Vu* complied: he now

⁴⁵ SHAT 5N 382, Cabinet du Ministre, Censure et saisie, Dossier *J'ai vu*.

⁴⁶ SHAT, 5N 360, contrôle publications illustrées, Cabinet du Ministre, section presse, 1914–1919, le général Maunoury Gouverneur militaire de Paris au Ministre 12 mars 1915 au Ministre. Note pour la section de la presse du 30 avril 1917.

⁴⁷ The censor responded with the accusation that the press only submitted copy for approval at the last moment so that they could blame the censor for the delay and publish without following his instructions. SHAT, 5N 360, contrôle publications illustrées, Cabinet du Ministre, section presse, 1914–1919.

⁴⁸ SHAT, 5N 382, Cabinet du Ministre, Censure et saisie, Dossier *J'ai Vu*.

‘appeared more inclined to submit to the requests made by the Press Bureau, as he estimated that the seizure of an edition would cost the periodical 25,000 francs.’ This compliance did not last: in April 1916, a seizure did indeed take place, following a new transgression by *J’ai Vu*. Even this only had a temporary prohibitive effect. Following the seizure, the periodical managed to comply with the regulations for just over a year, before re-offending on 1 May 1917. The Press Bureau merely responded with yet another ‘severe warning’ to *J’ai Vu* for yet again publishing material without the censor’s approval.⁴⁹

The archives thus reveal a certain passivity on the part of the censorship office which, on those rare occasions that it did confront papers for publishing without permission, was unable to impose real sanctions. Two reasons help explain this situation. The first is that the only effective punishment, to seize the entire print run of an offending edition after it had been published, was in reality difficult to organize. Any intervention after publication had occurred required considerable police involvement. To prevent copies reaching the public, the police had to go to the printers and to all points of sale, including provincial train stations and local distributors if they had already been circulated. Such actions were therefore only taken as a last resort, when the offending material was deemed to be really dangerous. In all other cases, the censor just passed the print run despite the inclusion of prohibited material. The second reason is related to this practice. Given that the censor only intervened in those cases that were considered to be really dangerous, then clearly the sensational, shocking images examined in this chapter were not considered sufficiently alarming or threatening at the time to warrant action by the authorities.

What photographs were considered dangerous enough for an entire print run to be seized? The action taken against *L’Illustration*’s illustrated supplement of 8 September 1917 provides a key insight into what motivated the censor. The report deemed offensive was entitled ‘Abandoning Riga’ (*L’Abandon de Riga*) and was intended to evoke the ‘terrible consequences of internationalist theories for the life of states.’⁵⁰ The article criticized the Russian revolution and its disastrous effect

⁴⁹ French text in the original quotation: ‘à paru d’autant plus décidé à se soumettre aux demandes du Bureau de la Presse qu’il évalue à 25,000 francs le préjudice que lui causerait la saisie d’un numéro.’ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *L’Illustration*, 8 September 1917: ‘funestes conséquences pour la vie des Etats des théories internationalistes.’

upon the morale of the soldiers, providing a quasi-cinematic depiction of a desertion incident, where the soldiers were forced back into the ranks by their officers using armed force. Four photographs appeared particularly revealing: the first and second, which showed the soldiers' stampede as they attempted to desert, and the third and fourth, which showed the use of extreme violence to enforce military discipline. This included threatening the soldiers with death if they did not return to the ranks, as demonstrated by an officer raising his rifle against two deserters. Appearing only a few months after the French mutinies of 1917, such images were no doubt seen as particularly dangerous.

As this example illustrates, with the exception of images which related to a precise factual context such as strikes, mutinies or defeat, photographs which had a powerful emotional impact were not in themselves considered dangerous or threatening to the national war effort. Thus, contrary to what one might believe—and contrary to the claims made by those witnesses who emphasized the pacifist outlook of some of these images—the photographs published by the illustrated press were not necessarily the result of an error or misinterpretation by the censor.⁵¹ They were simply read according to the norms of representation during this period. According to these norms, only events mattered; the psychological impact of reporting was not yet taken into account, even when it came to reporting facts about the war.⁵² Finally, such images did not perhaps carry the same visceral resonance that is attributed to them today. The very success of the fortnightly illustrated newspapers reveals the extent of public interest in images of the front and supports the argument that these pictures were not unpopular. The process of censorship, with its structures, instructions, recommendations, sanctions and training of personnel, is generally used to establish a normative framework for what is acceptable or unacceptable to the authorities. However, in the case of France during the First World War all these

⁵¹ SHAT 5N 360, contrôle publications illustrées, Cabinet du Ministre, section presse, 1914–1919. Two articles mocked the censor for allowing the publication of photographs that were considered to be dangerous. See *L'Intransigeant*, Friday, 5 March 1915, 'nos échos'; *Paris-Midi*, Sunday, 30 January 1916, p. 2.

⁵² This idea is supported by the first chapter in Jay Winter and Antoine Prost (2004), which clearly shows how during the war, and after, right up to the 1960s, the key emphasis was upon factual events, military or political, and not upon the human experience or emotions. Applying this interpretation to French culture during the war helps us to understand why the images published by *Le Miroir* and *L'Illustration* were not censored.

different aspects of censorship remained at a very embryonic stage in the institutions of 'Anastasie'.⁵³ In fact, the archives reveal that French censorship was a rather blunt instrument and that there was much that slipped through its wide net. Photography was a new method of communication for which the French censorship system was very poorly prepared and reluctant to exercise its authority.⁵⁴ This situation also reflected the understanding of photography at the time—the photograph was valued for its representation of real facts rather than its psychological meaning, which was often unintentional. The censorship system was not only not omnipotent, it was also not particularly interested in photographic information that had no overt political message, and frequently passed images of decapitated bodies, amassed corpses, devastated forests and soldiers in no-man's-land. This revelation raises a whole range of new questions about how photography created and sustained a national wartime system of information in France.

What Kinds of Iconographic Propaganda Developed?

The body of photographs studied here appears all the more surprising given that from spring 1915 on, the state had put in place a system intended to provide official photographs of the war. It was strictly controlled and produced images which were the exact opposite of those published by the illustrated press. In order to explore this contrast further it is necessary to look at French visual propaganda in more detail, and to define its main characteristics.

The creation of the Army Photographic Section (*Section Photographique de l'Armée* or SPA) on 9 May 1915 marked a major effort to coordinate visual propaganda.⁵⁵ Its employees were often professional photographers who were entrusted with covering official events. They worked

⁵³ 'Anastasie' is the name given to the French censorship office, chosen because it evokes an image of an old, cross woman with enormous scissors in hand. On this subject see Christian Delporte, 'Anastasie: l'imaginaire de la censure dans le dessin satirique (XIX^e-XX^e siècle),' in Pascal Ory, ed., *La censure en France à l'ère démocratique, 1848-1994*, Actes du colloque du Centre d'histoire culturelle de l'UVSQ, Bourges, 11-13 March 1994 (Bruxelles: 1997), pp. 89-99.

⁵⁴ The situation for the written press was not dissimilar. As late as 1917, a third of the articles which had been cut by the censor still appeared in print regardless of this fact. See Forcade (2005), p. 56.

⁵⁵ Guillot (2002), p. 14. Guillot's remains the leading work on the Army Photographic Section.

exclusively for the state, taking photographs according to its orders, and were directed by the military when they worked on location.⁵⁶ One observer stated that

From the moment the photographer arrives at the location he is constantly accompanied and is directed as to what he is to do. He is swiftly sent to the command position at HQ [Head Quarters, *Quartier Général*] [...] then army vehicles transport him to the site he is to photograph.⁵⁷

Such practices meant that official photographers rarely visited the front line and when they did, it was always before or after a battle, never during combat.⁵⁸ As a result, their photographs were sober, sanitized and often purged of any disturbing content.⁵⁹ If the corpse of an enemy soldier did appear, it was often censored, as all of the plates taken by official photographers were ultimately assessed by the authorities.⁶⁰ All these pictures were primarily intended to aid the French propaganda effort abroad, but some of them were also sold to the French press for domestic publication. However, of the 80,000 plates of official photographic images available between May 1915 and the end of September 1917, *L'Illustration* only purchased 269 and *Le Miroir* 233.⁶¹ This was a very small number, in part due to the relatively expensive price charged for the use of official photographs, but also due to the fact that photographs taken directly by individual soldiers were far more sensational and interesting.

Certain photographs experienced a new lease of life when they were selected to appear in official exhibitions about the war which were

⁵⁶ For example, on 21 July 1915 the Under-Secretary of State for Artillery and Munitions urgently requested 'some photographs relating to the employment of women in the munitions workshops.' See: *Ibid.*, pp. 22–27.

⁵⁷ 'A partir du moment où l'opérateur arrive sur le terrain il est sans cesse accompagné et aiguillé dans son travail. En effet, il est rapidement dirigé vers le QG [...], d'où il est transporté sur les lieux à photographier, par des voitures des services de l'armée.' *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁵⁸ Denoyelle (1997), p. 18, also points out that their equipment was heavy, consisting of impressive cameras with tripods, which made it impossible to take quick snap shots.

⁵⁹ For reasons of space, it is not possible to provide further detail here regarding the photographic work produced by the SPA. It was generally of a watered down nature.

⁶⁰ Poitevin (2003).

⁶¹ The 'Report on the Establishment, Role and Results of the Army Photographic Section' (Rapport sur la création, le fonctionnement et les résultats de la section photographique de l'armée), cited in Guillot (2002), p. 113, details precisely the number of photographs sold to the press.

held on a variety of different occasions. Apart from the permanent exhibition at the *Musée de la Guerre*, there were also temporary ones held intermittently in Paris, such as the Interallied Exhibition which attracted 50,000 visitors between October 1916 and January 1917, or another which lasted from November 1916 until December 1917. These Parisian initiatives were complemented by travelling exhibitions which appeared in North Africa or, in summer 1917, in the departments of Savoie, the Eure and Seine Inférieure. However, these were largely individual personal initiatives which exploited these otherwise under-utilized photographs as a source. For example, the Georges Petit Gallery in Paris produced an exhibition entitled 'Remember' (*Souvenez-vous*) which focused upon German atrocities. Town halls and schools in Paris and its suburbs displayed between 100 and 200 enlarged photographs between 1916 and 1917. In the provinces, trade fairs often facilitated informative discussions about the war; for example, the Lyon Book Fair arranged for the newspaper *Le Progrès* to lend its building for a permanent photographic exhibition on the conflict. A similar initiative was instigated by the Orleans Railway Company (*Compagnie des Chemins de Fer d'Orléans*). In addition to exhibitions, photographs were also used to produce published album collections or to illustrate school books and teaching material.⁶² However, despite these numerous, diverse private initiatives, which were very successful, it remains clear that SPA attempts at disseminating propaganda within France remained temporary, sporadic and uncoordinated, largely restricted to urban areas. Indeed the very varied nature of the local initiatives described here can be seen as evidence of a lack of state organization and an absence of any coherent state propaganda plan, rather than as proof of the success of official photographic propaganda.

Yet the SPA produced over 100,000 photographic glass plates between May 1915 and November 1918. It was established and functioned as a centralized, effectively controlled and carefully planned organization. Why then did its efforts remain so ineffective within France? One possible answer emerges from one of the key texts relating to the foundation of the SPA. It describes how the SPA was to 'ensure the supply of dependable propaganda using authentic documentary photographs [and] to create irreproachable archives which any impartial historian

⁶² 'Section photographique et cinématographique de l'Armée, Résultats et Fonctionnement d'octobre à février 1918,' p. 13, cited in Guillot (2002), p. 48.

will recognize as accurate.⁶³ However, 'the primary task at hand is [...] to supply propaganda to neutral countries which are overrun by German photographs produced by the *Verkehrsbureau* in Leipzig, the German organization responsible for providing visual propaganda.'⁶⁴ It was only as an afterthought that the official texts referred to the role of these photographs for internal propaganda. In both instances, when the term propaganda is used it refers to relations with foreign states, evidence that the idea of visual photographic propaganda within France was secondary, in comparison to the international propaganda war, in the minds of officials.⁶⁵

In many respects the evolving terminology provides us with the best insight into politicians' attitudes towards a national propaganda campaign.⁶⁶ The debates that took place regarding the posters used to advertise the four war loans between 1915 and 1918 are revealing. The different boxes and folders in the archives show that during the first three loan campaigns the posters used to advertise them were classed under the rubric 'financial advertising' (*publicité financière*).⁶⁷ It was not until 1918 and the final 'liberation' loan campaign that the term 'propaganda' (*propaganda*) was used at the same time that a centralized state-organized institution for national loans was established, the Commissariat for National Loans (*Commissariat à l'Emprunt National*). In contrast, at the same time, civil society used the term propaganda as a synonym for commercial advertising, indicating its informative, diffusive functions.⁶⁸ From the beginning of the war until the end of 1918, the term propaganda appears to have been understood, at least in official

⁶³ French text in the original quotation: 'assurer une propagande loyale à l'aide de documents authentiques, [de] constituer des archives dont la sincérité est irrécusable pour l'historien soucieux d'un travail impartial,' Levi (1915).

⁶⁴ 'La préoccupation première est (...) de fournir des images de propagande aux pays neutres qui sont submergés de photographies allemandes provenant du *Verkehrsbureau* de Leipzig, organisme allemand chargé de la propagande par l'image,' Guillot (2002), p. 14.

⁶⁵ 'Rapport sur la création, le fonctionnement, et les résultats de la section photographique de l'armée,' 10 October 1917, Archives de la photothèque du Fort de Saint-Cyr, cited in Guillot, Hélène, 'La vie quotidienne pendant la Grande Guerre: photographies de l'armée française,' *Mémoire de maîtrise*, Paris I-Sorbonne, 2002, vol. 1, p. 18.

⁶⁶ In a groundbreaking article, John Horne (2004) retraces the etymology of the word propaganda but does not deconstruct the evolution of its meaning during the war itself. It seems necessary to distinguish between postwar representations of wartime propaganda and actual propaganda practices during the conflict.

⁶⁷ Ministère des Finances, cartons B33025 à B33041.

⁶⁸ *Le Miroir*, 2 August 1914, publicity coupon.

circles, in the sense of a discourse which had the purpose of ‘propagating’ one idea: the destructive impact of the war on French territory. In no sense did the word invoke the deliberate falsification of facts or the manipulation of a discourse in order to project false impressions. This helps to explain why, throughout the war, photographic propaganda was almost exclusively directed at foreign countries: the aim was to publicize abroad the image of the disastrous effects of the war in France, in order to ensure international public opinion would support the French war effort. This outlook also helps to explain the themes chosen by the SPA for official photographic propaganda, which focused upon the material destruction caused by the war, such as ruined buildings. Given the prevalent belief that photographs directly represented reality, visual propaganda was not intended to falsify evidence or even to manipulate opinions. The purpose of such images was to report the truth. As a result of such thinking, the idea of providing propaganda for the French about France’s wartime situation appeared pointless: the French already knew the real situation. Therefore, between 1914 and 1918, there was little motivation to use official photographic propaganda within France and it was rarely employed in this way. If there was a photographic propaganda discourse, it remained the result of actions by individuals and was not created by the political or military authorities.

Conclusion

Overall, three key conclusions emerge from this study. First, between 1914 and 1918, the French public had access to photographs which vividly depicted some of the most atrocious aspects of life at the front. Second, this discovery highlights the fact that the idea of an authoritarian and omnipotent censorship office is incorrect, at least as far as the illustrated press is concerned: the censorship of the illustrated press was relatively benign. Finally, the publication of such violent photographs in the press was not the result of official photographic propaganda. This chapter has shown that there was no official photographic propaganda campaign within France, as well as showing the extent to which the term ‘propaganda’ encompassed a different meaning to that which it has today. This is not to say that manipulative or partisan discourses did not exist in wartime France—rather it is to point out that these discourses need to be sought in places other than official structures: in particular, by returning to sources such as the fortnightly illustrated

newspapers it is possible to explore how specific discourses emerged. These newspapers created and projected their own representation of the war—largely through their careful combination of text and photographs or by the way that they organized the photographs on the page. In general, however, it is clear that the study of iconographic propaganda during this period remains an unexplored field which can only be fully understood within the context of a transnational study.

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CHAPTER ELEVEN

'WAR PROFITEERS' AND 'WAR PROFITERS': REPRESENTING ECONOMIC GAIN IN FRANCE DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR*

François Bouloc

Introduction

For a long time economic and social histories of the First World War tended to neglect the cultural dimensions of the subjects they studied. This is certainly true for the wartime economy which has generally been investigated using quantitative or structural approaches that outline the processes of production or assess economic performance in different countries during different phases of the conflict. This type of study emerged in the immediate postwar period—the most notable examples being the interwar histories written for the Carnegie Foundation—and continued to be produced in the decades that followed.¹ Today these earlier works provide an invaluable resource for new research based on a different approach, looking at what can be defined as 'the totality of discursive forms through which contemporaries understood the wartime world in which they lived.'² Recent historiography of the First World War has increasingly focused on this question of discourse, examining how the factual historical reality related to contemporary perceptions at the time. This approach has proved remarkably fruitful: the executions of soldiers, German atrocities, wartime sexuality, the employment of women during the conflict and demobilization have all been investigated in this way.³ The value of such studies lies in their attempt to

* *This chapter was translated from French by the author and Heather Jones.*

¹ Bloch (1925), Fontaine (1925); Einzig (1939); Feldman (1966); Fridenson, ed. (1977).

² 'Définir comme l'ensemble des formes discursives au travers desquelles les contemporains ont compris le monde en guerre dans lequel ils vivaient,' Prost and Winter (2004), p. 217.

³ Offenstadt (2002); Horne and Kramer (2001); Le Naour (2002); Downs (2002); Cabanes (2004).

develop our knowledge of wartime practices and how those practices were understood, both internally and externally: in other words, what those living during the war said, did or even dreamed; what ideas motivated them to engage with the conflict as individuals or as groups; and finally, how moral judgement operated in wartime societies to include or exclude various behaviors or attitudes. This chapter will argue that these questions which have been applied to military or social history, also apply to economic history. However, it goes without saying that adopting this kind of approach does not exclude other forms of investigation. For example, studying the cultural discourse that developed around German atrocities in no way reduces the need to provide the most accurate estimate possible of the number of victims; in a similar way, studying the discourse that developed around war profiteers is not to undermine the very real financial benefits which individuals and companies made during the conflict. The intention here is to look at both aspects of the same issue—the reality and the discourse—rather than specifically privileging one dimension over the other. This will allow us to reassess the question of war profits in terms of its composite cultural, social and economic meanings.

*'Profiteers' and 'Profitters' during the First World War:
Defining a Social Typology*

The Reality of War Profits in 1914–1918

It is necessary to define the term 'war profits' in order to proceed with the kind of approach adopted here. The meaning of this term cannot be taken for granted—it is a contested, even a controversial, phrase. For contemporary experts who studied cultural discourses during the war, as well as later scholars, the term often had less to do with concrete realities or observed facts than with popular perceptions and fantasies. The French sociologist William Oualid came to the following conclusion in a report into war profits written in 1918, adopting a position of scientific objectivity and dismissing out of hand ordinary interpretations of social and economic life during the war:

The popular imagination has a tendency to exaggerate certain facts. Blown out of all proportion to reality, they thus give rise to a type of legend which is difficult to challenge later. This tendency is particularly notable during periods of great crisis [...]. It takes very little time before

a few fortunes made suddenly or high profit figures are exaggerated into a generalized belief that everyone, everywhere, who is still involved in economic activity, has profited from it to the same extent.⁴

Such an assertion is revealing. It marks the author's attempt to distance himself from common judgements which, he implies, are inherently simplistic and of no real value. This statement, which precedes numerous pages of detailed concise argument, is intended to highlight the scientific nature of Oualid's study and play down popular belief in large war profits. However, a less speculative approach, less dependent upon preconceptions, reveals the sheer scale of exceptional war profits made during the war. The impressive restructuring of economic activity, which the conflict caused in all the belligerent countries, is well known: the increase in state intervention and the enormous surge in output in response to the demands of mass industrial warfare have been analyzed in detail since the immediate postwar years.⁵ Broadly speaking, the war is often seen as a period when the economy was brought under state control in the main belligerent countries.⁶ Yet, it would be more accurate to describe the state as driving the economy rather than controlling it: in leadership circles, there was never any question of the state nationalizing the means of production during the war or usurping the role of the top industrialists. Its real role was one of propelling and coordinating economic development, and risking large amounts of capital in investments. Both Albert Thomas in France and Walther Rathenau in Germany sought to 'establish a minimum of order and coherence within the industrial machine,' and to 'turn the greatest possible number of factories over to supplying the war effort,' by assisting industrialists with agreed advance payments and lucrative prices.⁷ Within this system, production, and above all profit, remained in the hands of the private sector. As a result, there was nothing to stop

⁴ French text in the original quotation: 'L'imagination populaire a tendance à s'exagérer certains faits. Amplifiés au-delà de toute réalité, ils donnent lieu à une sorte de légende qu'il est par la suite difficile de déraciner. La tendance est particulièrement notable dans les périodes de grande crise [...] on a tôt fait de généraliser quelques enrichissements soudains, des chiffres de bénéfices évidemment énormes, pour en conclure que tout ceux qui de près ou de loin ont conservé quelque activité économique en profitent dans les mêmes proportions,' Oualid (1918), p. 7.

⁵ Reboul (1925).

⁶ Kuisel (1984).

⁷ French text in original quotation: '[...] établir un minimum d'ordre et de cohérence dans la machine industrielle'; 'tourner vers les fabrications de guerre le plus grand nombre possible d'usines,' Woronoff (1998), p. 369.

those parties involved in production for the national war effort from realizing profits. And they did. In reality the war did generate substantial financial profits. For example, on the basis of the figures for 4,700 large German companies, the net accrued profits increased from 1,656 million marks in 1912–1913 to 2,213 million marks in 1917–1918, rising from an average of 10.9% of capital expenditure to 13.7%. In France, the revenue from the tax on war profits, which was introduced in July 1916, illustrates the same pattern: the tax brought in 17.3 milliard francs for the period for which it was applicable 1914–1918.⁸

Therefore war profits were an objective, proven fact in 1914–1918 and the average man in the street was perhaps not so misguided or fanciful in his perception of the issue, despite his sense of bitterness. Two key aspects emerge from this, which serve both as pathways and as safeguards for historical analysis. First, although it is necessary to look at figures, simply focusing upon them risks isolating the question of war profits from its context, isolating it incorrectly into a simple statistical analysis which is far removed from how contemporaries saw the issue. Second, the polemical nature of the phenomenon must be taken into account. However, examining the essential terms of a polemic, in order to understand how it was constructed, does not mean endorsing its polemical claims. Any approach that is too partial, or conversely too overarching, is therefore open to criticism. With regard to war profits, and those who benefited from them, partial judgments have been made on all sides. These must be overcome and deconstructed.

Condemnation: The Parameters and Limits of Historical Analysis

The term ‘war profiteers’ is difficult to define. It has multiple meanings, as illustrated by the broad range of reactions and interpretations which it has provoked. The first, and most visible social response to the term, was to condemn war profits. Such condemnations often stemmed from a moral standpoint—often based upon the implication that the war was waged to make money. As a character from the classic saga by Roger Martin du Gard, *Les Thibault* stated ‘you would have to be very naïve to believe that France and Britain would exhaust themselves fighting for years in such a costly battle if they were not also making

⁸ Charle (2001), p. 297.

serious material profits from it."⁹ Other condemnations were rooted in an anti-capitalist or revolutionary world view which was summarised by Lenin as follows:

Capitalism has been transformed by a handful of 'developed' countries into a universal system of colonial oppression and financial enslavement for the vast majority of the world's population. Two or three all-powerful, rapacious powers, armed to the teeth, have shared out this "booty" between them [...] and now drag the whole world into *their* war over the division of *their* booty.¹⁰

However, the condemnation and indignation outlined above only provide a superficial insight into the particularly sensitive subject of war profits. In fact, condemnation was not restricted to the war years: during the interwar period there was also widespread condemnation of war profits in newspaper articles and caricatures, parliamentary debates, novels, essays, witness accounts, etc. This volatile cultural discourse proved a fertile breeding ground for another kind of reaction: letters of denunciation. These letters, which were sometimes anonymous, were sent to public authorities; in France, they were often sent to the Minister of Finance. This correspondence, which will be analyzed later in this chapter, is highly revealing, as it captures contemporary attitudes, allowing us to examine the *Zeitgeist* of the period as a whole.

There are a number of theoretical precautions that are necessary in a study of this kind where the subject being explored is such a widespread phenomenon, difficult to narrowly define. The purpose of studying war profiteers is *not* to prove or disprove the idea of the war as a sinister plot hatched by powerful, greedy industrialists and capitalists. This is an important point, given the general reductionist tendency to explain the outbreak of wars and the way that they are fought solely in terms of the actions of small circles of oligarchs or arms dealers, for example, Sir Basil Zaharoff, closely linked to political and economic

⁹ French text in the original quotation: 'Il faut être bien naïf pour supposer que la France et l'Angleterre accepteraient de s'être épuisées pendant des années dans une lutte aussi ruineuse, sans en tirer de sérieux profits matériels!' Martin du Gard (1938), vol. V, p. 165.

¹⁰ French text in the original quotation: 'Le capitalisme s'est transformé en un système universel d'oppression coloniale et d'étranglement financier de l'immense majorité de la population du globe, par une poignée de pays "avancés." Et le partage de ce "butin" a lieu entre deux ou trois rapaces universellement puissants, armés de pied en cap [...] qui entraînent toute la terre dans leur guerre pour le partage de leur butin.' Lenin (1917), p. 38.

elites. This is particularly the case with regard to 1914–1918, although it also applies to other conflicts as well. Such attitudes help explain Lenin's thesis outlined in his study *Imperialism*:

This book proves that for both sides the 1914–1918 conflict was an imperialist war (in other words a war of conquest, pillage and brigandage), a war waged over the division of the world, the distribution and the redistribution of colonies, 'zones of influence' of financial capital, etc.¹¹

Yet was it really the case that absolute power was in the hands of a few men who were able to opt for war or peace according to what was in their own personal interest? This kind of belief is reflected in a recent academic study which explains the USA's entry into the Second World War in terms of the need to preserve and develop a certain model of capitalist society.¹² The purpose here, however, is not to deny that factors such as elite interests did play a certain role: the work of Georges-Henri Soutou has shown the extent to which economic and geopolitical considerations influenced elites at the time.¹³ Rather the aim of this chapter is to question the way that the problem of war profits is usually looked at. It will explore whether there was a heuristic value—or even a militant one—attached to the war profits issue. In particular, what was the reason for the popular need to believe that a group of powerful men had *consciously* decided the fate of the world and that no one was able to resist their will? What was the heuristic value of this accusation? Hannah Arendt claimed that the masses constantly make the mistake of forgetting the 'fortuitous character of reality.' Although this is not always true, nor restricted to the 'masses,' Arendt's point is relevant, as it reveals the extent to which popular belief in the predictable nature of history is a chimera. One consequence of this was that in the traumatic, sacrificial context of the First World War 'one of the principal characteristics of the modern masses' developed: the idea that 'the truth was what respectable society had repressed or hidden through corruption.'¹⁴ This is a useful critical idea for understanding the

¹¹ French text in the original quotation: 'Dans ce livre, il est prouvé que la guerre de 1914–1918 a été des deux côtés une guerre impérialiste (c'est-à-dire une guerre de conquête, de pillage, de brigandage), une guerre pour le partage du monde, la distribution et la redistribution des colonies, des "zones d'influence" du capital financier, etc.' Lenin (1917), p. 36.

¹² Pauwels (2005).

¹³ Soutou (1989).

¹⁴ French text in the original quotation: 'caractère fortuit dans lequel baigne la réalité'; 'L'une des principales caractéristiques des masses modernes [...] que la vérité était tout

cultural mentalities that led to the stigmatization of war profits. Faced with the tragedy of 1914, it made sense to contemporaries to try to find an underlying cause for the war within the confusion of different conventional discourses that emerged. It would be doing a disservice to the subject to make the hunt for any one such determinant cause into the leitmotif of historical enquiry into the matter; but the converse is also true, that contemporary tendencies to lay the blame for the war on war profiteers cannot simply be dismissed.

Historicizing War Profiteers

One reason why people wrote letters of denunciation was because they were attracted to what appeared to be 'hidden' within the established order of society. The fact that there often actually was a hidden dimension to contemporary wartime events only served to accentuate this process. The letter writers represented numerous diverse groups and individuals; many were unable to see the war as anything other than the product of sombre machinations by capitalists and their associates. However, conversely, writing that exonerated war profiteers, through the use of ellipsis, omission or euphemisms also existed. In fact, recognizing the polemical nature of the key question regarding war profits—how could one build a fortune based upon the mass death of one's fellow citizens—certain authors have even resigned themselves to the impossibility of ever knowing the whole truth as a way of justifying not investigating any further. In an otherwise interesting study, based upon a wide range of first hand sources, John F. Godfrey asserted that it was pointless to attempt to investigate war profiteering in greater detail because of the nature of the subject and French financial customs:

The reader should be warned of several restrictions which hamper any discussion of French war profits during the 1914–18 period [...] it is almost impossible to give fully documented and detailed examples of the profits of individual firms.¹⁵

This assertion is false: the sources do exist for those who wish to research the reality of war profits. In fact, there is an abundance of documentation, in the form of thousands of individual taxation files for

ce que la société respectable avait hypocritement passé sous silence, ou couvert par la corruption.' Arendt (1995), pp. 77–78.

¹⁵ Godfrey (1987), p. 213.

the tax on war profits, the *Contribution extraordinaire sur les bénéfices exceptionnels ou supplémentaires réalisés pendant la guerre*. These files can be freely consulted in the archive of the Ministry for Finance and also in some French Departmental archives. They provide a selection of taxpayers' declarations, together with the results of enquiries and assessments carried out on individual cases by government taxation authorities. These documents thus provide the historian with an invaluable range of critically compiled, precisely dated and identified material which juxtaposes differing accounts and figures.¹⁶ The rest of this chapter will explore the different kinds of information that can be gleaned from a careful examination of these archive sources.

It is important to emphasize that this kind of approach is a legitimate one. For if one adopts the attitude of the historian Patrick Fridenson, this type of work appears to be at odds with the ethics of the historian. In his preliminary remarks in his pioneering study of Renault, Fridenson states that 'our intention is not to investigate the motivations behind Renault's participation in industrial mobilization, nor to research any secrets or scandals relating to war profits.'¹⁷ Expressed in these terms, the search for knowledge about war profits is more or less discredited, reduced to a relatively questionable, unscientific attempt to rake over minor secondary issues of the past. However, it is possible to envisage the question differently. For the object of history is also that which people at a particular time, wrongly or rightly, thought and that which precisely *motivated* them. No historian working today can ignore the many recent detailed studies of the social and cultural foundations of combatant practices in 1914–1918. If this approach is now a valid method for researching the history of soldiers then surely it can also be applied to businessmen, entrepreneurs and capitalists. These groups too were faced with the difficult task of orientating themselves within wartime society and had their own expectations and fears.

It is necessary to fully integrate the question of representations into any discussion of the war economy that is based upon a social and cultural history approach. This runs the risk, however, of falling into one of two traps: either uncritically repeating contemporary partisan

¹⁶ Moulin-Bourret (1997).

¹⁷ French text in original quotation: 'notre propos [...] n'est pas d'entrer dans les motivations qui ont déterminé la participation de Renault à la mobilisation industrielle, ni non plus de chercher de quelconques secrets ou scandales sur les profits de guerre,' Fridenson (1972), p. 107.

condemnations associated with the polemical subject of war profiteers or deciding not to define the term 'war profit' on the assumption that it is impossible to do so in an accurate, neutral way. J. F. Godfrey particularly emphasizes this second difficulty which he believes is impossible to overcome. For Godfrey, even if agreement existed on the definition of the term 'profit,' and valid sources were available, 'there would still remain the vexed question: what constitutes a "fair profit"? At what exact point does a reasonable profit become a "war" (i.e. excessive) profit? Again, no simple standard exists.'¹⁸ Put this way, in strictly economic terms, there is no solution to this problem. There is something inherently arbitrary in the idea of setting a certain threshold which would designate certain profits as legitimate and others as unacceptable. Even if a fixed limit were set, such as 5%, 10% or 15% of the capital invested in a scheme or of the total business turnover, any such definition could legitimately be contested. This is precisely the point made in a study of the history of war profits in the United States which examines the subject over a long term period:

Normally an adjective is attached to the gain, as in "fair profit," "reasonable profit," or "just profit." The opposite case is referred to as an "unreasonable profit," "excessive profit," or "exorbitant profit." Thus a distinction is conventionally drawn between a remuneration that is normal, necessary, and customary and one that is unusual, unwarranted, and abnormal. This differentiation invariably conveys an ethical judgment, implying that the level of benefit obtained exceeds that which is proper. As in all ethical judgments, war-profiteering is more easily defined conceptually than empirically.¹⁹

Yet what if it were possible to find a way to define war profits that combined both conceptual and empirical approaches?

War Profits as a Public Opinion Phenomenon

It is important to reiterate that real profits were made during the war that cannot be ignored. For this reason, the historian has to find a way to incorporate them into his or her methodology and overall analysis. What I would like to propose involves a number of different stages of analysis as follows.²⁰ First, given that it is not possible to define war

¹⁸ Godfrey (1987), p. 213.

¹⁹ Brandes (1997), p. 7.

²⁰ Bouloc (2006).

profits in terms of an objective financial threshold, this chapter will use the judgements of contemporaries to initially determine who can be considered a war profiteer. It is clear that the category of war profiteer only came into existence through the act of denunciation; individuals did not describe themselves as profiteers. For this reason the definition of a profiteer adopted here is anyone who was denounced as such. Second, in order to provide a scientific basis that will go beyond this initial, insufficiently rigorous, impressionistic definition, it is necessary to turn to the aforementioned financial archives. This allows us to subdivide our category of 'war profiteer'—defined as those who have been denounced—into 'true' or 'false' war profiteers, depending on the accurate or calumnious nature of the denunciation. Third, although the previous two steps help to objectify the 'war profits' phenomenon, the process is still incomplete. For example, within this schema of definition, what becomes of the profits revealed in the archives that did not give rise to any denunciation or fraud? This is a crucial point, as it highlights the fact that there were businessmen and industrialists who, despite the wartime situation, simply continued with their usual business as before. Without being in any way war mongers or evil characters, they found themselves incidentally in a favorable economic position due to the conflict and paid tax on their profits in accordance with their civic obligations. Although such people profited financially from the war, they do not fit the typology proposed here. There is no satisfactory way for the historian to incorporate this group into the definitions already outlined for the term 'war profiteer.' Either they are lumped in with all those who were denounced for making financial gains from the conflict and are considered as war profiteers in the same way, which is clearly not accurate, or they are left aside and viewed as separate economic actors who were not part of the contemporary polemic on 'war profits.' Neither of these two options works for the historian: the first is too partisan, the second de-contextualises this group from their historical context. To resolve this problem it is necessary to coin a different term to describe this group—'war profitters.' This neologism provides us with a subcategory that defines those among the general mass of people who profited from the war whose only error was to be out of synch with cultural trends at the time, which were moving to simultaneously legitimate mass death as sacrifice and stigmatize financial gain.

Thus we have here the basis for a flexible and open typology which will allow us to explore the question of war profits. Engaging with contemporary representations but also meeting the factual requirements

of historical research, these definitions can be applied to case studies as this chapter will now show. This, in turn, will enable us to ensure that wartime financial profits, whether controversial or unremarked, do not remain outside history.

*'War Profiteers' and 'War Profitters':
Case Studies from the Financial Archives*

Initial Methodological Remarks

The careful classification outlined above of the different groups involved in economic mobilization in 1914–1918 is important because of the plural nature of the historical object under consideration here. Those involved in economic mobilization represent a plethora of individual cases. Economic activity in 1914 appears to have been very fragmented and diverse, involving different types of economic structures, different sized operations, various legal regulations and a wide range of operational forms, etc. However, it was precisely these differences that existed at the outbreak of war in 1914 that would account for who benefited financially from the repercussions of the conflict. The nature of the sources available adds to this sense of a broad phenomenon which cannot be reduced to simplistic summaries. The thousands of individual tax files relate a variety of distinct, separate histories, and often give private personal or family information. The tax was calculated on an individual basis—the taxpayer whether he was an actual person or a corporate body was held individually responsible for the payment; this demand upon individuals stemmed from both the Inland Revenue and the wartime duty of citizens.

To investigate the question further it is necessary to examine case studies in detail, using a methodological and broadly empirical approach. The definitions outlined above were specifically developed in response to this source material which allowed for new hypotheses. The generic categories are those of 'war profiteer' and 'war profitter' along with their subdivisions. These allow the different, individual separate cases, which are geographically spread all across the country, to be grouped and cross-referenced. Examining several examples from the files enables us to apply the investigative methods and problematic that we have outlined.

Multiple Denunciations in Angoulême (Charente)

The following anonymous letter was sent from Angoulême to the Minister of Finance. It was received on 27 June 1917 and provides a key example of the real type of war profiteering that underpinned the fantasy representations of profiteers in cultural and political myth:

Monsieur le Ministre,

You are searching everywhere for money to shore up the massive French budget. Do you want to know where you can quickly find an easy two million made as war profits in Angoulême? Rather than accepting the fictional declarations of profits made by some unscrupulous industrialists and businessmen, you should give full power to your officials so that they can tax these industrialists and businessmen tenfold what they have declared and you will see that they will still be happy to pay this because this would still be less than the real figure they owe. If they contest the facts you should appoint experts to your staff of officials. One of a hundred examples: M. Py, mechanic, rue de Bassan in Angoulême has only declared 35,000 Francs in profits whereas he boasts everywhere that he has made a million and that he has bought several houses as investments one of which is worth 40,000 [francs] which the registrar [of home owners] is fully aware of! And there are many others like him who have only declared between 50 to 100,000 [francs] when they have actually made one or two million.²¹

At first glance, this denunciation appears to be the result of a kind of paranoia: it conceals information and implies that a naïve administration has been misled by numerous dishonest and cunning individuals: ‘one of a hundred examples.’ This example fits well with Luc Boltanski’s analysis of the denunciation process which defines four agents: the ‘victim,’ the

²¹ French text in the original quotation: ‘Monsieur le Ministre, Vous qui cherchez partout de l’argent pour boucler le formidable budget de la France, voulez-vous trouver rapidement deux millions rien qu’à Angoulême et comme bénéfices de guerre? Au lieu d’accepter les déclarations fantaisistes de bénéfices faites certains industriels et commerçants peu scrupuleux, donnez donc tous pouvoirs à vos fonctionnaires pour qu’ils taxent d’office ces industriels et commerçants au décuple de leurs déclarations et vous verrez que ceux-ci seront encore bien contents d’accepter parce que ce sera encore bien au-dessous de la vérité. S’ils les contestent faites adjoindre des experts à vos fonctionnaires. Un exemple entre cent: pourquoi M. Py, mécanicien rue de Bassan à Angoulême n’a-t-il déclaré que 35,000 [francs] de bénéfices alors qu’il se vante partout d’avoir gagné un million et d’avoir acheté plusieurs maisons de rapport dont une de 40,000 [francs] ce que l’enregistrement sait bien! Et beaucoup d’autres comme lui qui ont déclaré entre 50 et 100,000 [francs], alors que c’est un million ou deux qu’ils ont gagné.’ Centre des Archives Economiques et Financières (CAEF, Savigny-le-Temple), B.15.248, Py File (Mechanic, Angoulême).

'denouncer,' the 'persecutor' and the 'judge.'²² The 'denouncer' here remains unknown but what matters is that he or she sees his or herself as acting on behalf of others, not in self-interest but in the interest of the social collective. The 'victim' here is the national 'French budget' which is hard pressed due to the cost of the war effort—an effort which the writer claims to support. The request made in the letter is presented to a very specific kind of 'judge,' the Minister of Finance, an executive not a legislative figure. By writing to the Minister, the letter also appeals more generally to public opinion, which is understood as the legitimate voice of the mass of good Republican citizens, individual trustees of the collective destiny of the nation. The nature of existing French institutions in 1914, and the particular circumstances created by the war which made civic mobilization a duty, conspired to create a situation akin to that described by Paul Veyne, referring to a different time and place:

In sum, political thought in Greece, and also in Rome, was always trying to choose between two systems: the first, which most often matched the reality, was that some people ruled and the rest obeyed them; true those who ruled were not from a different race than those they ruled over; they were not their masters; they themselves came from the ranks of those they governed. But, within this system, the act of governing was a social specialization. According to the second system, however, the distinction between the rulers and the ruled was far less important. What mattered more was a vast assembly which united everyone and which served as the civic body of society and was made up of activists. In this system, the government was only one particularly active militant group among others.²³

The thousands of letters denouncing people who did not reveal the real extent of the profits they were making during the war to the tax authorities appear to rank amongst the second system described here. The Minister and his subordinates could not know everything, hence

²² Boltanski, (1990), p. 26.

²³ French text in the original quotation: 'en somme, la pensée politique, en Grèce et aussi à Rome a toujours hésité entre deux schémas. L'un, conforme à la réalité, le plus souvent, admettait que les uns gouvernent et que les autres se bornent à obéir; certes, les gouvernants ne sont pas d'une autre race que les gouvernés, ils ne sont pas leurs maîtres; ils sortent des rangs de gouvernés. Mais enfin, gouverner est une spécialisation. D'après le second schéma, en revanche, la distinction entre gouvernants et gouvernés est moins importante qu'un ensemble plus vaste qui les réunit tous et qui est le corps civique, composé d'activistes; le gouvernant n'est qu'un militant encore plus actif que les autres.' Veyne, (2005), p. 85.

the belief that it was the duty, or even the right, of the average citizen to inform. The executive was expected to fulfil a particular role and to act in the public interest. Citizens expected this and where the authorities failed to meet these expectations bitterness grew. This may even be one of the origins of the crisis of faith in government experienced in France in the 1930s.

To return to the question of the denunciation in Angoulême discussed earlier. The person named as an uncivic-minded war profiteer was a certain 'M. Py.' However, the letter also mentioned other people living in the same locality who were behaving in a similar way. By looking at the relevant files, it is possible to investigate the accuracy or inaccuracy of the accusations made. This allows us to move beyond the level of invective to explore the truth behind denunciation claims. In the file relating to M. Py there is a letter which he sent to the tax office two years after the denunciation that presents his case in a very different light. Py claims that 'in all sincerity, if there were industrialists who made money, others, such as myself [...] [had to] sell part of the business to pay the taxes.'²⁴ Which version of this case is closer to the reality? To assert that M. Py was a war profiteer it is necessary to prove that he knowingly misled the tax office—fortunately the sources allow us to investigate this further. The Departmental Commission on war profits (known as the Commission of First Degree) found in its investigation that M. Py's additional profits during the periods 1914–1915, 1916 and 1917, amounted to 89,022, 159,808 and 41,622 francs respectively.²⁵ However, the declarations he had made for the same periods did not tally: 39,738 francs in profit were declared for 1914–1915; 33,052 for 1916 and in 1917 he claimed to have made a loss.²⁶ These figures would appear to reveal that the person who denounced M. Py was well informed, estimating his undeclared profits at 35,000 francs for 1917—which is only slightly below the real figure. The enquiry by the taxation authorities revealed numerous incidences of embezzlement, ranging from an increase in amortizations to bonuses which had been

²⁴ French text in the original quotation: 'en toute sincérité, s'il y a des industriels qui ont gagné de l'argent, d'autres, et c'est mon cas [...] [devront] vendre l'avoir de l'affaire pour payer les impôts.' CAEF, B.15.248, Py File, Letter from M. Py to the Director of Direct Taxes, 15 March 1919.

²⁵ CAEF, B.15.248, Py File, Notification by the 'Commission du 1er degré' for Angoulême, 18 May 1922.

²⁶ CAEF, B.15.248, Py File, Declarations by M. Py (29 October 1916, 30 March 1917, 30 March 1918).

entered in under general expenses with the explanation 'receipt missing.'²⁷ Other documents in the file provide additional information which helps to create a profile of this war profiteer. For example, an inspection report, written a few weeks before the denunciation, states that: 'Until the outbreak of war, M. Py made steel rollers for the paper-making industry. Since then, he has been exclusively engaged in making shells, and steel or iron goods needed by the war services and the navy.'²⁸

Py had switched his business over to producing for the war effort as part of the process of economic mobilization at the start of the war—a relatively typical pattern. Even though such a move was depicted at the time as an act of national solidarity, it was not always accompanied by any real sense of financial civic obligation: being involved in the war effort did not always spring from deeply held patriotic convictions.²⁹ The archives also allow us to investigate the claim in the denunciation letter that Py's case was typical of others. In fact, of thirteen other files relating to Angoulême, there is only one other case that is similar, that of the Michaud & Company Foundry. It declared sums that were below its real profits in all of its tax returns for the period to which the tax applied, from August 1914 to June 1920, and, as a result, was convicted of fraud 'with intent to deprive the Treasury of tax revenue.'³⁰ The other cases examined allow us to place the scathing denunciations sent to the tax office in context: there were five cases where profits declared were repeatedly less than the real sums made. However, in each of these cases the authorities did not consider this to be the result of bad faith on the part of the taxpayer.³¹ Five other files fall into the category of war profitters rather than profiteers—people who made money from

²⁷ CAEF, B.15.248, Py File, Inspection Report, 24 January 1920. An amortization was the annual assessment of the depreciation of supplied goods or assets.

²⁸ French text in the original quotation: 'M. Py, qui fabriquait jusqu'au jour de la déclaration de guerre des rouleaux d'acier pour la papeterie a, depuis cette époque, complètement abandonné ce genre d'industrie pour se consacrer uniquement à l'usinage des obus et à la fabrication des appareils en acier ou en fer nécessaires aux services de la guerre et de la marine.' CAEF, B.15.248, Py File, Inspection Report, 12 June 1917.

²⁹ Bouloc (2005).

³⁰ Original French text in quotation: '[...] dans le but de frustrer le Trésor de l'impôt.' CAEF, B.15.248, Michaud & Cie File, Declarations on 27 January and 30 March 1917, 30 March 1918, 24 March 1919, 30 March 1920, Note of suppression of tax, 22 June 1922, Inspection Report from 11 June 1918 from which the quotation is taken.

³¹ CAEF, B.15.248, Files for Bernard (Military telegraph equipment), the Duveaux brothers (Mechanical construction), Sté des Entrepôts Métallurgiques du Sud-Ouest, Angoulême Paper-Making Cooperative and Weiller & Cie (Metallurgy).

the war without any particular incident.³² The final two files related to situations which were not taxable.³³ The distinction between profiteers and profiteurs thus allows us to examine the wartime polemic that developed around the subject of war profiteering without losing sight of its complexity and original form.

A War 'Profiter,' Munitions Manufacturer and Honest Taxpayer

Another benefit of the distinction between profiteers and profiteurs is that it allows us to assess cases involving war profits that did not involve denunciation. One such case was that of M. Epinat, a provincial munitions manufacturer in Vichy which emerged by chance from a reading of the archive inventories. As a result of the war, he had switched from his usual business of selling and repairing cars, to manufacturing shells. At the start of the war, the state sought to utilize all available resources—even small firms—to increase shell production, as prewar plans had grossly underestimated the amount of shells needed for a military campaign. During the early months of the conflict, Albert Thomas as *de facto*, and later official, Minister for Munitions ordered his subordinates to assess any additional resources that could be turned over to producing for the war effort. They were to implement this throughout French national territory. During a speech in February 1918, Thomas emphasized that participation in the war economy was officially seen as a highly patriotic act:

[when] France is attacked by a foreign invasion then, within itself, it finds unexpected resources. All previous difficulties are forgotten; each person wants to join in, to fight for the defense of the country. I will remember for the rest of my life, all those unforgettable moments I experienced during the long journey of 80,000 kilometers that I made all over France within the space of six months. I went to village artisans, to local mechanics who had only two or three lathes and I would say to them: "there are shells to be turned, they must be taken," and they would take them."³⁴

³² CAEF, B.15.248, Files for Gouverneur (Foundry), Lavelle (Leather craftsman), Thibault (Engineering firm), Vallez (Public works) and Viaud & Cie (Agricultural machinery and manufacture of shells).

³³ CAEF, B.15.248, Files for Talard (Bakery) and Laurent (Military supplier).

³⁴ French text in the original quotation: '[quand la] France est attaquée, lorsqu'elle subit l'invasion de l'étranger, alors on trouve chez elle des ressources inespérées, toutes les difficultés de la veille se trouvent aplanies, chacun veut concourir, chacun veut lutter pour la défense du pays. Je me souviendrai toute ma vie de tous les faits inoubliables que j'ai vécus dans la longue tournée de 80.000 kilomètres que j'ai faite à travers la

Albert Thomas's comments must be tempered somewhat, however; we have seen in the case of M. Py that there was no automatic link between making shells and patriotism, but rather multiple degrees of personal involvement in the different levels of the wartime economy.

The case of the mechanic Jean Epinat, who started making shells because his usual line of business ran into difficulties, provides a different example, which illustrates the idea of the 'war profiteer' rather than the 'war profiteer.' Having endured financial losses in 1914 and 1915, his profits in 1916 and 1917 ran to 976,157 francs in total, resulting in a tax of 624,186 francs. In 1920, his business once again made a loss.³⁵ Clearly, given these circumstances, it is difficult to consider Epinat as a 'war profiteer,' particularly as the authorities had no doubts whatsoever about his honesty: 'the figure of net profits [...] made from war production in the factories up to the end of December 1916 [...] is based upon accurate accounts. [...] Therefore no criticism can be made of the declaration given and it seems certain that no profits that should be taxed were made [in 1914–1915].'³⁶ Epinat was not suspected of financial misconduct, nor is there any evidence in the archives to suggest it—his wartime profits were the result of honest business. For this reason he typifies an ordinary war profiteer as distinguished from those who profited from the war through financial corruption.

The Butchers of Périgueux (Dordogne)

In the case of another denunciation concerning three butchers in Périgueux the information provided to the Inland Revenue proved to be generally accurate. The informer stated in the letter of denunciation that 'I am taking the liberty of alerting you to three commercial businesses in Périgueux which have made outrageous profits from supplying

France pendant l'espace de six mois. Je suis allé chez les artisans de village, chez le petit mécanicien qui avait deux ou trois tours et je lui disais: "il y a des obus à tourner, il faut les prendre", et il les prenait.' Bibliothèque de Documentation Internationale Contemporaine, F Delta Res 180, speech by Albert Thomas in Cardiff, 25 February 1918.

³⁵ CAEF, B.15.204, Epinat File, avis récapitulatif de détaxe, 25 September 1923.

³⁶ French text in the original quotation: 'le chiffre des bénéfices nets [...] réalisés dans l'exploitation des usines de guerre jusqu'à la fin décembre 1916 résulte d'une comptabilité régulière [...] sur aucun point, la déclaration ne paraît donc sujette à critique et l'absence de bénéfices imposables [pour 1914–1915] semble certaine,' CAEF, B.15.204, Epinat File, Investigation Report, 22 May 1917.

meat to the army.³⁷ The first person named was a M. Reillac whose wife had boasted in public about how well her husband was doing financially: 'when Madame Reillac says that her husband has made 100,000 francs she is telling the truth. But she does not expect to pay tax on profits made during the war—tax which I hope you will make them pay.'³⁸ The difficulties that civilian populations faced due to the increase in prices during the war are well known. This particularly affected women.³⁹ It is this that explains the depth of anger that led people to denounce others. In this case, the letter writer sought to justify the denunciation—a sign that he or she is not entirely sure that it is a legitimate thing to do—by claiming that it was in the national interest, a more noble and presentable motive than personal resentment: 'I hope that you will excuse my denunciation of these exceptional, hidden profits of which you are perhaps unaware, but at this time when France has need of its money, it is necessary and right to take it, wherever it is.'⁴⁰ This example thus fits with the 'ideal-type' model of an activist national community. In agreement with a colleague, named as Richard, M. Reillac had withheld significant sums from the tax office. According to the same denunciation letter, another butcher, M. Laborie 'rakes in 180 to 210 francs in profit daily' during 1915, sums which he had not declared accurately. The contents of this letter are corroborated by the files on the traders concerned: after an enquiry Reillac and Laborie were issued with significant tax adjustments accompanied with heavy penalties of up to 62.5% of the total tax owed for incomplete financial declarations.⁴¹ As these cases illustrate, the methodology adopted here

³⁷ French text in the original quotation: 'Je prends la liberté de vous signaler trois commerçants de qui ont réalisé des bénéfices scandaleux dans des entreprises de fourniture de viande nécessaire à l'armée. [...] CAEF, B.15.262, Reillac File (Butcher), Denunciation letter addressed to the 'Direction départementale des Contributions directes,' 19 December 1916. The subsequent citations are taken from the same document.

³⁸ French text in the original quotation: '[...] lorsque Madame Reillac disait que son mari avait gagné 100,000 francs, cette dame disait bien la vérité, mais elle ne s'attendait pas à cette contribution sur les bénéfices réalisés pendant la guerre dont je l'espère vous saurez si justement les frapper.' *Ibid.*

³⁹ Manning (1997); Bonzon and Davis (1997); Renard (1921).

⁴⁰ French text in the original quotation: '[...] vous m'excuserez de vous faire cette dénonciation de bénéfices exceptionnels cachés que vous ignorez peut-être, mais comme nous sommes au moment où la France a besoin de son argent, il faut le prendre où il est, rien de plus juste.'

⁴¹ CAEF, B.15.262, Reillac File, Decisions made by the 'Commission du 1er degré' on 17 July 1918, 28 April 1922 and 27 June 1923; Laborie file, Decisions made by the 'Commission du 1er degré' on 16 January 1918, 19 February 1919, 11 May 1921 and 20 June 1923.

allows us to verify denunciations relatively accurately. However, it can also be used to provide a broader overview of war profits, allowing us to explore how individual cases fitted into the overall situation.

*Comparing the Individual Case with the Overall Situation:
War Profits in the Département of Aveyron*

Analysing individual case studies can provide us with numerous insights. However, it is necessary to locate these examples within the broader context of a quantitatively based assessment. This will be done here by exploring the taxation of war profits in the coal mining department of Aveyron in 1918, based upon tax returns and other documents—specifically the returns for Aubin and Decazeville.⁴² Together this provides us with 34 cases, mainly small traders or artisans. These illustrate the real change in the nature of war profits that developed with the advent of modern warfare, described by an interwar writer as follows: 'war profits which were once direct, have now become indirect and these profits are made further and further away from the theater of military operations [...]. Julius Caesar has given way to the manufacturer of tinned food.'⁴³ A breakdown of the 34 different businesses involved in the war effort based upon the Aveyron sample illustrates the point (Table 11.1).

The value of taking this kind of small sample from among the numerous individuals liable to pay the tax on war profits is that it allows us to explore the attitude of taxpayers towards this exceptional wartime taxation in a quantitative way. The case of M. Py has already revealed that taking part in industrial mobilization did not in itself indicate that an individual accepted the duty of all citizens to pay wartime taxes. The case of M. Epinat, however, has also shown that it is not correct to simply assume that an individual was defrauding the state, without an in-depth examination of their case. A wide range of attitudes emerges from the documents, even though the moral norms regarding war profits were publicly very rigid. Between 1914 and 1918

⁴² Archives Départementales de l'Aveyron (ADA), 16P11/2, Figures for the taxation of war profits for Decazeville and Aubin, 4th period (1918). The following table is based upon those documents.

⁴³ French text in the original quotation: 'Les bénéfices de guerre, jadis directs, deviennent indirects et s'éloignent de plus en plus du théâtre des opérations militaires [...] Jules César a cédé la place au fabricant de boîtes de conserves.' Lewinsohn (1935), p. 290.

Table 11.1. Breakdown of taxpayers by profession in the small industrial towns of Decazeville and Aubin (Aveyron) during the year 1918.

Type of Business	Number
Haberdashery, Fabrics, Cloth, Discount Trader, Novelty Goods	8
Wine Merchant, Liqueur Merchant, Distillery, Brewery	8
Grocers, Wholesale Grocers, Different Foodstuffs	7
Hardware Business, Earthenware	3
Foundry	1
Pharmacist, Dentist	2
Printer	1
Broker, Merchant	2
Chemical Products and Tannic Extracts	1
Not Specified	1

national mobilization produced a culture of conformity based upon an ideology of sacrifice. Anyone who deviated from this explicit, polymorphous norm was ostracized from the nation, at least symbolically. He or she was excluded and no longer considered a legitimate part of the wartime national community, which existed in the form of concentric circles built around the central figure of the combatant. In this way, to defraud the state of taxes on war profits between 1914 and 1918 was also to defraud the nation: anyone who committed such an act failed to fulfill his or her mobilization role. Assessing whether a person was willing or unwilling to pay their tax contribution thus offers a means of quantifying what proportion of people fell into the category of war profiteers—a category which was roundly condemned as anti-patriotic as we have seen in the letters addressed to the tax authorities.

The analysis of the Aveyron sample reveals that 19 of the 34 taxpayers were issued with higher tax bills as a punishment for not paying on time or for not declaring the full extent of their profits in their tax returns. This was around 56% of the total. In this sample, therefore, it appears that patriotic solidarity succumbed to the traditional French reticence regarding paying taxes.⁴⁴ Although this small survey can only offer a partial insight into the situation, other sources from the same geographical area support its findings. For example, in early 1917, the tax inspector in St-Affrique (in the south of the Aveyron region)

⁴⁴ Hincker (1971).

complained to his superiors that 'since the war, the work in [my] division has significantly increased' and that in two places in particular, Roquefort (cheese production) and Millau (tanneries) 'enquiries generally take a long time and are very difficult to prepare because of obstruction by the declarants.'⁴⁵ By cross-checking this sample further against other sources it is possible to build up a more detailed picture of the situation. This was done by carrying out an overall analysis of 285 tax inspection files which were created during 1918. Some of these files related to the situation in the Rodez, Aubin, Villefranche, Millau and St-Affrique sectors.⁴⁶ There were a number of difficulties in carrying out this analysis. There were 10 cases where it was found that taxes had been deliberately withheld which made up 3.5% of the total. Therefore, on the basis of this assessment non-compliance and fraud were not that common. However, conversely, goodwill or good faith on the part of the taxpayer is mentioned in only 7 cases, only 2.45% of the total. The majority of cases fall into a broad grey area in-between, neither zealous taxpayers nor proven fraudsters. The difficulty lies in how to define these people. One way of dealing with this is to analyze the number of cases where there were problems with the accounts, as presenting badly kept accounts does perhaps reveal a certain amount of anti-taxation feeling, and, in turn, a certain lack of patriotism. However, this conclusion must be considered with caution and with due attention to the techniques and customs of the period. A survey of the same sample of inspection files reveals that 67, or 23.5% of cases, mention insufficient or inexistent accounting practices. If these numerous accounting problems are attributed to negligence or malice then a pattern of relatively frequent deliberate fraud emerges. Comparing the partial sample for Aveyron with an exhaustive study of the Haute-Garonne reveals significantly higher incidences of accounting problems (Table 11.2).⁴⁷

⁴⁵ French text in original quotation: 'Depuis la guerre le travail dans [sa] division s'est accru dans de notables proportions [...] les enquêtes sont en général longues et pénibles à instruire vu la mauvaise volonté des déclarants.' ADA, 16P11/7, Note to the Director of Direct Taxes, 9 February 1917.

⁴⁶ ADA, 16P11/3, Case files compiled by the inspectors. These files are organized under the following headings: name; place of activity; type of business; the expenses paid by the tax agent in the course of his enquiry; additional hours of work spent on each case; the amount of any extra payments due.

⁴⁷ Serée de Roch (1999), vol. 2, p. 610.

Table 11.2. Disparities in bookkeeping among the taxpayers
of Haute-Garonne

Well-ordered accounts kept	23 %
No accounts kept	44 %
Poor accounts kept	23 %
Fraudulent accounts kept	10 %

It is not easy to interpret the contradictory data that emerges from a variety of different sources and it will come as no surprise that such fragmentary information does not lend itself to any monocausal explanation regarding the involvement of large and small businesses in the war economy. However, what this research does suggest is that the desire to make a profit did not disappear with the mobilization of a war economy and that, conversely, those who did make money during the conflict often lost it immediately afterwards. Similarly, while some people complied with tax payments, others tried to escape them. Perhaps it was simply the case that regardless of the wartime context, business remained business. This raises the question as to whether 1914 had changed anything with regard to the unequal spread of moral values such as civic-mindedness or social solidarity within society.

*The Rhetoric of Patriotism in Industry:
The Carmaux Mining Company—One Case Among Others*

Researching war profits and those who made them reveals a wide variety of very different situations which cannot be reduced to any one interpretation. However, a number of major groupings can be broadly defined, without losing sight of the complex reality of each individual case. This allows us to evaluate the accuracy of denunciations. It also enables us to analyze the human dimension of wartime relations between a tax administration that enforced a particular kind of patriotism and taxpayer-citizens who were supposedly mobilized in support of the war effort. If we take it that an individual's attitude towards the tax on war profits is an indication of their patriotism then we can use the tax administration's judgements and evaluations of their goodwill or the accuracy of their declarations to analyze the levels of patriotism within the war economy. Thus taxpayers' reactions, attitudes and practices can inform us about mental discourses. This brings us to our

final example, a major industrial firm which serves to illustrate a more general trend regarding patriotism and economic mobilization. Reflecting the contemporary mood, administrators at the Carmaux Mining Company (Tarn) embellished their wartime reports to shareholders at their annual general meetings with vigorously patriotic comments. For example, a few months after November 1918, they referred to victory in the following terms:

After four years of anguish, the sun now shines upon our victorious armies. Our land has been cleared of the enemy who oppressed and ravaged it since 1914. The French flag now finally flies upon the wind of victory and bowed before the tombs of our glorious dead it inspires in our heart the hope of a France ready to make every sacrifice, every effort to regenerate our land, revive our national industry and restore our finances in order that our country, which has earned the admiration of the world for the bravery of its soldiers, will also be admired for its economic, industrial and financial prowess.⁴⁸

Such impassioned language, which to a certain extent draws upon a kind of Barrésienne vulgate, appears to offer proof of a resolute attachment to the national soil. Digging the earth to extract precious coal in the mines reflects the soldier digging trenches. Coal is depicted here as the primary, indispensable element in the fight against the invader; the directors of the Carmaux mines clearly have a keen sense of the importance of their work. This idealistic image was part of a general view of the war that existed at the time, and which has survived in some quarters up to the present day, that presents national feeling as *a* dominant, or even *the* dominant, interpretative paradigm through which the war is analyzed. However, further investigation of other sources for the Carmaux Mining Company seriously challenges this interpretation. The very people who were behind such patriotic discourses were those who had the most to gain financially from the war: the fee paid to company directors rose from 30,000 to 60,000 francs for the financial

⁴⁸ French text in the original quotation: 'après quatre années d'angoisses, le soleil a brillé sur nos armées victorieuses. Notre sol a vu disparaître l'ennemi qui, depuis 1914, l'opprimait et le ravageait. Le drapeau de la France flotte enfin sous le vent de la victoire et s'inclinant sur les tombes de nos morts glorieux il nous met au cœur l'espoir d'une France prête encore à tous les sacrifices, à tous les dévouements pour régénérer notre sol, relever notre industrie nationale, refaire nos finances et pour que notre pays, qui a fait l'admiration du monde par la vaillance de ses soldats, la fasse encore par sa valeur économique, industrielle et financière.' CAEF, B.15.626, 'Société des Mines de Carmaux,' Report to the general assembly of shareholders, 1919.

year 1914.⁴⁹ Similarly, the shareholders who responded with applause to patriotic speeches at the annual general meetings also gained financially from the conflict: from 115 francs in 1914, the share dividend rose to 150 francs for the 1918 financial year.⁵⁰ Inflation must, of course, be taken into account in these increases. However, these figures certainly do not reveal any real sacrifice, particularly when seen in the context of what was occurring at Verdun or the Chemin des Dames. Similarly, overall profits rose. The company made an extra 17,223,307 francs in profit between August 1914 and the end of June 1920.

Thus the reality behind the passionate, patriotic rhetoric was a good deal more prosaic. Yet these profit figures from the archives, on their own, do not tell us anything about the wartime polemic about war profiteers or attitudes towards war profits. Adopting the approach outlined earlier, however, allows us to gauge the true extent of the Mining Company's patriotism by assessing to what extent it complied with the tax on war profits. In other words, did the company match its patriotic rhetoric in fulfilling its tax obligations? Numerous discrepancies and maneuvers would appear to indicate otherwise. They reveal a clear distinction between verbal patriotism and actual patriotic practices. For example, in 1920 a new subsidiary company was set up, the '*Cie Générale Industrielle*' (CGI), which was not liable for the high fees paid by mining operations. The reasons behind this move were openly acknowledged: 'The CGI will only be a subsidiary of the Carmaux Mining Company and in this way we do not feel that it is going too far to predict that this will provide us with savings of 3 million per year which we will not have to pay to the state and which will be distributed to us.'⁵¹ The contrast between this move and the patriotic 1919 speech made to shareholders discussed earlier speaks for itself, particularly given that this was not the only example of the company practicing tax evasion. In fact, the tax file on the Carmaux Mining Company reveals that in 1924 a meeting took place with tax officials regarding wartime taxation issues

⁴⁹ CAEF, B.15.626, 'Société des Mines de Carmaux,' Report to the general assembly of shareholders, 1915.

⁵⁰ CAEF, B.15.626, 'Société des Mines de Carmaux,' Report to the general assembly of shareholders for the years 1914 to 1919.

⁵¹ French text in the original quotation: 'la CGI ne sera donc qu'une filiale de la Société des Mines de Carmaux, et de cette façon nous ne croyons pas trop nous avancer en prédisant que ce sera trois millions par an que nous ne verserons pas à l'Etat et qui nous seront distribués.' CAEF, B.15.626, 'Société des Mines de Carmaux,' rapport à l'assemblée générale des actionnaires, 1921, in *Le Progrès civique*, 9 July 1921.

which were still not resolved (it should be noted that tax enquiries could often drag on for some time). The Carmaux Mines were represented at the meeting by a certain M. Lucy, Director of Direct Taxes who had taken early retirement the previous year. He had previously been in charge of the State's investigation into the war profits made by the very same Carmaux Mining Company. In other words, to protect its own interests, the Mining Company had succeeded in winning over the tax official assigned to its case. Given these circumstances it is difficult to accept that the professions of patriotism made by management were anything other than lip service, revealing more of an attachment to the existing political and social order than to 'a France ready to make every sacrifice.'⁵²

Conclusion

To conclude, a brief discussion of contemporary events seems relevant. For those who believe the old adage that 'each war has its profiteers' the Second Iraq War appears to support this view.⁵³ In the midst of a deeply unpopular war, the American left has adopted the term 'profiteer' to bolster its analytical framework. For example, the Web site for the *Institute for Southern Studies* in North Carolina proffers an online petition against alleged war profiteers who are listed by name, such as the Bechtel or Halliburton companies.⁵⁴ The text has been signed by such anti-establishment figures as Noam Chomsky or Howard Zinn, or organizations such as *Veterans for Peace*. However justified such a stance may be, by focusing on the term 'war profiteer' it limits its impact because the term is too heavily loaded and polemical, especially given that what the petition is really condemning falls into the category of war 'profiters' rather than 'profiteers'—a minimum definition which

⁵² '[...] une France prête encore à tous les sacrifices.' Extract from the speech quoted previously, see above.

⁵³ French text in the original quotation: 'toute guerre a ses profiteurs.' A search on Google, carried out on 7 December 2004 is revealing. A search for the 'exact expression: *profiteurs de guerre*,' resulted in no less than 1170 hits, which covered the whole range of political viewpoints as well as an immense number of different conflicts.

⁵⁴ Cf. http://paxhumana.info/article.php3?id_article=305. Similarly, Californian pacifists produced a parody of the famous card game issued by the Pentagon which featured Iraqi dignitaries. Given the title, *Warprofiteers*, it stigmatized President Bush and leading American figures: <http://www.warprofiteers.com>.

does not invoke guilt and misconduct to the same extent and which is therefore much more difficult to criticize.

The money made during, or as a result of, war remains problematic. As this chapter has shown it can easily escape analysis if the definitions adopted are too narrow or the wrong questions asked. Stuart D. Brandes sums up the complexity of the issue as follows in a series of key points:

Neither honest wages nor ill-gotten gains, war wealth has generally displayed a gray veneer. Several ethical problems associated with the accumulation of wealth during war-time help to explain this ambiguity. Is it proper for an individual to gain or enlarge a private fortune while the community at large faces a great peril and while some of its members are sacrificing life and limb for its protection? Is that kind of wealth legitimate? If so, is all of it legitimate or only part of it?⁵⁵

This quotation highlights the central historical problem which First World War profiteering posed—that of legitimacy. Two intertwined, symbiotic phenomena competed against each other in wartime society: the right to legitimate financial gain was pitted against the popular right to denounce excess wartime earnings. The conflict between these two rights left its mark on French social life. Given the enormous symbolic sacrifices of wartime and the very real griefs it brought, it is hardly surprising that ostentatious wealth became unpopular. However, the situation was complicated by the fact that the government and authorities upheld the right to war profits, in the face of public hostility towards such financial gain, on the basis of the principle that it was legitimate to make money from business, even during war. As a result, the discourse of hostility towards war profiteers provoked a counter-discourse which aimed to discredit it, either by presenting industrialists working for the war effort as patriots defending their country or by asserting that those who protested against war profits were naïve—simplistic workers, brainwashed by anti-capitalist discourse.

As Stuart Brandes has pointed out, the absence of any objective assessment of what constitutes an acceptable level of war profit and what might be considered excessive creates moral confusion during wartime.⁵⁶ This was clear during 1914–1918 when financial gain was juxtaposed with the gruesome deaths of men at the front: bookkeeping

⁵⁵ Brandes (1997), p. 3.

⁵⁶ Brandes (1997), p. 3.

had a moral resonance beyond financial probity. The result was that the debate on war profits was deeply polemical, ranging from virulently denouncing wartime financial gain to justifying it. The most objective historiographical response to this polemic is to analyze this debate itself, rather than attempting to define what was an acceptable rate of war profit—akin to the history of witchcraft which focuses upon the assumptions and beliefs of contemporaries, rather than assessing the true or false nature of magic. By adopting this approach, the denunciation of war profits lends itself to empirical analysis and this chapter has attempted to provide as rational an assessment as possible of the phenomenon, avoiding excessive empathy or condescension.

War profits are the product of the epoch that created them, whether they are the direct result of a bloody conflict or simply a corollary of it. They bear the stigma of their origins, both in terms of their notoriety and in the way that they are hidden and made anonymous. Those at the heart of France's liberal democracy in 1914 believed that money earned from private enterprise was by definition legitimate, as did the key founders of the American political tradition. However, the paradox is that a shift occurs during wars waged in the name of defending the national community and its core values—values which in peacetime normally include private enterprise. The legitimacy of financial profits is questioned, including those of the legally constituted state.⁵⁷ The issue becomes confused. In fact, one way of interpreting the interwar period in Europe is to take into account the gap between the higher and lower echelons of society in belligerent countries between 1914 and 1918. There is a real disjunction between the position and the aims of political communities and the experiences of the masses who were callously thrown into the torments and upset of total war, only to be removed later and ordered to reintegrate into normal life—based on the idea of a prewar normality which no longer existed. During the Great War the battle for abstract values such as 'Right' co-existed alongside the reality of unequal sacrifice within society (war profiteers, shirkers etc.); the battle for 'Justice' co-existed with the sentences passed by court martials and the battle for 'Democracy' with the persistence of parliamentary cronyism etc. Disregarded by those who were meant to protect them, these values were seriously undermined by the end of the war. Here perhaps is the reason for the disillusionment which

⁵⁷ Cazals (2000).

produced such bitterness, apathy and violence in the interwar period and which future research into the social and cultural history of the Great War can help reveal.

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SECTION IV

THE CHALLENGE OF REMEMBRANCE

CHAPTER TWELVE

‘HUMANS ARE CHEAP AND THE BREAD IS DEAR.’ REPUBLICAN PORTRAYALS OF THE WAR EXPERIENCE IN WEIMAR GERMANY*¹

Vanessa Ther

The fundamental assumption of this chapter is that the Weimar Republic was essentially defined by Germany’s war experience, positively as a reaction against further bloodshed and negatively as a refusal to admit the reality of defeat. On this premise the following chapter will explore how a specifically republican narrative of the war experience was promoted following the establishment of the republic in 1918. In order to examine why this narrative emerged in opposition to German wartime propaganda, this analysis will contextualize the evaluation of the war, both as a general concept and from the soldiers’ point of view, in relation to the postwar political debate. This chapter will furthermore illustrate that the depiction of particular themes, such as the relationship between front and home front, as well as a particular portrayal of front soldiers and officers, attempted to counteract prevalent right-wing propaganda.

In order to understand the significance of an alternative narrative of the First World War during the Weimar Republic it is initially necessary to examine how wartime propaganda affected popular perceptions of the war experience. The Weimar memory of the war developed after a period of extensive censorship. Upon the outbreak of war in 1914, a state of siege was declared throughout Germany, which severely limited freedom of expression in order to control the flow of information about Germany’s military situation.² This censorship not only applied

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¹ Quote from: ‘Die Mörder sitzen in der Oper,’ *Vorwärts*, 296 (12 June 1919).

² Koszyk (1972), pp. 14, 15, Albes in Hirschfeld (2004), p. 975.

to military affairs but also to political and even to mundane issues such as food shortages because discussion of such matters was seen as a threat to public morale.³ It was not merely prohibited to report negative developments, but evidence relating to military progress was also significantly distorted in order to sustain patriotic enthusiasm.⁴ The pacifist Hellmuth von Gerlach outlined this official approach to the truth when he described instructions given to journalists during a military press conference in 1914: 'Even if half of the troops had been lost before Liège, you would still have to write that victory had been accomplished with astonishingly few losses.'⁵

Promoted in such a fashion, euphemistic and glorifying accounts of the war soon permeated cultural and political life in Germany, while dissent was silenced.⁶ The continuation of this propaganda effort to the last days of the war meant that the majority of the German population remained largely unprepared for defeat and its consequences.⁷ The unexpected military collapse and the insecurity that marked the revolutionary period traumatized many Germans, especially the conservative middle classes and the former elites. As a result, a frantic search for explanations for the perceived breakdown of values began.⁸ During this period of instability, different interpretations of the war provided frames of reference for both republican and anti-democratic conceptions of the new political order. The republican explanation of defeat as evidence for the complete military and moral collapse of the old system, which warranted the creation of a democratic state, became a central issue in the political debate with regard to the legacy of the war.⁹ The portrayal and interpretation of the war consequently constituted a powerful political tool in the revolutionary period and its aftermath. While a substantial amount of research has already been done with reference to the war's significance in right-wing propaganda, there is an historiographical void when it comes to dealing with the republican

³ Eksteins (1975), p. 28.

⁴ Verhey (1997), p. 177.

⁵ Gerlach (1921), p. 124.

⁶ 'Der Vater der Lüge,' *Weltbühne* (29 June 1920), pp. 139, 140; 'Die grosse Lügenzeit,' *Welt am Montag (WäM)* (18 August 1919); 'Warum ich aus Deutschland ging,' *Freiheit*, 74 (25 December 1918).

⁷ Mommsen (2004), pp. 58, 82.

⁸ Deist (1991), p. 232.

⁹ See for example: *Freiheit*, 1 (15 November 1918); *Vorwärts*, 309 (9 November 1918); *Frankfurter Zeitung (FZ)*, 313 (11 November 1918).

reaction to the conflict.¹⁰ Yet the ultimately unsuccessful attempt to construct a distinctly republican interpretation of the war and its legacy was a significant factor in shaping the nature of the new state.

In order to understand how republicans utilized the war in the immediate postwar period, it is crucial to assess their portrayal of the war experience. Most research in this field focuses primarily on war-affirmative, right-wing literature or on the explosive political and literary responses to the publication of Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* in the late 1920s.¹¹ Although these works generally acknowledge the existence of critical anti-war literature in the first years of the republic, it was not regarded as a phenomenon that merited more than a brief reference.¹² The scholarly discourse has generally defined the first half of the 1920s as a time of apologist 'regimental stories and officers' memoirs.'¹³ This approach, however, neglects a considerable range of articles in republican newspapers and journals, as well as novels and pamphlets, which attempted to portray and interpret the war experience in a critical light.

In order to redress this historiographical gap, this chapter will analyze the depiction of the war, assessing 196 articles from the republican press published between 1918 and 1921, in newspapers and journals ranging from *Die Freiheit*, organ of the Independent Socialists, to the liberal *Frankfurter Zeitung*, affiliated with the German Democratic Party. Additionally it will also consider other representations of the war in novels and pamphlets written between 1914 and 1925. Although some of these narratives were actually written during the war, all of the works included in this analysis were first published in Germany after the revolution and can thus be regarded as deliberately addressing the war experience in the context of the republican war debate.¹⁴ Carl von

¹⁰ Mosse (1990); Sontheimer (1983); Theweleit (1987).

¹¹ For example: Prüm (1974); Gollbach (1978); Müller (1986); Bornebusch (1985).

¹² Thomas F. Schneider's collection of essays is a notable exception. However, the essays dealing with Vogel's, Frank's and Latzko's works remain largely work-specific in their analysis: Schneider and Wagener (2003).

¹³ Bartz (1997), p. 14.

¹⁴ Although Andreas Latzko's *Menschen im Krieg* was published in Switzerland, his writing and pacifist activities were referred to and reviewed throughout the republican press which indicates that his work was read in Germany. See: 'Andreas Latzko,' *FZ*, 309 (26 April 1919); 'Latzko Novellen,' *Der Sozialist*, 25 (21 June 1919), p. 376; 'Latzko Abend,' *Weltbühne* (11 December 1919), p. 740; 'Vortragsverbot,' *WaM* (24 November 1919).

Ossietzky, for example, justified the postwar publication of Wilhelm Lamszus' novel *Das Irrenhaus* by arguing that the issues which had caused the war remained unresolved and still needed to be dealt with.¹⁵

As this research is primarily concerned with a political, rather than a literary or esthetic, analysis of the war experience, it is worth outlining the selection process used for the non-press sources. While the choice of the republican press sources was relatively unambiguous due to the different publications' clear political affiliations, identifying distinctly 'republican' novels and pamphlets was more problematic. Herbert Bornebusch, for example, excludes Bruno Vogel's novel *Es lebe der Krieg!*, among other anti-militarist works, from the canon of democratic war literature because it endorses a specific political aim rather than merely portraying previously suppressed experiences and memories.¹⁶ This exclusion seems somewhat arbitrary, especially as Bornebusch acknowledges that the literary portrayal of the First World War in the Weimar Republic has to be understood in relation to postwar society and politics.¹⁷ Novels, however, often target a much broader audience than the press. The scope of their readership depends on publicity rather than on the political affiliation of the author. In order to remain as inclusive as possible this chapter will therefore consider novels and pamphlets which were reviewed positively in the republican press because their inclusion in the republican discourse rather than their author's political affiliation made them part of the republican narrative of the war. This analysis is more concerned with the republican politicization of a particular narrative of the war than its origins.

This focus on the promotion of a specifically republican version of the war experience does not allow for a detailed examination of individual authors or works. Instead this chapter aims to identify themes in the republican narrative of the war experience which were utilized as propaganda for the defense and, to some extent, the definition of the republican idea.¹⁸ In order to address the diverse interpretations which contemporaries attributed to the different locations of the war, this study is not limited to an analysis of combat experience. Rather it aims to examine how perceptions of the whole range of war experi-

¹⁵ Lamszus (1919), p. 9.

¹⁶ Bornebusch (1985), p. 77.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 60; Hüppauf, p. 178.

¹⁸ For the definition of the term propaganda see: Jowett and O'Donnell (1999), p. 5.

ences at the front, the rear and on the home front were portrayed in the postwar period.

The Front Experience: The Nature of War

The purifying and regenerating nature of war was a central theme of official propaganda throughout the conflict. In August 1914, the Franco-Prussian War, which had led to the foundation of a unified German state, was the only recent example through which people could envisage the kind of war that the German nation now faced.¹⁹ Thus there was a general consensus that the impending conflict would be short, victorious and would lead to a moral regeneration of German society.²⁰ It was assumed that the war would purge the nation of its political divisions and create a unified national community.²¹ This notion featured frequently in official war propaganda as a cultural justification for the conflict.²²

While acknowledging that a desire for renewal had motivated the soldiers to fight, republican war literature strongly rejected the idea that war was a cathartic force.²³ Instead, it posited senseless human and topographical destruction as a defining characteristic of modern warfare. Republican portrayals of combat noted that the war had transformed beautiful landscapes into splintered trees and rubble and had turned people's homes into burning ruins.²⁴ Fritz von Unruh, for example, described a soldier's impressions of a sunset in a destroyed village:

Limy, senseless and orphaned chimneys protrude between the ruins of destroyed human settlements and bear witness to the places where people once broke bread. [...] Gables of houses collapse like mirages. High walls collapse into nothing; fire burns through the stones.²⁵

¹⁹ Fries (1995), pp. 95, 96; Mommsen (2000), p. 202.

²⁰ Dülffer (2003), p. 122; Fries (1995), p. 96.

²¹ Welch (2000), pp. 12, 16–19.

²² Mommsen (2000), p. 197.

²³ 'Ein Lustrum,' *Weltbühne* (7 August 1919), p. 173.

²⁴ Latzko (1918), pp. 65, 66; Unruh (1919) p. 20; Vogel (1978), p. 11; Zech (1919), pp. 25, 31; 'Heil Dir im Siegerkranz,' *Vorwärts*, 599 (23 November 1919); 'Kamerad Levi,' *Tage-Buch* (24 March 1923); 'Das Schaukelpferd,' *FZ*, 308 (6 November 1918).

²⁵ 'Aus dem Tagebuch,' *FZ*, 390 (30 May 1920).

The contrast between apocalyptic images and memories of peaceful human interaction emphasized how inhabited areas were devastated by repeated shelling.²⁶ This focus on the destruction of family homes attempted to draw attention to a human aspect of the war, which most German civilians would not have witnessed first hand. This appeal for empathy was intended to undermine the abstract interpretation of war as a constructive force because the perception of war as a source of renewal could only be sustained if human suffering was taken out of the equation.²⁷ The idea that war can only thrive because of ignorance is also found in the novel *Menschen im Krieg* as Andreas Latzko's protagonist Captain Marschner cannot face identifying a fallen soldier from his battalion, because the identification of the dead individual as a person rather than a number would destroy his ability to continue fighting. The moral implications of this human dimension of destruction were most strongly evoked in references to children as victims of the conflict. Although the war to some extent de-sensitized society to human suffering, the distress of innocent children was still perceived as a strong moral incentive that could influence political decisions.²⁸ Descriptive allusions that evoked the formerly peaceful lives that children had left behind in burnt-out villages were therefore seen as endorsing a particularly strong condemnation of war.²⁹

The idea that war had a cathartic effect on society was also challenged by stressing that the destructive force that it unleashed was not selective but completely indiscriminate. For example, upon entering a soldier in one of the articles observed that the seventeenth century town hall was going to end up in the same pile of rubble as the twelfth century belfry next to it.³⁰ Some writers particularly focused on the desecration of holy places, such as burnt-out churches or destroyed graveyards.³¹ Such allusions implied that the arbitrary destruction of warfare could not be a creative source of renewal because it destroyed places of cultural and religious identification.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 'Das Schaukelpferd,' *FZ*, 308 (6 November 1918).

²⁷ Latzko (1918), p. 84.

²⁸ The perceived appeal of children's suffering was evident in newspaper coverage dealing with the blockade, which strongly condemned the inflicting of harm on children. Consequently it can be assumed that children's suffering was seen as having a strong emotional and moral impact. 'Die Hungerblockade der Kinder,' *FZ*, 444 (19 June 1919); 'Der Krieg gegen Kinder und Greise,' *Vorwärts*, 58 (1 February 1919).

²⁹ Zech (1919), pp. 49, 50; 'Das Schaukelpferd,' *FZ*, 308 (6 November 1918); 'Aus dem Tagebuch,' *FZ*, 390 (30 May 1920).

³⁰ 'Das Schaukelpferd,' *FZ*, 308 (6 November 1918).

³¹ 'Aus dem Tagebuch,' *FZ*, 390 (30 May 1920); Zech (1919), pp. 31, 119.

Similarly, the depiction of the destruction of lives on the battlefield was not just portrayed in relation to its immediate impact on society but was also highlighted as a negative influence on the country's future potential. Both Leonard Frank and Bruno Vogel listed a range of groundbreaking discoveries that individual soldiers could or would have made had they not been killed at the front, thereby implying that the war had actively impeded the progress of civilization.³² Fritz von Unruh exploited the same idea from a different angle, consciously juxtaposing the image of a soldier with destroyed and rotting genitalia against a burning church in a description of a destroyed village.³³ The depiction of war as the destroyer of both a sacred place of worship and the equally existential ability to procreate evoked its sinful nature. Such portrayals of war, as the antithesis of religious values, thus challenged the idea propagated by clergy and politicians during the conflict that the war was being fought with divine approval. The image of literal or psychological castration, which von Unruh evoked in his article, was also evident in other republican war narratives.³⁴ It suggested that death and injury in combat would strongly affect the demographic pattern of future generations.

Some writers particularly emphasized this demographic angle in their work. Professor Dr Georg Friedrich Nicolai attempted to expose war as a negative form of natural selection within a scientific framework. In *Biologie des Kriegeres*, he argued that because modern warfare obliterated the strong and healthy, in spite of their bravery, it lacked the positive natural selection value of traditional face-to-face combat.³⁵ As a logical conclusion, he maintained that the weak and degenerate forces in society, who remained at home, were spared death in combat and consequently thrived as a result of the war.³⁶ This interpretation of modern warfare was a conscious inversion of the Social Darwinist ideology of the prewar right-wing which had advocated war as an effective means of eradicating perceived weaknesses within German society.³⁷ Given that Alfred Polgar promoted remarkably similar ideas it can be assumed that this depiction of war as negative selection was perceived as a strong argument in favor of political change because it

³² Frank (1919) pp. 87–89; Vogel (1978), pp. 65–67.

³³ 'Aus dem Tagebuch,' *Vorwärts*, 390 (30 May 1920).

³⁴ *Ibid.*, Vogel (1978), p. 19; Lamszus (1919), pp. 119, 120; Frank (1936) pp. 146, 161, 162.

³⁵ 'Die Biologie des Kriegeres,' *FZ*, 190 (12 March 1919).

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Horne and Kramer (2001), pp. 154, 155.

attempted to create a scientific anti-war argument in order to deconstruct the right-wing glorification of the war.³⁸

On an abstract rather than an individual level the portrayal of the destruction of human life also illustrated the devastating nature of modern warfare. Mutilated, decapitated and decaying corpses were frequently described in republican war narratives as part of the landscape surrounding the soldiers.³⁹ The extent to which death was an integral part of the soldiers' existence was especially evident in accounts of soldiers literally stepping on corpses or body fragments.⁴⁰ The sheer number of victims and the horrible disfigurement of many corpses were dominant themes throughout republican literature and the press.⁴¹ The depiction of death and decay in a clinically detailed rather than an emotional manner reinforced the intensity of the images, as it hinted at the emotional numbness of the observing soldiers. This becomes especially evident in an article in *Vorwärts* in which a soldier describes passing a severed head which is watching flies crawl over the intestines hanging out of a mutilated torso.⁴²

The literary critic Paul Fussell has attributed this emphasis on the shocking aspects of war in German war novels to an artistic tradition that focused on the portrayal of horror.⁴³ Interpreting these narratives exclusively as the result of a particular literary tradition, however, fails to contextualize them as an integral part of a wider political and cultural framework within Weimar Germany. For Germany, unlike the victorious nations, the armistice did not bring the conflict to a close. The war was constantly politicized at a domestic level which prevented the ideological demobilization of public discourse.⁴⁴ During the war official propaganda had portrayed combat through the romantic lens

³⁸ 'Der Krieg als Erzieher,' *Weltbühne* (10 October 1918), pp. 337, 338.

³⁹ Unruh (1919), p. 161; Vogel (1978), pp. 13, 17, 18, 62; Zech (1919), pp. 26, 27, 30, 38, 55, 72; 'Episode,' *Tage-Buch* (26 May 1923).

⁴⁰ 'Heil Dir im Siegerkranz,' *Vorwärts*, 599 (23 November 1919); 'Aus dem Tagebuch,' *FZ*, 390 (30 May 1920).

⁴¹ Zech (1919), pp. 26, 55, 119; Latzko (1918), pp. 71, 141, 147, 151, 159; Weiß (1982), pp. 115, 125; Lamszus (1919), p. 24; Frank (1936), pp. 58, 72, 77; Unruh (1919), p. 161; Vogel, (1978), pp. 13, 18; 'Episode,' *Tage-Buch* (26 May 1923); 'Heil Dir im Siegerkranz,' *Vorwärts*, 599 (23.11.1919); 'Kamerad Levi,' *Tage-Buch* (24 March 1923); 'Deutsche Jugend,' *FZ*, 840 (12 November 1920); 'Es war einmal,' *WaM* (14 February 1921).

⁴² This image was exemplary for the portrayal of death on the battlefield. 'Heil Dir im Siegerkranz,' *Vorwärts*, 599 (23 November 1919).

⁴³ Fussell (1980), pp. 177, 178.

⁴⁴ For the centrality of the war in Weimar politics see: Sammet (2003), p. 265.

of traditional warfare, depicting death in a highly stylized fashion.⁴⁵ Officers' memoirs, describing battles from a strategic viewpoint, continued this tradition in the postwar period. Their depiction of warfare did not focus on individual suffering or elaborate on the nature or the scope of casualties.⁴⁶ Neither Hindenburg's nor Ludendorff's memoirs contain explicit descriptions of soldiers being killed or dying, instead using euphemisms such as 'losses' or 'sacrifices' on the rare occasions that they do refer to German casualties.⁴⁷

In response to such sanitized narratives of combat a number of republican publications explicitly defined carnage on the battlefield as the 'embarrassing truth' of the war.⁴⁸ This claim to represent the 'true' nature of warfare operated on a rational as well as an emotional level. It attempted to rationally deconstruct the traditional right-wing glorification of battle and implied that any attempt to sanitize the conflict was necessarily based on lies. Emotionally, the sensationalized call to uncover the truth was intended to exploit the public's suspicion that official war propaganda had betrayed them. By suggesting that the former elites continued to deceive the population, republican forces attempted to foster resentment against their political opponents. The graphic portrayal of war-related death and destruction in republican publications can therefore be regarded as an attempt to challenge the moral and ideological authority of the former political and military elites. It implied that republicans had a monopoly on the truth regarding the war and thus the exclusive right to make decisions regarding its legacy. Detailed descriptions of carnage and bloodshed were therefore used to create a distinctly republican narrative of the 'reality of war' which was referred to and utilized in the political debate.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ For example: 'Die Sonne sank im Westen,' (1915) in Digitale Bibliothek, 66 (2004), p. 567.

⁴⁶ The difference between officers' and soldiers' versions of the war is well documented in *Krieg im Frieden* which printed two substantially different accounts of the same battle. While the officer stressed that there were practically no casualties, the soldier gave evidence of his comrades' deaths. Ulrich and Ziemann (1997), pp. 77–79. Also see: Hindenburg (1920), pp. 96–104, 107–116, 137–141, 194–197 and Ludendorff (1919), pp. 41–45, 83–85, 216–220, 434–439.

⁴⁷ Ludendorff (1919), p. 213; Hindenburg (1920), p. 141.

⁴⁸ 'Denkwürdigkeiten,' *Vorwärts*, 453 (5 September 1919); 'Heil Dir im Siegerkranz,' *Vorwärts*, 599 (23 November 1919).

⁴⁹ The horrific depiction of warfare was not uniquely republican as Ernst Jünger also focused on the destructive nature of war. However, the predominant right-wing narratives of the war in the immediate postwar period reflected a continuation of sanitized war propaganda.

The uniformity of the republican narrative also clearly reveals the innate political dimension to the republican portrayal of the war experience. Although republican parties and interest groups were deeply divided on many political issues arising from the war, they had remarkably similar approaches to portraying the conflict. This is illustrated by a letter from the *Reichsarchiv* in 1924 which complained that democratic and left-wing newspapers refused to print official, non-pacifist narratives of the war experience.⁵⁰ Given this highly politicized context, even war narratives which were not ostensibly political can therefore be evaluated as part of the political debate, rather than simply personal accounts or artistic interpretations of the conflict.

The Soldier's Tale: The Nature of the Front Experience

The revolution in November 1918 made it clear that the war had neither stabilized conservative values nor brought about a united society. Yet, reactionary forces within the republic never questioned their war rhetoric, merely shifting its emphasis in the postwar period. Wartime propaganda had evoked ideals such as heroic and willing sacrifice for 'Kaiser and Fatherland' which were frequently attributed to soldiers at the front.⁵¹ Even after the revolution, anti-republican forces upheld the wartime creed that the *Stahlbad* of the front experience had transformed soldiers into more highly evolved human beings.⁵² This concept was used in political discourse by defining the disciplined and morally superior front soldier as the antithesis of 'defeatist' republicans. For the right, the martial virtue which the soldiers embodied represented the reactionary ideal for which postwar Germany should strive.⁵³

This right-wing appropriation of the 'spirit of the front soldier,' however, was not only significant because it suggested that the soldiers were

⁵⁰ Ulrich and Ziemann (1997), p. 70.

⁵¹ Anne Lipp provides a concise and accurate account of the propagandistic genesis of the soldier-warrior during the war. Lipp (2003), pp. 150–156. For a contemporary view of the 'fighting spirit' see: 'Mit Gott für König und Vaterland,' (1914/1915) in Digitale Bibliothek, 66 (2004), p. 1091.

⁵² This right-wing catchphrase, which literally translates as bath of steel, implied that the war strengthened the soldiers mentally and physically. It is evident in right-wing reviews of Remarque that this issue was still central to the anti-democratic creed in the late 1920s. For examples see Schrader (1992), pp. 34, 36, 37, 84, 85; Fries (1994), pp. 6, 7; Zilch in Hirschfeld (2004) pp. 638, 639.

⁵³ Sontheimer (1983), p. 109.

supportive of a conservative revolution. Its depiction of front soldiers as morally and physically superior also reinforced the idea of a weak home front, which constituted the basis of the stab-in-the-back myth. Generated within the army, this myth claimed that Germany had lost the war because republican and democratic forces on the home front had stabbed the undefeated army in the back.⁵⁴ These right-wing accusations of treachery forced the republican government to simultaneously deal with the consequences of defeat and defend their legitimacy as a governing body. Meanwhile nationalist forces believed that they merely needed to maintain the flow of accusations denouncing the wartime actions of those who were now in government and await their chance to 'swing [...] into the saddle again.'⁵⁵ The republican evaluation of the front experience and the effects of modern warfare on the human psyche was therefore part of an essential political debate which had consequences for the political survival of the republic.

The central role attributed to soldiers in Germany's political development in the postwar period was evident in the 'cult of the fallen soldier.'⁵⁶ The literary resurrection of the fallen in support of a specific political purpose was not an exclusively right-wing phenomenon, but was used across the political sphere to give political aims credibility. This veneration of the fallen soldier during the Weimar Republic suggested that the memory of the country's war heroes was held in higher regard than the representatives of the postwar political system. In the insecure ideological transition period between monarchy and republic, ex-soldiers were therefore the only group with the authority to challenge the anti-republican image of the front soldier. Hence it was when republican portrayals of the war experience claimed to represent the soldiers' viewpoint that they were potentially most effective in countering the stab-in-the-back myth.

Soldiers' descriptions of harsh conditions at the front were therefore used by republican writers to criticize the front experience and to undermine its right-wing depiction. Life at the front was portrayed as a constant battle with adverse forces of nature as well as with the enemy.⁵⁷ Independent of location or the type of warfare portrayed, all

⁵⁴ Krumeich (2001), p. 588; Afflerbach (1994), pp. 308, 309; Feldman (1992), p. 502.

⁵⁵ OHL Report from 7 October 1918, cited in Feldman (1992), p. 516.

⁵⁶ Mosse (1990), p. 106; Kruse and Kruse (1994), p. 105.

⁵⁷ Vogel (1978), pp. 12, 13, 18, 22, 23; Weiß (1982), pp. 112–114; Unruh (1919), pp. 153–157, 161.

accounts of the front experience reflected a lack of the most basic provisions such as food, drink or adequate shelter.⁵⁸ Soldiers were depicted as sleeping in their own feces, literally drowning in their trenches, infested with lice and suffering unbearable hunger and thirst.⁵⁹ Additionally, the soldiers' accounts emphasized the disturbing nature of constant gunfire and shelling and the overbearing stench of decomposing corpses.⁶⁰

The disparity between a romanticized idea of war and the reality of deprivation and suffering at the front contributed substantially to the soldiers' evaluation of the nature of war in the different republican narratives. This becomes particularly evident in Bruno Vogel's *Es lebe der Krieg!*, which directly contrasted the imagined 'field of honor' with the reality of 'unbearably fetid corpses,' 'miserable grub' and 'howling flesh.'⁶¹ Latzko on the other hand used the phrase 'field of honor' to describe a mortuary on the home front accommodating suicide victims who could not face being drafted or returning to the front after leave.⁶² By suggesting that the war robbed soldiers of their human dignity and their will to live these publications thus undermined the prewar notion of war as an adventure.⁶³

Making Sense of the War

The experience of deprivation and suffering therefore provided the framework in which the soldiers depicted in this literature perceived their existence at the front. Yet the scale of killing and the undignified

⁵⁸ 'Es war einmal,' *WaM* (14 February 1921); 'Episode,' *Tage-Buch* (26 May 1923); 'Der See Genezareth,' *Vorwärts*, 335 (6 December 1918); 'Briefe aus dem Felde,' *Freiheit*, 23 (27 November 1918); 'Die Marktenderei,' *Weltbühne* (24 July 1919), p. 94; 'Aus dem Roman das Feuer von Henri Barbusse,' *Freie Jugend* (15 July 1919); Unruh (1919), p. 181; Vogel (1978), pp. 12, 13; Zech (1919), pp. 12, 13, 15, 61, 98, 153; Zickler (1919), p. 10; Weiß (1982), p. 116.

⁵⁹ 'Briefe aus dem Felde,' *Freiheit*, 23 (27 November 1918); 'Der See Genezareth,' *Vorwärts*, 335 (6 December 1918); 'Episode,' *Tage-Buch* (26 May 1923); 'Die Marktenderei,' *Weltbühne* (17 July 1919), p. 94; 'Heil Dir im Siegerkranz,' *Vorwärts*, 599 (23 November 1919).

⁶⁰ 'Aus dem Tagebuch,' *FZ*, 390 (30 May 1920); 'Der Mann am Baum,' *WaM* (20 January 1919); 'Heil Dir im Siegerkranz,' *Vorwärts*, 599 (23 November 1919); Zech (1919), pp. 55, 61.

⁶¹ Vogel (1978), pp. 7, 11, 13.

⁶² Frank (1936), p. 111.

⁶³ Fries (1994), pp. 95, 96.

nature of death feature even more strongly in these texts as reasons for questioning the validity of the war. While one of Vogel's 'fallen' recounted being eaten and copulated on by rats before he died, one of Frank's protagonists described the fate of a wounded soldier who died slowly and painfully over the course of five days after being trapped in barbed wire outside the trenches.⁶⁴ Aware of the potential prospects for their own lives in the context of the immense losses they witnessed during combat, the soldiers within republican literature consequently reassessed the implications of the official war propaganda.

Ideological concepts intended to legitimize combat and give meaning to the loss of life were therefore frequently contrasted with the horror and banality of everyday experiences at the front. The absurdity of the prewar concept of heroism, for example, is illustrated by attributing it to soldiers cowering in a corner after a gas attack or the accidental killing of civilians.⁶⁵ The portrayal of soldiers at Langemarck, who went into battle chanting patriotic songs only to scream for their mothers when wounded, also illustrated the juxtaposition of the heroic idea with a less heroic reality.⁶⁶ Other clichés which dominated wartime propaganda such as honor, sacrifice, fatherland and patriotism were subverted in a similar manner.⁶⁷ The soldiers' disillusionment with nationalist war propaganda was portrayed in this manner to suggest that reactionary forces had no right to appropriate the spirit of the front soldiers after the revolution because men at the front had not fought to defend right-wing values. Otto Lehmann-Russbüldt summarized this phenomenon by claiming that he had never met a Pan-German at the front.⁶⁸ Only one article in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, however, explicitly applied this logic to the political tensions in postwar society, arguing that post-revolutionary youth were misinterpreting the legend of Langemarck, seeing it as an endorsement of reactionary values. The article suggested that the true

⁶⁴ For example: Vogel (1978), p. 47; Frank (1936), pp. 78, 79. These two specific examples are by no means exceptional as similar images can be found in: 'Die ersten Toten,' *FZ*, 1 (1 January 1919); 'Aus dem Tagebuch,' *FZ*, 390 (30 May 1920); Vogel (1978), pp. 17, 18, 24, 68; Weiß (1982), p. 132, 135; Unruh (1919), pp. 18, 43, 56, 157; Lamszus (1919), p. 89.

⁶⁵ Unruh (1919), p. 34; Zech (1919) p. 174.

⁶⁶ 'Deutsche Jugend,' *FZ*, 840 (12 November 1920). See also: Lamszus (1919), p. 31; Vogel (1978), pp. 18, 71.

⁶⁷ 'Franz T.,' *Weltbühne* (6 February 1919), p. 147; 'Preußische Presse,' *Weltbühne* (29 May 1919), pp. 647, 648; Frank (1936), pp. 79, 80; Lamszus (1919), p. 65; Unruh (1919), pp. 38, 124, 169; Vogel (1978), pp. 9, 13, 18, 41, 42, 46.

⁶⁸ Lehmann-Russbüldt (1919), p. 12.

legacy of the soldiers of Langemarck should be to inspire Germany's youth to support the republic, as the soldiers' loyalty had been to Germany rather than to the old regime.⁶⁹

In republican writing, the soldiers' rejection of official war rhetoric also manifested itself in a fierce antipathy towards propaganda which glorified the conflict.⁷⁰ Soldiers were portrayed as resenting war correspondents, whom they perceived as ignorant of the reality of warfare, but also as being occasionally amused by journalists' blatant lies which bore no resemblance to their own experience.⁷¹ They perceived propagandists as responsible for prolonging the soldiers' own suffering and the deprivation that their families experienced at home.⁷² This perception of the effects of war propaganda was mirrored in articles dealing with the general nature of propaganda during the conflict. The notion that war-affirmative propaganda had intended to deceive the home front was consciously promoted in order to fuel popular resentment against the old regime.⁷³ It was consequently argued that public opinion was a product of the propaganda office which discouraged any reflection about the war beyond the fact that it 'was going well.'⁷⁴ By implying that the home front would have resisted the continuation of warfare had they been aware of the full extent of its horror, the republican narrative insinuated that neither the ordinary soldiers nor the ordinary people really wanted the conflict.⁷⁵

Yet republican publications not only criticized official war propaganda. They also pointed out that those who called for sacrifice, whether war correspondents at the front or the press at home, were not actually

⁶⁹ 'Deutsche Jugend,' *FZ*, 840 (12 November 1920).

⁷⁰ Lehmann-Russbüldt (1919), pp. 11, 12; 'Die Kriegsberichterstatter,' *Weltbühne* (28 April 1921), pp. 466, 467; 'Es war einmal!' *WaM* (14 February 1921); 'Der See Genezareth,' *Vorwärts*, 335 (6 December 1918); Latzko (1918), p. 143.

⁷¹ 'Die Kriegsberichterstatter,' *Weltbühne* (28 April 1921), pp. 465–467; 'Ein Lustrum,' *Weltbühne* (7 August 1919), pp. 173, 174; 'Arno Voigt,' *Weltbühne* (4 September 1919), p. 305; 'Nicolai,' *Weltbühne* (5 December 1918), p. 531; 'Kriegslügenberichterstatter,' *Freiheit*, 268 (23 November 1919).

⁷² 'Der See Genezareth,' *Vorwärts*, 335 (6 December 1918); 'Heimkrieger,' *WaM* (1 August 1921); 'Franz T.,' *Weltbühne* (6 February 1919), p. 147.

⁷³ 'Ein Lustrum,' *Weltbühne* (7 August 1919), pp. 173, 174; 'Nicolai,' *Weltbühne* (5 December 1918), pp. 531, 532; Frank (1936), pp. 22, 29; Latzko (1918), p. 142.

⁷⁴ 'Kriegs-Presse-Amt,' *Weltbühne* (14 November 1918), pp. 457, 458; 'Die grosse Lügenzeit,' *WaM* (18 August 1919); Unruh (1919), p. 201.

⁷⁵ 'Nicolai,' *Weltbühne* (5 December 1918), p. 531; Frank (1936), pp. 22, 29.

willing to practice what they preached.⁷⁶ This argument was particularly evident in a satirical poem in the pacifist *Welt am Montag* which jokingly described editors and head teachers willing to sacrifice their last drop of blood for the fatherland, and war profiteers sacrificing their profits to go into battle.⁷⁷ The association of war propagandists with war profiteers, who were generally perceived as exploiting the soldiers' suffering from a position of comfortable safety behind the front lines, was intended to exploit a source of popular discontent. The stigmatization inherent in this accusation supported the demand that the public sphere needed to be cleansed of self-mobilized poets, politicians and journalists who had 'continuously pissed patriotic poetry' during the war.⁷⁸

The deconstruction of nationalist war propaganda in republican portrayals of the war experience should therefore not merely be understood as part of a pacifist agenda. The focus on the serious consequences of war propaganda and its effectiveness on the home front rather aimed to legitimize the republic by providing an alternative reading of the stab-in-the-back myth. By emphasizing the soldiers' disillusionment with official war rhetoric, republican writers suggested that rather than feeling betrayed by the home front both soldiers and war-weary civilians shared the same values. In fact, the only grave accusation which soldiers made against the home front in republican literature and press was to complain that people had supported war propaganda at all.⁷⁹ This line of argument was further validated by the claim that the soldiers had wanted, and actively supported, the revolution.⁸⁰ Republican writing identified right-wing propagandists, rather than the home front as such, as having destroyed the soldiers' morale by prolonging the conflict.

The Image of Home

The strong emotional and ideological link between the front line and the home front was also stressed in a different context, as most republican

⁷⁶ 'Drückeberger und Maulhelden,' *WaM* (2 February 1920); 'Heimkrieger,' *WaM* (1 August 1921); 'Preußische Presse,' *Weltbühne* (29 May 1919), pp. 647, 648.

⁷⁷ 'Helden,' *WaM* (4 November 1918).

⁷⁸ 'Es war einmal!' *WaM* (14 February 1921).

⁷⁹ Frank (1936), pp. 22, 159; Latzko (1918), pp. 28, 29, 30; Vogel (1978), pp. 9, 10.

⁸⁰ 'Liberale Erneuerung,' *Weltbühne* (28 November 1918), p. 512; Zickler (1919); Preface, Frank (1936), pp. 24, 25.

publications highlighted the soldiers' longing to be with their families.⁸¹ Dying soldiers were depicted calling for their mothers or loved ones, or even clutching their wife's photograph.⁸² At the same time, republican writers portrayed the soldiers' absence and death at the front as having an equally strong impact on the population at home. Leonard Frank, whose novel was the only republican narrative which dealt with the impact of war on the home front, explicitly described the economic and emotional hardship which the families of soldiers experienced.⁸³ Like the soldiers at the front, Frank's civilian protagonists had to survive on insufficient provisions and questioned the war on the basis of their disillusionment with official propaganda.⁸⁴ This depiction of common suffering deliberately set out to eradicate the perceived boundaries between front and home front that had been artificially created by the stab-in-the-back legend. Although their wartime experiences had affected soldiers and civilians differently, the republican depiction of the family links which united the two challenged the right-wing portrayal of the home front as treacherous.

This portrayal of common ideals shared by the front and the home front, however, was just one aspect of how the war was depicted as impacting upon the soldier's family life. Another prevalent interpretation, found throughout republican publications, was to present the war as a force which ruined families and, therefore, the moral fibre which held society together. In a literal sense, such writing emphasized the human dimension of the war, highlighting that dead soldiers were not 'human material' but somebody's father, brother, son or lover.⁸⁵ The republican literature also illustrated, though, that the devastating influence of the war extended beyond the consequences of enemy bullets.

Both Frank and Vogel give concrete examples of how sexual promiscuity bred by the war and manifested both at the front and at home destroyed lives. Bruno Vogel recounts the story of a junior officer who passed on gonorrhea from a prostitute to his pregnant wife. Upon recognising that his wife and child have been irreversibly affected by the disease he murders them, before committing suicide during combat.⁸⁶

⁸¹ Vogel (1978), p. 14; Lamszus (1919), pp. 26, 64, 79; Latzko (1918), pp. 21, 47, 55.

⁸² Latzko (1918), p. 27; Lamszus (1919), pp. 26, 31, 64; Vogel (1978), pp. 18, 71; 'Deutsche Jugend,' *FZ*, 840 (12 November 1920).

⁸³ Frank (1936), pp. 26, 41, 69.

⁸⁴ Frank (1936), pp. 13, 19, 21, 28, 29, 33, 44, 69.

⁸⁵ Latzko (1918), pp. 27, 47, 48, 55, 62, 63, 143; Lamszus (1919), p. 27.

⁸⁶ Vogel (1978), pp. 35, 36, 37, 38.

One of Leonard Frank's protagonists, on the other hand, describes how soldiers committed suicide after discovering that their loved ones had betrayed them in their absence.⁸⁷ By emphasizing the war's impact on interpersonal relationships, these writers implied that the former elites responsible for the conflict were also to blame for a breakdown in the very moral values that they claimed to promote.

Although the republican press also portrayed suffering as an integral part of the war's impact on the home front, it analyzed the issue in a completely different framework. Most press sources focused almost exclusively on the blockade's role in causing the economic hardship suffered by German civilians.⁸⁸ The democratic press therefore used descriptions of the war's effect on the home front to hold the Allies, rather than the former elites, responsible for German civilians' suffering. This suggests that the republican press still considered Germany's former enemies a more severe threat to its existence than domestic political opponents.⁸⁹ The same publications which vehemently attacked the nationalist narrative of wartime combat therefore shared and promoted the right-wing assessment of who was responsible for suffering on the home front.⁹⁰ Comparing the different depictions of home front suffering in novels and in the press thus provides a compelling example of how the divergence between the ideological ideal of international reconciliation and the perceived necessity to defend Germany against its wartime enemies weakened the ability of the republic to defend itself against domestic attacks from the right.

The Noble Warrior

The republican narrative was much less ambiguous in its depiction of soldiers' perceptions of their futile existence at the front. Many of the texts analyzed portrayed soldiers as unable to identify with officially prescribed emotions and aspirations, worn down by the condition of combat, failing to find any way of convincing themselves that their

⁸⁷ Frank (1936), p. 113.

⁸⁸ For example: 'Die Hungerblockade der Kinder,' *FZ*, 444 (19 June 1919); 'Der Krieg gegen Kinder und Greise,' *Vorwärts*, 58 (1 February 1919); 'Frauenprotest gegen die Hungerblockade,' *Vorwärts*, 88 (17 February 1919); 'Aushungerung Deutschlands,' *FZ*, 24 (10 January 1919).

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

actions had value. Both narratives of the combat experience and more abstract descriptions of the soldiers' morale emphasize soldiers' distinct lack of willingness to die for the fatherland. The image of exhausted, submissive and resentful human beings, who desired nothing more than to survive and get away from the front, was a universal one in the republican literature analyzed.⁹¹ The extent to which soldiers hated their existence is highlighted in this writing by the fact that they were shown welcoming serious injuries as a way to escape the war.⁹²

Such portrayals of the soldiers' morale challenged propagandistic concepts of heroism and self-sacrifice. Trapped at the lowest level of the hierarchical military chain, soldiers were depicted as deprived of individuality, free will or any control over their own fate.⁹³ Additionally they had no legal means to challenge their officers' decisions as the military understanding of discipline did not tolerate dissent.⁹⁴ Consequently soldiers grudgingly endured their fate, accepting it neither enthusiastically nor willingly, under the threat of death for desertion.⁹⁵

The republican press challenged concepts of heroism even further by questioning the established cultural distinction between brave soldiers and cowardly deserters or dissenters. A few journalists argued that a soldier who simply endured and obeyed, despite his reservations, was actually not as brave as a dissenter who upheld his moral integrity in spite of the prospect of severe punishment.⁹⁶ This argument, however, was somewhat problematic in terms of its potential impact. Although it provided a strong logical deconstruction of the stab-in-the-back myth by suggesting that the soldiers acted out of cowardice rather than

⁹¹ Zech (1919), pp. 15, 84, 85; Latzko (1918), pp. 42, 72, 73; Lehmann-Russbüldt (1919), p. 5; Vogel (1978), p. 71; Unruh (1919), p. 145; Frank (1936), p. 77; 'Es war einmal!' *WaM* (14 February 1921); 'Totentanz,' *Freiheit*, 287 (20 June 1919); 'Heil Dir im Siegerkranz,' *Vorwärts*, 599 (23 November 1919); 'Aus dem Tagebuch,' *FZ*, 390 (30 May 1920).

⁹² Lehmann-Russbüldt (1919), p. 10; Latzko (1918), p. 136.

⁹³ Unruh (1919), p. 3; Vogel (1978), p. 31; 'Militaria—Unser Militär,' *Weltbühne* (3 July 1919), pp. 25, 26; 'Die Kerle,' *Weltbühne* (17 July 1919), pp. 69, 70.

⁹⁴ Lehmann-Russbüldt (1919), pp. 7, 8, 14, 15; 'An den Herrn Verfasser der Militaria,' *Weltbühne* (28 March 1919), p. 315.

⁹⁵ Frank (1936), pp. 73, 74; 'Gericht der Toten,' *Vorwärts*, 407 (11 August 1919); 'Hedwig Dohm,' 273, *Freiheit* (8 June 1919).

⁹⁶ 'Der Deserteur,' *Tage-Buch* (6 August 1921). 'Drückeberger und Maulhelden,' *WaM* (2 February 1920); 'Der Krieg als Erzieher,' *Weltbühne* (10 October 1918), p. 338.

bravery, it failed to allow for the soldiers' need to justify their suffering upon their return.⁹⁷

Historians have argued that during the conflict some soldiers expressed their resentment of the war through deserting or attacking their officers.⁹⁸ Yet, such active opposition by soldiers appears very rarely in the republican accounts of the conflict, although these narratives did depict soldiers voicing their grievances and therefore challenging the nationalist narrative which was based on the idea of enthusiastic sacrifice. Only in Bruno Vogel's work are soldier protagonists depicted as actively retaliating for being sent into an unnecessary and devastating attack, by throwing hand grenades into the officers' trench. Yet this particular act of revenge was not caused by the soldiers' combat experience. Rather it is triggered by resentment at corrupt superiors who demanded an attack to 'cleanse' the soldiers' spirit, while they avoided participation themselves, drinking wine and entertaining prostitutes in their trench.⁹⁹

The majority of soldiers in the republican narrative therefore either resentfully accepted their subordinate role or broke down under the pressure of combat.¹⁰⁰ The way that republican writers describe the soldier's mental state during combat in many ways resembles the brute force of Jünger's ideal of the primitive man. This recovery of animal instinct in the republican texts, however, was solely motivated by desperation and fear.¹⁰¹ Even when the depicted soldiers realized that pushing their endurance to the limit threatened their sanity, they did not consider deserting.¹⁰² Lacking the strength to rebel, some are depicted throwing themselves into enemy fire or completely losing control over their bodies and minds.¹⁰³ The portrayal of soldiers as impotent victims of the machinery of war, whose will and sanity have been destroyed by the

⁹⁷ Mosse (1990), p. 6.

⁹⁸ For example: Lipp (2003), p. 122; Bessel (1993), pp. 225, 226.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 17, 71; Unruh (1919), pp. 51f, 110; Lamszus (1919), pp. 16, 54; Zech (1919), pp. 30, 168, 169, 174; Frank (1936), pp. 73, 74, 77; Latzko (1918), pp. 15, 16; 'Aus dem Tagebuch,' *FZ*, 390 (30 May 1920).

¹⁰¹ Baron and Müller (1992), p. 302; Vogel (1978), pp. 24, 71; Unruh (1919), pp. 145–149.

¹⁰² Zech (1919), p. 79.

¹⁰³ Unruh (1919), p. 51; Lamszus (1919), pp. 54, 55; Frank (1936), p. 80.

‘front experience,’ was a key theme that distinguished the republican war narratives from nationalist and communist war literature.¹⁰⁴

The obvious absence of pacifist anti-heroes among the soldiers featured in republican war narratives suggests that the portrayal of the devastating psychological impact of combat was essentially used to counteract the nationalist concept of the *Stahlbad*. On this basis it can plausibly be argued that these critical war novels published during the early postwar period implicitly claimed to bear witness to ‘a generation which was destroyed by the war, even if it escaped the grenades,’ long before Erich Maria Remarque coined the phrase.¹⁰⁵ By addressing the fear and mental instability of the soldiers, early republican war narratives challenged the image of the brave and noble warrior, thus deconstructing the basis for the stab-in-the-back legend. Their detailed analysis of the psychological impact of the war experience therefore challenges Bruno Schulze’s assumption that Remarque had no precursors and undermines Hans-Harald Müller’s claim that democratic war novels did not address the stab-in-the-back myth.¹⁰⁶ At a different level, the highly critical portrayal of the soldiers’ subdued wartime endurance was also, to some extent, offered as a blueprint for the nature of the new state which claimed to provide freedom rather than oppression. In order to rally support for the republic, it was portrayed as the antithesis of the oppressive military system and was represented as encouraging the soldiers to co-operate and participate, rather than passively endure.¹⁰⁷

The Noble Officer

With regard to the role of the soldier in war propaganda, it is interesting to note that nationalist ideology tended to depict the common soldier as heroic once he had sacrificed his life for the fatherland.¹⁰⁸ Superior officers, however, could achieve such fame without the inconvenience of being dead.¹⁰⁹ The division which the system of military hierarchy and its exploitation by individual officers created between officers and

¹⁰⁴ For the radical left-wing’s portrayal of their own role during the war, see: Sammet (2003), pp. 193–198.

¹⁰⁵ Remarque (1986), p. 5.

¹⁰⁶ Schulze (1994), p. 308; Müller (1992), p. 106.

¹⁰⁷ ‘Olle Kamellen,’ *Weltbühne* (6 February 1919), p. 145.

¹⁰⁸ Schneider in Hirschfeld (2004), pp. 550, 551.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

men was portrayed as a significant factor in the soldiers' feelings of impotence and bitterness. The reality of separate canteens, toilets and graves for different ranks at the front was seen as exemplifying an unfair and obsolete hierarchy.¹¹⁰ According to a number of accounts dealing with officers' conduct, the soldiers' resentment was motivated not only by the substantial inequality in pay and provisions, but also by officers' blatant abuse of their position.¹¹¹

Accusations against commanding officers were mainly based upon the idea that they considered their own privileges more important than the soldiers' welfare. Within republican narratives officers were commonly accused of depriving soldiers of their allocated provisions in order to indulge in luxurious feasts.¹¹² In a similar fashion, Arno Voigt attributed the death of soldiers buried under a collapsed shelter to the fact that workers had not had time to provide decent accommodation for the soldiers because they were too busy with elaborate building measures being carried out to beautify a villa for the officers.¹¹³ Even von Unruh and Weiß, who had served as officers during the war, depicted officers as willing to order futile military missions or defend unimportant front line positions in order to receive military recognition.¹¹⁴ Such depictions implied that in the officers' quest for honor, soldiers were degraded to 'material' and treated accordingly.¹¹⁵ This 'lust for power' was portrayed even more forcefully in Vogel's novel, which depicted an officer caught masturbating while watching the carnage on the battlefield through a pair of binoculars.¹¹⁶

Front and Rear

The treatment of officers in the republican press was not all one-sided. A former officer writing for *Die Weltbühne* attempted to defend

¹¹⁰ Lehmann-Russbüldt (1919), p. 7; 'Die Kerle,' *Weltbühne* (17 July 1919), pp. 70, 71.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 'Offiziersvereinigungen,' *Weltbühne* (15 January 1920), pp. 80, 81; 'Briefe aus dem Felde,' *Freiheit*, 23 (27 November 1918); Zech (1919), p. 70; Zickler (1919), p. 21; Appens (1919), pp. 9, 29, 30.

¹¹² Zickler (1919), pp. 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 27, 28; 'Die Kriegsleiden des Kronprinzen,' *Vorwärts*, 561 (2 November 1919); Lehmann-Russbüldt (1919), pp. 9, 10.

¹¹³ 'Wie sie starben,' *Weltbühne* (23 June 1921), pp. 678–680.

¹¹⁴ Unruh (1919), pp. 189f; Weiß (1919), pp. 134, 135.

¹¹⁵ Latzko (1918), pp. 68, 79, 120.

¹¹⁶ Vogel (1978), p. 43.

active officers at the front claiming that they had often done their duty blamelessly and were admired by the troops.¹¹⁷ Although admitting that corruption in the army needed to be addressed, he argued that it was mostly prevalent in administrative units in the rear. In the subsequent debate Kurt Tucholsky argued that the whole military system needed to be transformed as even decent officers had tolerated and covered up decadence and corruption.¹¹⁸ Although Otto Lehmann Russbült's account of soldiers' perceptions of the war validated the officer's argument, Tucholsky's conclusion reflected the tenor of republican perceptions of the officer class more accurately.¹¹⁹ The republican publications analyzed generally assumed that the moral corruption associated with the military administration reflected the mentality of the entire officer corps.

The republican narrative fully exploited the theme of officers' corrupt moral conduct in administrative units in the rear. Wilhelm Appens' and Heinrich Wandt's accounts, for example, portray officers in the rear zone as the antithesis of the national ideal of the front community. Although these novels dealt with different administrative headquarters in France and Belgium, both provided very similar descriptions of officers' decadent lifestyles in the safety of the rear.¹²⁰ While front soldiers risked their lives in horrendous conditions, the conduct of administration and the general staff in these accounts scarcely indicated that a war was being fought. Instead, these officers were allegedly most concerned with their musical, culinary or sexual entertainment.¹²¹ They were also accused of stealing food and other goods to sell on the black market in Germany.¹²² Heinrich Wandt specifically noted that these officers nonetheless received major decorations for living in obscene luxury, doing very little work and looting houses and warehouses.¹²³ Republican

¹¹⁷ 'An den Verfasser der Militaria,' *Weltbühne* (28 March 1919), pp. 315–317. See also: 'Das alte Heer,' *Weltbühne* (5 February 1920), pp. 176, 177.

¹¹⁸ 'Militaria—Zur Erinnerung an den Ersten August 1914,' *Weltbühne* (14 August 1919), pp. 190–200; 'Präsentiert das Gwä!' *Weltbühne* (30 October 1919), pp. 551, 552.

¹¹⁹ Lehmann-Russbült (1919), p. 7.

¹²⁰ Wandt (1920), pp. 3, 11, 13, 14, 37, 38; Appens (1919), pp. 8, 9, 13–19.

¹²¹ Zickler (1919), pp. 10, 16, 21, 27, 28; 'Die Kriegsleiden des Kronprinzen,' *Vorwärts*, 561 (2 November 1919); Appens (1919), pp. 8, 9, 21, 28, 29; Latzko (1918), pp. 99, 103.

¹²² 'Militaristische Korruption,' *Freiheit*, 65 (20 December 1918); Zickler (1919), pp. 10, 22; Appens (1919), pp. 11, 18.

¹²³ Wandt (1920), pp. 12, 22, 43, 49, 51.

writers also alleged that officers tormented front soldiers on leave who dared to intrude upon the officers' territory.¹²⁴

These accusations were intended to undermine the idea that the officer corps was morally superior, which had been a defining tenet of the prewar social hierarchy.¹²⁵ The aim was to mobilize soldiers to support the republic against their former superiors by urging them to remember the injustices that officers had inflicted.¹²⁶ These accusations were also addressed to the entire population, as they claimed to reveal the truth about how the former military leaders had defrauded their loyal subjects. This was especially evident with regard to the depiction of officers as war profiteers, which directly implied that these perceived 'war heroes' should be considered as morally discredited and unfit to have any political input into shaping the new state. This idea was reinforced by pointing out that the German people would have to pay for the extortionate debauchery of their officers.¹²⁷

The republican press also used its complete vilification of officers, based on the conduct of the so-called 'behind the front pigs' (*Etappe-schweine*) in the rear areas, to construct a convenient scapegoat for the defeat.¹²⁸ Thus their superiors' immoral conduct was constantly cited as a factor in the soldiers' disillusionment, which was believed to have contributed to Germany's downfall.¹²⁹ It is striking that the republican image of the war profiteer on the home front was constructed according to the exact same model. Similar to the figure of the corrupt and decadent officer, he was singled out as a representative of the old elites, characterized by his self-interest and a willingness to tolerate the suffering of soldiers and civilians alike if it increased his profits.¹³⁰ Intellectuals such as Alfred Polgar used such accusations as means of validating

¹²⁴ Latzko (1918), pp. 103, 118, 119; 'Das alte Heer—Die Etappe,' *Weltbühne* (11 March 1920), pp. 328, 329; Wandt (1920), pp. 8, 15, 53, 86.

¹²⁵ 'Wilhelm I' in Ulrich and Ziemann (2001), p. 116.

¹²⁶ 'Präsentiert das Gwöl' *Weltbühne* (30 October 1919), pp. 551, 552.

¹²⁷ Wandt (1920), pp. 37, 38; Appens (1919), p. 32.

¹²⁸ *Etappe-schweine* was a derogative term, coined by the soldiers for the administrative units behind the front lines.

¹²⁹ Lehmann-Russbüldt (1919), pp. 26, 27; 'Militaria—Offizier und Mann,' *Weltbühne* (9 January 1919), pp. 38–41; 'Militaria—Verpflegung,' *Weltbühne* (23 January 1919), pp. 87–89; 'Olle Kamellen,' *Weltbühne* (6 February 1919), p. 145; 'Die Kerle,' *Weltbühne* (7 July 1919), pp. 69–71. 'Offiziersvereinigungen,' *Weltbühne* (15 January 1920), pp. 78–82.

¹³⁰ 'Der heldenhafte Kriegslieferant,' *Vorwärts*, 305 (5 November 1918); 'Denkwürdigkeiten,' *Vorwärts*, 453 (5 September 1919); 'Heimkrieger,' *WaM* (1 August 1921); Vogel (1978), p. 8.

the new state. Unlike nationalist journalists, who often contrasted the economic deprivation of the revolutionary period with the *status quo ante*, Polgar directly compared the spiritual deprivation, inequality and oppression under the old regime with the political and personal freedom of the postwar order. On these grounds he called for remembrance of 'what was' as a 'consolation for what is.'¹³¹

This analysis suggests that, contrary to the assumptions made by previous scholars, attempts were made in the early postwar years to construct an interpretation of the war experience which aimed to defend and legitimize the Weimar Republic. The focus upon the destructive nature of the conflict in the republican narratives examined here, which manifested itself in the portrayal of butchery on the battlefield and the deterioration of fundamental human values, challenged the glorifying war propaganda that had covered up the alleged 'reality of war.' The suggestion that the former elites had deliberately deceived the population and willingly tolerated immense suffering for their own gain was intended to undermine the right's credibility.

Assuming that the war was predominantly driven by the greed of nationalist elites, acting against the will and the genuine interest of the people, these narratives created a division between those who had directed the bloodshed and those forced to endure it. This dichotomy allowed both soldiers and civilians to identify themselves in opposition to a common internal enemy, personified by the former elites. Republican narratives, which arose from a need to defend the republic against accusations that it had betrayed the soldiers, thus created a counter-myth to the stab-in-the-back legend intended to restrict the political influence of the republic's opponents by identifying them as the enemy within.

The negative portrayal of the nature of war also sought to draw upon popular war weariness to win support for the republic by implicitly contrasting the destructive impact of military ideology with the humanist values which were seen as integral to the revolution. The war narratives thus portrayed republican forces merely as agents implementing the popular will in response to a perceived desire for peace, attributed to both soldiers and civilians. Considering that the responsibility for defeat was also attributed to the corruption of the former elites, these critical war narratives legitimized the republican role in ending the war as a positive one.

¹³¹ 'Es geht uns gut,' *Weltbühne* (6 February 1919), pp. 139, 140.

The considerable support for the republican parties and the *Nie Wieder Krieg!* (No More War) peace movement in the early years of the Weimar Republic suggests that a significant proportion of the population could identify with the republican understanding of the war and its implications. Yet republican attempts to undermine the nationalist claim to power never fulfilled their full potential. This was partly due to the fact that although politicians and journalists expressed a pacifist interpretation of the war in order to discredit the old elites, they were unable to defend their position against the reactionary justice system. Appens, Vogel and Wandt faced legal challenges to their work, resulting in censorship or delays in publishing their novels, while Latzko's public readings were prohibited.¹³² Furthermore, moral condemnation of the war, the most important aspect of republican war literature, did not offer the immediate practical solutions to the reality of defeat which right-wing propaganda claimed to offer. Although basic concepts like the horrific war experience or the corrupt officer corps were expressed in republican press and literature, issues that implied the need for change were often diluted on a political level. Generalized opposition to the military system, for example, could not be upheld quite as vehemently when the new government had depended on troops during the political unrest in January 1919. Moreover, inconsistencies within republican war narratives, which were divided on whether to blame the Allies or the old regime for wartime suffering on the home front, lent credibility to the right-wing interpretation of the war. It can therefore be argued that while there was an intellectual attempt to provide a republican war narrative in the early years of the Weimar Republic, the practical results of this discourse were limited.

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¹³² See Vogel (1978), pp. 86–103; Wandt (1920), p. 4; 'Latzko Abend,' *Weltbühne* (11 December 1919), p. 740; 'Vortragsverbot,' *WaM* (24 November 1919); 'Antimilitarist,' *Weltbühne* (25 March 1920), p. 384.

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CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE FIRST WORLD WAR AND GERMAN MEMORY*

Alan Kramer

Anyone undertaking a comparative study of the memory of the war is struck by the disparity between the strong popular and scholarly interest in the First World War in Britain, France, and Italy, and its relative neglect in Germany. To this day, it is known in the former as ‘The Great War,’ ‘*La Grande Guerre*,’ and ‘*La Grande Guerra*.’ In the latter the term ‘*Der Große Krieg*’ is no longer used; although it was in use during the war, ‘*Der Weltkrieg*’ (the World War) was more common, and after 1939 it was demoted to the status of a dress rehearsal, as ‘*Der erste Weltkrieg*.’¹ This neglect should be surprising, given Germany’s central role in the war, the fact that it suffered more military losses than any other belligerent, and the profound political changes occasioned by defeat. Yet neglect does not mean amnesia, and the German memory of the First World War is so multi-faceted that this chapter can merely outline the main themes and point to areas for further research. It discusses collective memory, political culture and historical scholarship in the period 1918 to 1939, the Second World War, and since 1945.

Admittedly, the term ‘collective memory’ is problematic. The war had a place in the memory of everyone who experienced it, directly or indirectly. But to talk about ‘collective memory’ assumes there is a collective social body with a consciousness and a memory. Especially in the polarized political culture of interwar Germany, we are dealing with plural collectives, divided by class, confession, gender, generation, geography, milieu, and politics.

* I should like to thank Gerhard Hirschfeld for his incisive comments on this chapter.

¹ It is a sign of the recent resurgence of interest that the term ‘*Der Große Krieg*’ has reappeared. Cf. Hinz (2006).

Memory 1918–39

The memory of the war was deeply engrained in German society and culture, especially political culture, after 1918. Although memory of the defeat was repressed in official political culture, war was a constant background presence.²

Historical scholarship on the topic never ceased. Germany's most prestigious historical journal, the *Historische Zeitschrift*, reflected from the start the divisions in political culture. A long article by Moriz Ritter in 1920 on Germany and the outbreak of the war was basically an apologia for the German government and military leadership in 1914, on the basis of the very few (and highly selective) documents published at that early stage.³ Ludendorff's war memoirs were given the honor of a review article in 1920 by Johannes Ziekursch.⁴ Ziekursch took the opportunity of writing a critique not only of Ludendorff's wartime politics, but also of the constitutional weakness of the Bismarckian state which collapsed in 1918. In 1926, the liberal-democratic historian Veit Valentin, who had been forced by Pan-German agitation to give up his Freiburg professorship in 1916, analyzed the history of the armistice of 1918; his study was based on the documents of the Reich Chancellery and the Foreign and Interior Ministries (which he had published in 1924), and the Reichstag investigation commission on the causes of the German collapse in 1918. Given the limitations of the sources, he wrote a remarkably critical account of Germany's military leaders, primarily Ludendorff.⁵ Valentin never regained a position at a German university, a sign that non-conformist research was still unwelcome in academia. A short article by R. P. Oßwald in 1927 attempted a retrospective vindication of the wartime German *Flamenpolitik*, i.e. the policy of encouraging Flemish separatism in order to break up the Belgian state.⁶ In a long review article in 1931 on Austria-Hungary and Serbia and the outbreak of the war Ludwig Bittner concluded that the documentation available to the Habsburg statesmen in July 1914 was completely adequate to justify 'emergency action in line with

² Cf. U. Heinemann (1983). An excellent survey with annotated documents on the traumatic consequences of the war for the Weimar Republic is Ulrich and Ziemann (1997).

³ M. Ritter (1920).

⁴ Ziekursch (1920).

⁵ Valentin (1926).

⁶ Oßwald (1927).

international law'; he found that Austria-Hungary had to defend itself against the Serbian and Russian 'will to annihilate.'⁷

During the 'Third Reich' professional historians maintained an interest in the war. In 1935 Fritz Hartung published an astonishingly critical review article on the legal theoretician Carl Schmitt's book on the collapse of the second Reich, *Staatsgefüge und Zusammenbruch des zweiten Reiches*, which included a large section on the failures of German politics in the world war.⁸ Later that year Ernst Buchfinck wrote an article presenting the dominant military history view of the battle of the Marne in 1914, that General Helmuth von Moltke had failed to apply the true doctrine of the genius Schlieffen.⁹ Erwin Hölzle wrote a lengthy review of Lloyd George's *War Memoirs*, praising the political role of 'the English war dictator,' for it proved that 'only he can win victory who wills victory with the greatest strength: a bitter truth for us, if we think of the history of the war. But a historical truth which is capable of inspiring us.'¹⁰ Clearly, this was future-directed history.

However, the two largest historical projects on the war were conducted outside the universities and scholarly journals. One was the mammoth 'innocentist' campaign financed by the Foreign Ministry to repudiate the Allied charge of German guilt in causing the conflict and committing war crimes during it. This included the production of a journal devoted to the question, *Die Kriegsschuldfrage*, the covert support of German and international historians willing to defend the German case, and the publication of the German diplomatic documents in forty volumes. *Die Kriegsschuldfrage*, to which not only journalists under contract to the Foreign Ministry but also respected historians such as Hans Rothfels and Hans Delbrück contributed articles, appeared from 1923 to 1928, and was continued under a different title until 1944. Most university historians in fact refrained from contributing directly to the 'innocentist' campaign, although the majority were conservative nationalists who rejected the republic and democracy.¹¹ Foreign 'revisionist' (i.e. anti-Versailles) historians such as the Americans Harry Elmer Barnes and Sidney B. Fay were given pride of place in the German campaign; Barnes was invited to tour Germany, and the German Foreign Ministry

⁷ Bittner (1931), p. 104.

⁸ Hartung (1935).

⁹ Buchfinck (1935).

¹⁰ Hölzle (1937).

¹¹ Hirschfeld (2004), p. 4.

bought up a large contingent of Fay's book *The Origins of the World War* to distribute it free to foreign readers. International pacifists, such as the British E. D. Morel and the French Victor Margueritte, were mobilized in support of the thesis of German innocence, the latter secretly receiving no less than 500,000 Reichsmark from the Foreign Ministry.¹² The document publication *Die Große Politik der europäischen Kabinette 1871–1914* (1922–7) was intended to deflect attention away from the events of July 1914 by going back to 1871 and showing how all the main European powers had embarked on policies of imperial expansion, leading to international tensions resulting in war. Many important documents were omitted or heavily edited (most of Kaiser Wilhelm's marginal comments, for example, were suppressed). Despite its obviously instrumental nature, the series nevertheless contained a wealth of diplomatic sources still useful today; moreover, it had the beneficial effect of prompting the other powers to publish their own diplomatic documents.¹³

The other historical project was the official history of the war based on military sources, published in two main series: the first consisted of 14 weighty volumes (plus supplemental volumes on armaments and economic preparations, 1871 to 1914, the railways in 1914, and armaments and the war economy) intended mainly for researchers, and the second was a popular history of the war in 36 volumes, called 'Battles of the World War.'¹⁴ Since the research was carried out by army-approved historians and military staff working in the *Reichsarchiv*, the publications were not surprisingly tendentious and generally uncritical of the army and the Imperial state, except when it came to ascribing blame to the hapless Moltke for allegedly watering down the Schlieffen Plan which would have provided certain victory in 1914. Hindenburg and Ludendorff, by contrast, were beyond all reproach. Despite the one-sided approach, the distortions and suppression of evidence, the

¹² Heinemann (1983), pp. 95–115.

¹³ Heinemann (1983), pp. 78–87. France, Britain, Austria, and Italy all published parallel collections of diplomatic documents, each with its own national bias, and each informing subsequent scholarship and collective memory. A systematic comparison of the diplomatic document publications can be found in S. Zala (2001).

¹⁴ Reichsarchiv, *Der Weltkrieg* (1925–44, 1956); *Schlachten des Weltkrieges* (1921–30). Sales of the official history were around 14,000 per volume; sales of the *Schlachten des Weltkrieges* reached 40,000 to 50,000 per volume. On the official war historiography see Pöhlmann (2002), *passim*, here esp. p. 142. There was also an official history of the naval war, *Der Krieg zur See, 1914–1918* (1920–66).

official historians' monopoly of access to the sources, and the rejection of independent criticism, much of the material presented is still of value to scholars, especially since most of the source material in the *Reichsarchiv* was destroyed in the bombing of Potsdam in 1945.¹⁵

The only critical research was carried out by men like the lawyer Hermann Kantorowicz, who was commissioned by the Reichstag to investigate the causes of the war. When he discovered in the files of the Foreign Ministry the documents showing the responsibility of Germany and Austria-Hungary in unleashing the war, publication of his report was repeatedly delayed and ultimately suppressed. In a letter to Hermann Lutz, another member of the Reichstag investigation committee, Kantorowicz wrote: 'The entire guilt propaganda campaign is nothing but a vast confidence trick played on the people, for the purpose of the moral mobilization for the next war.'¹⁶ The Kantorowicz report was not published until 1967.

Another historical project was the creation of specialist 'war collections.' As early as during the war itself, libraries in the belligerent countries began to make special collections of publications relating to the war, and Germany was no exception. The State Library in Berlin began its '*Kriegssammlung*,' which despite losses suffered in the Second World War is still a useful resource today. The Library of Contemporary History in Stuttgart was started by a Württemberg industrialist in 1915 as a special collection of war publications, posters, iconographic material, and memorabilia. Called the '*Weltkriegsbücherei*' until 1944, it is one of the world's most important libraries for the wars of the twentieth century down to the present. (The parallel collections are the *Bibliothèque de Documentation Internationale Contemporaine* in Paris, the Imperial War Museum, London, and the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace, Stanford.)¹⁷ The '*Weltkriegsbücherei*,' along with the 216 other world war collections which had emerged in Germany by 1917, expressly aimed to reflect the 'war experience' and allow the entire people to participate in the collective. After the war it continued to collect, thanks to the financial commitment of its founder; it not only provided a resource for teachers and serious research, but was also much used by militarist nationalist writers and retired officers; it

¹⁵ Pöhlmann (2002), *passim*, esp. pp. 187–94.

¹⁶ Kantorowicz (1967); Geiss, editor's introduction, *Ibid.* p. 36.

¹⁷ Hirschfeld, 'Vorwort' in Hirschfeld et al. eds (1993).

also saw one of its main tasks as the political campaign against the 'war guilt lie.'¹⁸

'Collective memory' is not shaped only by historical research. Just as important were the memories and memoirs of participants. Primarily that means the narratives of the returned combatants; yet this group of nearly ten million men was by no means uniform. Officers had a different war experience from men; the artillery saw a different war compared with the infantry, not to mention the navy, itself sharply divided between the submarine crews and the surface fleet. A single war experience, such as an artillery bombardment or the storming of a village, could be experienced in as many different ways as the people who were the actors or those affected by it.¹⁹ Prisoners of war had yet another, quite different war experience. Postwar political allegiance and prewar socialization also acted as a prism through which the experience of war was refracted. Socialists tended to be critical of the war, but there were exceptions; some officers (such as General von Deimling) converted after the war to pacifism.

For many members of the public with a literary bent, whether ex-combatants or those of a different generation or gender, the experience of the war was best reflected in the published war letters of fallen students. The most successful and long-lived of the genre was the collection of letters published by Philip Witkop, first in wartime, and republished several times by 1942, with total sales of 200,000. The editions before 1933 were politically ambivalent. The letters did communicate some of the nature of modern industrialized war, and often expressed a loathing for it. But they also reflected the notion of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, the classless front community, and equal sacrifice for the nation. Overt patriotism and hatred of the enemy were conspicuous by their absence; instead there was an often-voiced willingness for self-sacrifice. Witkop's book was supported during the war by the army, and subsidized in the Weimar period by several ministries of education. Yet because of the ambivalence, both pacifists and militarists could praise the 'truth' of the book.²⁰

Before 1933 there was thus no dominant memory of the war. The vast majority of the people were opposed to war, not only in 1919,

¹⁸ G. Hirschfeld (2007), 'Die Stuttgarter "Weltkriegsbücherei," 1915–1944,' unpublished manuscript.

¹⁹ Koselleck (1992), p. 325.

²⁰ Winter (2006), p. 105. More detailed: Hettling and Jeismann (1993).

but long thereafter.²¹ Writing an internal memorandum for the army in 1922, the chief of army command Hans von Seeckt stated: 'It has to be admitted that the spirit which affected the delegation at Versailles has not yet disappeared and that the foolish call, "Never again war!" finds a widespread echo... Certainly, there is in the German people a widespread and explicable desire for peace.'²² Even after the occupation of the Ruhr had led to a nationalist revival in 1923, the fundamental opposition of the majority of people to a remobilization for military expansion or a strengthening of the army still dogged military planners, and it rested on a remembrance of war. General Walther Reinhardt, who had been Prussian Minister of War and Chief of Army Command in the crucial period from January 1919 to March 1920, wrote in the right-wing *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* in January 1927: 'The mass of the weary [i.e. war-weary] among our people is so great, and it likes the sloppy slogan "Never again war"[:] ... parties have to take account of that at election time.'²³

The memory of professional officers was a different matter. There was a flood of memoirs and diaries published after the war, some, like that of Ludendorff, tendentious and mendacious; others, like that of von Einem, informative not only on the war but also on the mentalities of a dying breed, the Prussian noble officer; and some, such as that of Crown Prince Rupprecht von Bayern, revealing, for example, about the high command's loss of a sense of reality and the collapse of the army in 1918.²⁴

The Wehrmacht generals of the Second World War had fought as young staff officers in the First; they had experienced a war commonly interpreted as 'total.' They were especially influenced by the writings of militarists, like Ludendorff, *Der totale Krieg*, 1935, and Ernst Jünger,

²¹ On 1919 see General Groener's conclusion from the deliberations of the various state governments with the Reich government on popular opinion on whether a resumption of the war could be envisaged if the peace treaty were rejected in June 1919: 'A warlike spirit, as is the absolute precondition for military success, elemental national enthusiasm and great sacrificial courage, as are entirely required for a desperate struggle, were not to be found in the entirety of the people, and given the national demoralization [*Verlumpung*] of the people could not be reawakened even by a Hindenburg.' Note of the First Quartermaster-General, Groener, on the days in Weimar, 18 to 20 June 1919, *Akten der Reichskanzlei*, vol. 1 (1971), document 114, p. 490.

²² Michalka and Niedhart (1981), document 76, pp. 143–5.

²³ Cited in Schüddekopf (1955), document 94, pp. 218–20. On Reinhardt see Mulligan (2005).

²⁴ Ludendorff (1919); von Einem (1938); Rupprecht von Bayern (1929).

Die totale Mobilmachung, 1930, who popularized the ideal of total war as the war of the future. There was a strong link of 'memory' (in the form of personal experience and subsequent interpretation) between the young officers' war of 1914–18 and the generals' conduct of the war of racial annihilation from 1939 to 1945. However, a study of 49 commanders of army groups and armies on the Eastern Front, 1941–44, shows that these generals wrote astonishingly little about the First World War in their post-1945 memoirs, dealing with what must have been formative, even traumatic, experiences in a few dry sentences. Yet surviving the war, in which vast numbers of combat officers were casualties, meant experiencing at close hand the death and suffering of comrades and friends. That must have occasioned a shift in perception towards the acceptance of mass death as a necessary condition of war; whether it led, as Michael Geyer has argued, to a 'radical devaluation of the individual,' depended on the culture in which these officers were socialized, for it cannot be said to have happened in all other belligerent nations.²⁵

German warfare in the First World War, without an explicit ideological system such as fascism, groped towards policies of total exploitation of civilian populations at home and across occupied Europe and of prisoners of war. Yet the entire period 1914 to 1920 should be seen as one entity in which for the later Wehrmacht generals some of the elements of fascist warfare were gradually distilled: the acceptance of the necessity of mass death and destruction, ruthless exploitation without moral compunction or human pity, absolute priority for the German military over all else; in short, the expectation and desire for the future 'total war.' The enemies were no longer merely foreign nations, but 'socialists, Jews, Slavs, "*Freischärler*" [civilian irregulars].'²⁶ Of particular importance was the experience of brutal fighting in the Baltic region and the German-Polish borderlands by the Freikorps in 1918–19; the memory of the ethnic enemy and Bolshevism connected back to the memory of the Eastern Front and older images of the Russian invasion of East Prussia in 1914; loathing of the 'dirt,' 'filth,' and 'depravity' of 'the East' combined with fear of Bolshevism and a vision of a '*Raum*'

²⁵ Geyer (1995), p. 679.

²⁶ Hürter (2002), p. 769.

ready for colonial settlement. This profoundly shaped the nationalist and Nazi 'mindscape' of the East in the next war.²⁷

What was to be done with this well of poison during the years of German democracy after 1918? What was to be done to reconcile these conflicting memories of war? The Weimar state made one attempt to commemorate the anniversary of the start of the war, in August 1924. Officially dedicated to the memory of the fallen, the event was intended by its organizers to promote republican loyalty by stressing the bond between all Germans dating back to the (putative) unity of all Germans in August 1914. It was a fiasco. Critics, such as the social democratic Minister of the Interior Carl Severing, warned that there were no nationally agreed symbols, and trying to invent political symbols would only widen the political divisions. In Berlin and other towns across Germany (except in Bavaria, which refused to participate in this republican ceremony) flags, both republican and imperial, were flown at half-mast, there were military parades, and speeches recalled the spirit of the fallen. In Berlin, Dresden, and some other towns, pacifists and communists interrupted proceedings, shouting 'down with war,' and in several towns there was fighting between rival demonstrators.²⁸

Instead, individual events were commemorated, in a selective process that steered well away from disasters like the Marne, the Somme, and Verdun. Thus the victory against Russia at 'Tannenberg' was celebrated from 1919 on, in what became annual political demonstrations against Weimar and Versailles. That defiant celebration of victory climaxed after the election of Hindenburg, the victor in the East, as president in 1925, with the erection of the Tannenberg monument in 1927.²⁹ The naval battle of Jutland was commemorated by the Papen government in June 1932 with a military parade through the Brandenburg Gate, complete with goose-stepping soldiers. Oblivious to the inconclusive nature of the battle, a crowd of people, wild with joy and quasi-religious ecstasy, gave the fascist salute and shouted their approval.³⁰

The memory of the war was increasingly a battleground in the final years of the Weimar Republic. The obsessive campaign waged against the 'war guilt lie' and reparations payments stood for nationalist Germany's refusal to accept the consequences of defeat. Yet that

²⁷ Hirschfeld (2003a). Liulevicius (2000), chapters 5, 7, and 8.

²⁸ Verhey (2000), pp. 207–09.

²⁹ 'Tannenberg-Mythos,' in Hirschfeld (2003b), p. 920.

³⁰ Klemperer (1996), pp. 28–9.

did not obliterate the real memory of the war. Even in 1936, after the Nazi regime had presided over a remarkable economic recovery and had announced German rearmament in defiance of the peace treaty, the remilitarization of the Rhineland prompted many people to express their fear at the prospect of a new war and the repeat of the death and destruction of 1914–18.³¹ Hitler's announcement in his speech to the Reichstag in April 1939 that he had 'attempted to tear up page for page' the Treaty of Versailles and 'given back to the Reich the provinces stolen from us in 1919' was intended to demonstrate that he had successfully resolved the problems of the legacy of the war. He went on to say that he had 'attempted to do all this without spilling blood and without inflicting on my own people or on others the suffering of war': a tacit acknowledgement of the force of the memory of the conflict.³² The public opinion reports gathered by the Security Service (SD) and other state and party organs were unanimous that the Germans were not 'lusting for aggression or enthusiastic for war, but resigned, full of fear of war and the yearning for peace' in the period before September 1939. The Sudeten crisis in autumn 1938 unleashed a veritable 'war psychosis'; the German population wished to have nothing to do with a war, and were depressed at the prospect of war against Britain and France. One such report concluded: "'Under no circumstances war" (*nur keinen Krieg*): this wish was articulated especially pointedly by front soldiers of the World War.'³³ Despite the elaborate propaganda campaign against Poland staged in 1939, the regime failed to mobilize popular opinion for war and the mood at its outbreak was sombre.³⁴

In his memoirs written in exile in Britain in 1939, the political journalist and author Sebastian Haffner (born 1907) touched on an important aspect of memory: generation. He, too, knew the irrational hubris of wild patriotism. He conceded that while he was not directly affected by the war as young boy, or at least not by its violence, he was

³¹ Evans (2005), p. 635.

³² Cited in Kershaw (1998), p. 185.

³³ Cited in Wette (1979), p. 140.

³⁴ The memory of the First World War in popular discourse in Nazi Germany from 1933 to 1939 is a question that awaits research. Wette (1979) does not deal explicitly with memory. The chapter 'Das Erbe des Ersten Weltkrieges' ('The legacy of the First World War') by J. Förster discusses the conclusions drawn from the war by political and military leaders from 1918 to 1939. However, it is not about the memory of the past war, but the tasks for the future: how to achieve 'Wehrhaftmachung,' i.e. the remilitarization of the German people.

totally absorbed by it. Haffner saw the root of Nazism not in the 'front experience,' but in the 'war experience of the German schoolboy [...]. The actual generation of Nazism consists of those born between 1900 and 1910 who experienced the war, quite unaffected by its reality, as a great game.'³⁵ Michael Wildt has shown in his study of the personnel of the *Reichssicherheitshauptamt* (RSHA), the 'Reich Security Main Office,' which planned and directed the genocide of the Jews in the Second World War, that these young intellectuals shared a common biography in having mainly been children too young to have fought in the First World War, but whose political consciousness was formed during it.³⁶

The SS chief Heinrich Himmler, born in 1900, was so keen to fight in the war he left school early to join the army at the start of 1918, but by the end of the war he was still taking officer training courses and saw no action at the front. Reinhard Heydrich, born in 1904, was still at school at the end of the war. He joined the Nazi party and the SS in 1931, and was appointed head of the SS security service, the SD, the forerunner of the RSHA, in 1932.³⁷ Heinz Gräfe, born in 1908, was later to become director of the RSHA Soviet department. As a student activist before 1933 he organized volunteer student work camps in border regions and German minority areas abroad. The work, he wrote in 1932 in words that were redolent of military culture and war, was about showing

willing, active deployment (*tatbereiten Einsatz*), integration into the manly discipline of the camp [...], service in all hardship and ruthlessness, service with all discipline and comradeship [...].³⁸

Many clever, ambitious young men, perhaps precisely because they missed out on the war experience, glamorized war and aspired to be soldierly, hard, and remorseless.³⁹ Yet their view of the war was not directed to the past; it was a vision of the future, in which their 'Germany' and their 'Reich' were a task for the coming elite. The Great Depression, which had a more catastrophic effect on Germany from 1929 to 1933 than on any other nation, confirmed this younger generation's rejection of the bourgeois order and civil society.⁴⁰

³⁵ Haffner (2000), p. 22.

³⁶ Wildt (2002).

³⁷ Wildt (2002), p. 42.

³⁸ Cited in Wildt (2002), p. 136.

³⁹ Cf. Wildt (2002), pp. 41–5.

⁴⁰ Wildt (2002), p. 138.

In summer 1933, seeing where power and opportunity now lay, Gräfe joined the Nazi League of Lawyers, and then the *Stahlhelm* (the nationalist ‘veterans’ association). He wrote to his fiancée: ‘We have reached the point where every young German man who has some self-respect will join a defense association (SA, SS, or Stahlhelm). “Civilians” no longer count for anything.’ By the end of the year he had been recruited by Heydrich into the SD.⁴¹ Heydrich’s organization model was that of the *kämpfende Verwaltung*—the ‘fighting administration’; the SS was a ‘shock-troop of the party.’⁴² It was thus no coincidence that the RSHA, in preparation for the invasion of Poland in summer 1939, formed five commando groups of SS and security policemen to work behind the lines of the army and called them *Einsatzgruppen*, which combined Nazi racial theory with the practice of mass murder.

Politics in the ‘Third Reich’ had become a war machine, designed to combat the internal enemy—political, ideological, and racial. Even the language used by the ‘Third Reich’ was a reminder that violence was at the top of the Nazi agenda. The first word of Nazi language learned by the philologist Victor Klemperer was ‘*Strafexpedition*,’ used by a Nazi acquaintance to describe the severe beating of two factory workers who were communists, shortly after Hitler’s takeover in 1933.⁴³ Klemperer explained that the Nazis had borrowed the word from the Italian Fascists; so they had, but the Fascists had taken it directly from the ‘*Strafexpeditionen*’ of the World War. As from February 1933 the Nazis incarcerated their political enemies in makeshift camps that expressly recalled the prisoner and civilian internment camps of the First World War.⁴⁴ Rearmament commenced simultaneously.

The Second World War

The memory of the previous war had profound effects on the way Germany waged the Second World War. The most salient are sketched here.

⁴¹ Wildt (2002), pp. 158–63.

⁴² Wildt (2002), p. 205.

⁴³ Klemperer (1996), pp. 60–1.

⁴⁴ The term ‘concentration camp’ was in common usage in the First World War. The users of the terms ‘punishment expedition’ and ‘concentration camp’ in the German language were probably oblivious of their origin in colonial warfare before 1914.

1. *Propaganda*. Nazi propaganda policy was based on what Hitler and Goebbels deemed to be the lessons of 1914–18. The Nazis criticized the weakness of German propaganda in the Great War and ascribed demonic power to Allied, especially British, war propaganda in mobilizing the entire world against the innocent and naïve Germans. This time, things would be different. Germany would go on the propaganda offensive and achieve total mobilization of minds. It began in early 1933 with denunciations of the ‘atrocity propaganda of world Jewry.’ The (distorted) memory of the First World War was never far from the minds of the Nazi propagandists, especially Goebbels, as his diaries show.⁴⁵

Even at the height of its power, the Nazi regime was determined to reappropriate the memory of the First World War. In what must have been the greatest wartime historical research project in the world, archivists from the German army archive searched through Belgian and French archives for material relating to the First World War (and a range of other historical subjects), with orders to seize all German records captured by the French, the records of Belgian and French court martial cases against alleged German war criminals, and, in general, documents that would enable Germany to rewrite the history of the war. The Supreme Command of the *Wehrmacht* informed the commander of the German invasion forces on 6 July 1940:

We have the greatest interest in the archives of the Belgian General Staff [...] From them exact proof can perhaps be provided to show that the “German atrocities in Belgium,” which were used at the time to whip up hatred against us in the whole world, had their origin in the Belgian General Staff which incited the Belgian civil population to resist the German invasion [...].⁴⁶

By September 1940 the Military Archive in Potsdam was running out of space: it had received six lorry-loads of documents from Paris, another seven or eight railway wagon-loads were on their way, and Metz was preparing to send two to three wagons. At least 68 volumes of documents of the war history section of the Belgian general staff relating to the First World War were sent.⁴⁷ Almost one thousand bundles of files

⁴⁵ Welch (2002); Reuth (2002).

⁴⁶ Horne and Kramer (2001), p. 404.

⁴⁷ Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv Freiburg, RH 18/v. 242 Aktensammelstelle West. Arbeitshilfsmittel für Aktenauswertung, *passim*.

of the German section in the *Deuxième bureau* of the French General Staff were sent to Berlin in three wagons.⁴⁸

For all their efforts, satisfactory material was never found. Major von Harbou, Chief of Staff of the military commander in Belgium and Northern France, and combat officer in 1914, explained in August 1940 why the mission was unlikely to succeed:

After a few hours [in the first days of the invasion of Belgium in August 1914] every civilian was treated as an enemy. Whoever shot from a house was regarded as a *franc-tireur* [partisan], even if he was a Belgian soldier. Enormous nervousness on our side; and then Germans shot at Germans. I do not think anything good will come out of this matter. It will hardly be possible to find anything to implicate Belgium.⁴⁹

However, the obsessive hunt for material to rewrite history continued throughout the occupation. With the Allies closing in on Paris, as late as 7 August 1944 files concerning the court martialling of German war criminals in absentia during the 1920s were being sent to the German army archives; the archive commission in Paris disbanded the next day. Rather than finding material incriminating Germany's enemies, the result, evidently, was the opposite. In September 1944 the Military Archive adopted the policy of destroying files of material 'which might be deleterious to the interests of the Reich in the event of their return.'⁵⁰

2. *War economy.* A policy of autarky and continental hegemony was intended to avoid the problems of naval blockade. One of the most powerful collective memories of the war was the 'turnip winter' of 1916/17, when the failure of the potato crop and other supply difficulties caused widespread hunger. In the interpretation of the Nazis, the mass hunger (caused solely by the Allied naval blockade) had weakened civilian resolve and led to revolutionary unrest. Hitler had a veritable phobia of a repeat of 1918 and the alleged collapse of the home front, and insisted on a policy to provide adequate food for the civilian population.⁵¹ The regime succeeded, by and large, in keeping the civilian population well fed until the last months of the war through systematic exploitation of occupied Europe.

⁴⁸ Undated paper in BA-MA Freiburg RH 18/v. 243.

⁴⁹ Horne and Kramer (2001), p. 405.

⁵⁰ Undated paper [September 1944] in BA-MA Freiburg RH 18/v. 243.

⁵¹ Mason (1971).

3. *Strategy*. Hitler and the German army learned the lessons of offensive warfare from the First World War and succeeded in combined, all-arms, mechanized, motorized operations (Poland, the West 1940, Barbarossa) which overcame the stagnation of trench warfare: 'lightning warfare' spearheaded by tanks and aircraft to ensure mobility. However, as from 1943 Hitler insisted on repeating the defensive doctrine of 1916: rigid, linear defense of every inch of ground, refusal to allow flexible defense.⁵² In terms of grand strategy German warfare was based on a dysfunctional war economy because of racial ideology and slave labor.

4. *War aims*. In the short term, the war that started in 1939 had a great deal to do with reversing the result of 1918. Not only were there obvious continuities between the territorial war aims of 1914–18 for the creation of a vast German imperium in Europe, and the war aims of Hitler, there were also many other aspects in which the Second World War was fought to revise the result of the First. The fall of France in early summer 1940 was a stunning victory, but no amount of newsreel of Hitler and *Wehrmacht* officers parading before the Eiffel Tower could disguise the fact that so long as Britain and the Soviet Union were unvanquished, the war was not won. Ultimately the war aims of Nazi Germany were limitless, and warfare would have continued until Germany had achieved world domination.⁵³

Yet Hitler's war was both about the memory of the First World War and about moving to a new, radically different style and purpose of warfare. The destruction of Belgrade on 6 April 1941 by a massive air attack in a sudden, undeclared war was not only part of a strategy to keep Yugoslavia and Greece under German control. It was also a case of settling old scores. The bombing of Belgrade was called 'Operation *Strafgericht* (vengeance)': Hitler wished to revise the result of the First World War and eradicate the influence of Serbia in the Balkans. In Nazi propaganda even the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo in 1914 was used to justify the destruction of Belgrade.⁵⁴

There was much more unfinished business from the First World War. The government plans being discussed in 1916 for the expansion of

⁵² Groß (2002).

⁵³ Rich (1973, 1974); Hildebrand (1976); Hauner (1978). On the various grandiose schemes of the Nazi regime for a 'Greater Germanic Empire' in Europe, and the racial New Order, see Umbreit, (1988).

⁵⁴ Vogel (2001), pp. 303–08.

German borders to include Russian-Polish territory, from which the Polish and Jewish population was to be expelled eastward to allow German settlement, were revived. Yet even the most radical ideas among the civil service and military staffs in the First World War did not go beyond 'systematic purchase' of Polish property and a partial, voluntary resettlement.⁵⁵ In September 1939, by contrast, Hitler informed the army of plans for the compulsory resettlement of Poles and Jews from western Poland; the murderous character of the plans was revealed to the army in discussions about '*Flurbereinigung*,' meaning not only ethnic resettlement but also the physical elimination of the Polish intelligentsia, nobility, clergy, and the Jews.⁵⁶

5. *'Anti-partisan' warfare.* The memory of 1914 strongly influenced German warfare at the start of the Second World War. The invasion of Poland was prepared by a crescendo of propaganda, as is well known, alleging Polish atrocities against the German minority, and employing anti-Slav and anti-Semitic stereotypes to stoke hatred of the future enemy. Internal army directives, in addition, warned the troops that the Poles were 'fanatical saboteurs' led by the Catholic clergy; one week before the war one division warned that 'the Pole' by character had a propensity for ambushes and irregular fighting; another warned of 'the *franc-tireur* war, orchestrated by the priests,' and prescribed 'rigorous [...] if necessary ruthless, drastic measures.'⁵⁷ With the exception of the racist terms, all the language could have been lifted straight from the orders issued during the German invasion of France and Belgium in 1914.

From the first day of the invasion, 1 September 1939, thousands of Polish civilians were killed, shot out of hand, burned in their houses, or summarily executed, on suspicion of having resisted. An order was issued to the *SS Leibstandarte* 'Adolf Hitler,' serving in the 8th Army, on 2 September 1939: 'If there is shooting by the population the entire male population capable of bearing arms [is to be] shot.'⁵⁸ Unlike Belgium in 1914, Polish militiamen and civilian volunteers in some places engaged in fighting with ethnic German paramilitaries and participated in defense of their homeland against the invasion. But the language used to justify the killings was just the same as in 1914: '*francs-tireurs*' and '*Freischärler*,' which both mean civilian irregulars. Thus

⁵⁵ Geiss (1985), pp. 110–13.

⁵⁶ Wildt (2002), pp. 452–7.

⁵⁷ Böhler (2006), p. 40. Emphasis in the original.

⁵⁸ Quoted in Böhler (2006), p. 223.

the chief of the *Ordnungspolizei* (security police) Kurt Daluege, ordered a police battalion on 5 September 1939 to restore order in Czeŝochowa by ‘hanging the Polish *francs-tireurs* from the lamp-posts, so that they are visible to the entire population.’⁵⁹ Several hundred civilians were executed by *Einsatzgruppe* IV between 5 and 12 September in Bromberg/Bydgoszcz; again, the accusation was that the victims were guilty of *franc-tireur* fighting.⁶⁰

It should not be thought that the *Einsatzgruppen*, the *Waffen-SS*, and the police battalions were acting alone. The army itself had entered Poland with a violent mix of racist mentalities, criminal orders, nervousness, and the institutional memory of 1914. This explosive potential discharged itself in brutal treatment of civilians and other non-combatants. Although the army did not issue orders as radical as that of the *Waffen-SS* (to shoot all men capable of bearing arms), the differences in wording had little effect in practice. With very few exceptions there was no attempt by commanders to stop the spiralling dynamic of violence in the invasion.⁶¹ In total more than 3,000 Polish soldiers were killed after surrender in September 1939; approximately 12,000 civilians were slaughtered in executions.⁶² This was not merely a numerical increase on August 1914, but represented something new in German warfare: the racist radicalization of policy which was to turn into the most ruthless occupation imaginable, and end with genocide.

Memory after 1945

Although the Second World War and the growing consciousness of Nazi war crimes overshadowed the memory of the First World War, there were certain features of the First that recurred in German culture and memory after 1945. Published memoirs, naturally, included fragments of memory of the First World War. Thus Golo Mann (born 1909), youngest son of the writer Thomas, and himself a widely read popular historian, recalled in his memoirs his family’s rejoicing at each victory and his father’s hero-worship of Hindenburg.⁶³ Richard von Weizsäcker (born 1920), president of the Federal Republic 1984–94, recorded that

⁵⁹ Quoted in Böhler (2006), p. 222.

⁶⁰ Wildt (2002), pp. 432–47.

⁶¹ Wildt (2002), pp. 152–3.

⁶² Böhler (2006), pp. 241–2.

⁶³ Mann (1986), pp. 34–5.

three of his uncles were killed in the war: 'the happiness of countless families had been destroyed.' He recalled that his father often quoted Lloyd George on the origins of the war, that 'we all slithered into the war,' a common shibboleth that went unchallenged in Germany until the early 1960s.⁶⁴

All memory is selective, but the post-1945 German memory of the First World War was particularly lop-sided. A distorted version of the First World War was part of the strategy of the accused and the defense lawyers (among them the young Richard von Weizsäcker) at the Nuremberg International Military Tribunal, 1945–6. In their version of history, Germany had suffered such trauma in the First World War that there was no popular desire for another war; the Allied charge of conspiracy to wage a war of aggression was null and void, for Hitler had concealed his secret plans for war by continually repeating in public his desire for peace. Rather, it was the Allies who were responsible for the rise of Hitler and the Second World War by imposing the 'shameful' Treaty of Versailles which created 'national humiliation' and through its 'senseless and impossible terms' caused the disruption of the world economy.⁶⁵ In many ways, this perception of the war, obsessed with fragments in the form of causes and consequences rather than the war experience, dominated the post-1945 cultural memory of the First World War until the 1980s.⁶⁶

A kind of popular memory also existed, in the form of soldiers' memoirs, now from both world wars, in books and less formal publications. Veterans' associations simply continued the publication of journals and brochures which dated back to the post-1918 period. Even the terms of the discourse were largely unchanged, with the use of clichés like 'the spirit of the front,' 'soldierly virtues,' or the 'unbeaten German army.' However, this was a niche market without broader resonance.⁶⁷

Historical scholarship on the war made a promising start. In his keynote lecture to the first conference of the Association of German Historians (*Deutscher Historikertag*) after the war in September 1949, published in the 1950 issue of the *Historische Zeitschrift*, Gerhard Ritter spoke of the need to internationalize, to send young German historians

⁶⁴ Weizsäcker (1997), pp. 26–31.

⁶⁵ Echternkamp (2002), pp. 643–5.

⁶⁶ Gerd Krumeich noted that it was characteristic of German research hitherto to concentrate on war guilt: Krumeich (1993), p. 16.

⁶⁷ Echternkamp (2002), pp. 648–50.

abroad, to encourage international exchange. He welcomed the fact that the initial isolation of the German historical profession had been rapidly overcome after the Second World War, unlike after the First. He called for responsible, politically free historical scholarship which should overcome the narrowness of a purely national historical perspective. Yet he stood by the achievement of the historical profession of the interwar years: 'The struggle in relation to the so-called "war guilt question"—despite certain exaggerations in apologies—did lead in the end to a world success for the main German arguments.'⁶⁸ On the other hand, Ritter was not uncritical of the obsessive character of the German historical profession in the Weimar period. He wrote that Friedrich Meinecke's *Idee der Staatsräson* (1924)

could have been the start of a new German historiography that finally dropped the 19th-century national-liberal conception of the state and allowed us to take a deep look into the abysses of politics which the 20th century has completely revealed to us. But the book remained without any successors even in Meinecke's own school, because everything remained transfixed by the closest and most pressing needs of the day, above all the research on war guilt and Bismarck. The German historians were still engaged in defending Germany's "just cause" before the world while demonic powers were already emerging from the deep, little noticed by them and for a long time underestimated in their significance, to drag the German people down into a wild maelstrom of extreme hate propaganda, extreme German claims for admiration. This memory should be a warning to us. We no longer live in the world of the nineteenth century. We as political historians need new, more profound insights into the essence of modern society and the modern state in order to interpret our own times historically.⁶⁹

Ritter called for a vast programme of research in contemporary history on the 'Third Reich,' including research in the enormous flood of documents left by the regime, and the documentation produced in the Nuremberg Trials, but also a program of interviews with eyewitnesses. Socio-economic history and global history were essential. Germany and its historians had 'the urgent task of enlightenment through genuine truth to liberate itself from the nightmare of its recent past.'⁷⁰

This was a call for the founding of what was to become the Institute of Contemporary History in Munich. In relation to the history of the

⁶⁸ G. Ritter (1950), p. 16.

⁶⁹ G. Ritter (1950), p. 17.

⁷⁰ G. Ritter (1950), pp. 18–19.

Nazi period, Ritter's call was successful. However, in relation to the First World War the message did not get through. Research stagnated, remaining within the ideological framework of Weimar for the first fifteen years after 1945. The dominating question was still 'war guilt.' Ludwig Dehio published in the *Historische Zeitschrift* in 1952 a theoretical essay reflecting on Germany in the epoch of the world wars. He conceded that Germany's desire for a world empire conflicted with Britain, but added that 'England' responded by organizing the 'encirclement' of Germany; this 'isolated' Germany and forced it to push for continental hegemony!⁷¹ The article was not really about the wars, of course, but a lament on Germany's lack of political realism, written in the tradition of idealism.

Ritter's own article five years later, on the 'problem of militarism in Germany,' shows that he was not going to follow his own prescription to open up his approach by using innovative methodology or internationalizing. It was a pilot study for his four-volume history of militarism in Germany.⁷² The article briefly examined the two wars of the twentieth century in the light of his apologetic theses. Thus in 1914 there was little desire in the German general staff to launch a preventive war, unlike the Austro-Hungarian general staff. Moltke was no militarist, but a captive of the iron law of military mobilization. Political rule had 'lost its leadership over the ambition and the political passions of the peoples.' If Germany had not breached Belgian neutrality, the British army would have done so. Germany was no different to the other nations in its 'militarism,' i.e. the bellicosity and hatred among the masses, although Germany went further than other nations in allowing militarists like Ludendorff to gain so much political power. On the other hand, he argued, Germany's enemies pursued 'nothing other than a radical will to annihilate in the style of "total war."'⁷³ In other words, this was a reversion to the apologias of the 1920s, and anything but a new departure.

Perhaps this phase of historical scholarship is best understood as a struggle for the honor of the German nation. Very little could be salvaged from the history of Germany in the Second World War to defend its honor (the exception, symbolically, being the military con-

⁷¹ Dehio (1952), pp. 77–94.

⁷² G. Ritter (1964).

⁷³ G. Ritter (1954), pp. 42–4.

spiracy against Hitler in 1944 which was privileged over all other forms of resistance); but at least the honor of imperial Germany remained intact.

The only work of historical revisionism on the First World War was not by a historian, but a geographer: Peter Schöller, who published a systematic demolition of the official German case that Belgian *francs-tireurs* were to blame for the fighting in Louvain in August 1914 that led to the destruction of much of the city. He showed how German troops had in panic fired on each other, assumed that *francs-tireurs* were firing, and deliberately killed unarmed civilians. The government subsequently manipulated evidence in wartime publications to exonerate the army.⁷⁴ The short book was well received by most of the historical profession; the chancellor of the day, Konrad Adenauer, the Foreign Minister, and the Federal President all congratulated Schöller. True, there were furious denunciations from veterans' associations and some former soldiers, but the German press and radio response was almost entirely benevolent. Schöller's study was intended to be one of a series written by historians on the other major atrocity incidents of 1914, but significantly, all the historians pulled out of the project.⁷⁵

In 1957 the first articles began to appear on the Second World War, and scholarship on the First World War might well have drifted into a complacent slumber if Fritz Fischer had not presented his pathbreaking arguments about German war aims in the 1959 issue of the *Historische Zeitschrift*.⁷⁶ He began by quoting from a recently published history handbook by military historian Walther Hubatsch: 'The history of the years 1914–18 has been better researched than almost any other epoch. The historian stands everywhere on firm ground.'⁷⁷ Fischer gave the academic equivalent of the retort 'nonsense!':

Such a claim is all the more surprising since the archives of the Entente powers for this period are not open and the central German documents have only been accessible for a few years and have by no means been exhaustively studied.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ Schöller (1958).

⁷⁵ Horne and Kramer (2001), pp. 413–16. We can only speculate on why the historical profession failed to complete the project at the time; research in the personal papers of historians such as Hans Rothfels, Werner Conze, and Franz Petri might produce answers.

⁷⁶ Herzfeld (1956); Wagner (1957).

⁷⁷ Hubatsch (1955), p. 2.

⁷⁸ Fischer (1959), p. 249.

His arguments, developed at length in his book two years later, were that the German government had planned and pushed for war, that the war aims elaborated during the war indicated pre-existing intentions for imperialist expansion in Europe and overseas for Germany to attain world power status; and he suggested that there was a continuity of war aims from Imperial Germany to Nazi war aims in the Second World War. This came as a bombshell to the conservative, nationalist historical profession. Fischer's article prompted a reply by Hans Herzfeld, who doubted whether government documents were sufficient to throw light on the war aims debate, to which Fischer replied in the same issue.⁷⁹ Practically the entire German historical profession rejected Fischer's arguments, and at first he was isolated. Ritter published an inflammatory article in the *Historische Zeitschrift* (as well as several newspaper articles) accusing Fischer of having produced 'a new war guilt thesis.' The book represented a 'self-obfuscation of German historical consciousness' which would be no less fateful than the extreme patriotism of the Nazi era. He was, he concluded, deeply saddened by it, and greatly concerned for the coming generation.⁸⁰ The controversy reached public view with the publication of Fischer's book *Griff nach der Weltmacht* in 1961, with the debate that year at the *Historikertag*, the biennial conference of German historians, and with the Federal German Foreign Ministry's attempt to prevent Fischer from going on a lecture tour to the United States.⁸¹ Fischer was the recipient of hate mail and so many abusive telephone calls that he had to take his telephone number ex-directory.⁸² Yet it is worth recalling that although the First World War was now a *cause célèbre*, the issue was not the war as such, but German war aims and the origins of the war.

In 1960 the old debate about the battle of the Marne was briefly revived. Gotthart Jäschke argued once again that Moltke had fatally weakened the Schlieffen plan which had offered the best chance for victory. The fact that Jäschke wrote on a much broader basis of published memoirs and official war histories, including French and British contributions, than previous authors, cannot disguise the fact that this

⁷⁹ Herzfeld (1960); Fischer (1960).

⁸⁰ G. Ritter (1962) esp. pp. 667–8. Fritz Fischer responded to his critics in 1964: Fischer (1964). The bulk of the article is devoted to themes in prewar politics in anticipation of his book of 1969, *Krieg der Illusionen*.

⁸¹ Fischer (1961). The ministry instructed the Goethe Institute to withdraw the travel funding; Fischer's tour went ahead at the invitation of American universities.

⁸² F. Fischer in conversation with the author, 25 November 1991.

was barren in terms of methodology and questions. Although the article referred to the soldiers' experience of the superiority of the French artillery and recognized the importance of the British counter-attack in crossing the Marne and prompting Bülow's retreat, this was not transnational history: the perspective remained firmly on one side of the battlefield.⁸³

In an article in 1961 Gerhard Ritter cast the blame for the decision for war in 1914 on the German military, and absolved the civilian government of Bethmann Hollweg of responsibility. Bethmann's 'honest desire for peace' could not be doubted, but the political leaders allowed themselves to be usurped by the military which believed in the 'technical inevitabilities of modern warfare.' Ritter constructed a counterfactual speculation in which Germany might have escaped the international moral condemnation for the war ('which we have still not cast off') by not invading France and Belgium, but remaining on the defensive, and insisting on Austria-Hungary accepting negotiations. This was not only wishful thinking in ignorance of the German pressure on Vienna to go to war; it also amounted to a recipe for a war in which Germany would emerge as victor with its moral reputation intact.⁸⁴

Like his four-part history of militarism, *Sword and Sceptre*, Ritter's article reads like a critique of Fischer and a defense of the German imperial government; it was not criticizing the decision to go to war as such, merely the undiplomatic way it was done. In the third volume of his book, published in 1964 after he had had the opportunity to see the archive documents used by Fritz Fischer, Ritter stubbornly insisted that German policy in July 1914 was 'in principle defensive in nature, not aggressive.'⁸⁵

If Ritter, a historian of the older generation who had personally experienced the conflict and was still 'deeply dejected' by reflecting on the decision to go to war, showed how deeply the cultural trauma of German responsibility for war still affected him, Klaus Schwabe, a young historian who had completed his doctorate with Ritter at Freiburg in 1958, could be more dispassionate. His article, also published in 1961, is characterized by a refreshingly sceptical distance from the assumptions of the German professoriate who in their majority participated

⁸³ Jäschke (1960).

⁸⁴ G. Ritter (1961), p. 91.

⁸⁵ Cited in Schieder (1969), p. 14. On Ritter see C. Cornelißen, *Gerhard Ritter: Geschichtswissenschaft und Politik im 20. Jahrhundert* (Düsseldorf: 2001).

in the uncritical and chauvinist war enthusiasm in the early months of war, and went on to demand wide-ranging annexations of territory in Europe in order to establish German hegemony on the continent and world power status. Schwabe also made careful distinctions, showing how some academics, such as Lehmann, Troeltsch, Weber, and to some extent Delbrück, retained a sense of proportion and rational judgement, rejecting annexation demands. Other professors, however, demanded the removal of Russia from Europe and the creation of vassal states in eastern Europe, their indigenous populations to be expelled to allow German colonial settlement.⁸⁶

An article by Fritz Dickmann on the 'war guilt question at the Paris Peace Conference' in 1963, concluded among other things that the Versailles clauses on war criminals were seriously defective:

The serious flaws of the procedure decided in Versailles against the supposed or real war criminals and the one-sided claim of guilt are indeed obvious, and partly they have been repeated after the Second World War. If one measures the Versailles guilty verdict by the standard it sets, the judgement from the legal point of view must be devastating: the incredible carelessness in the taking of evidence, the trial that defies all sense of justice by not even hearing the accused and withholding the evidence from him, refusing his presentation of evidence and finally the extortion of a confession of guilt by force. Then there is the pretension to be not only prosecutor but also judge, amidst the intoxication of victory after a war waged with such anger!⁸⁷

Dickmann concluded that the Allies were mistaken in believing in 1919 they could anticipate the judgement of history, for no one could know 'where are cause and effect' and 'how to determine the degrees of guilt and responsibility.'⁸⁸ Yet this furious attempt to fight against the 'innocentist' campaign of the 1920s to defeat Fischer was too thin in historical research to have much chance of success. Even an article by another of Fischer's opponents, Egmont Zechlin, on 'Germany between cabinet warfare and economic warfare,' did not tackle the Fischer thesis directly. It remained on the level of government activity and policy, and treated neither economic warfare in terms of exploitation of production

⁸⁶ Schwabe (1961), pp. 606–12. Schwabe's PhD was published in 1969 as *Wissenschaft und Kriegsmoral. Die deutschen Hochschullehrer und die politischen Grundfragen des Ersten Weltkrieges* (Göttingen: 1969).

⁸⁷ Dickmann (1963), p. 95.

⁸⁸ Dickmann (1963), p. 99.

and resources, nor the military aspects of the war, even when dealing with a topic such as ‘prevention of the French popular war.’⁸⁹

Within a few years, a remarkable shift took place, in which most younger historians engaged constructively with Fischer’s arguments. Wolfgang Schieder wrote in 1969: ‘Who today would be contented with the soothing and apparently so plausible declaration of Lloyd George that the Great Powers jointly “slithered” into the Great War?’⁹⁰ No serious historians would be, but in 1984 an official book on the history of the First World War published by the Federal Defense Ministry explained the outbreak of the war by attributing it to causes such as the ‘Great Serbian idea,’ ‘Pan-Slavism and Russian expansionist aims on the Balkans,’ and the French desire to ‘re-establish the European position lost in 1870.’ Russian mobilization and the alliance with France had compelled Germany and Austria to respond with their own mobilizations; Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg neither expected nor desired war, and the German army had not prepared for war. The Kaiser’s speech on 4 August containing the words ‘We are not driven by the lust for conquest’ is quoted without critical comment. The book ends with a condemnation of the Allied accusation of the ‘sole war guilt of Germany and Austria-Hungary’ and of ‘the Versailles system’ which failed to lay the basis for mutual trust between nations. Although the ‘stab-in-the-back’ legend is not explicitly revived, the source of the ‘agitation’ which caused the civil unrest and revolutionary uprisings is traced to the Russian embassy in Berlin. In other words, despite all the advances made in the twenty-odd years after the Fischer controversy, the Federal Republic’s army, which every year conscripted the majority of young men, was still being educated in a national-conservative web of myths. The author was none other than Hubatsch.⁹¹

Even at the time this was a thoroughly outdated approach. Modern, critical scholarly histories had begun to appear in the wake of Fischer, such as Schieder’s book referred to above. Jürgen Kocka’s book of 1973 on German society in the war explained the importance of the great divisions in living standards and working conditions between industrial

⁸⁹ Zechlin (1964), pp. 376–81.

⁹⁰ Schieder (1969), p. 12.

⁹¹ Hubatsch (1984).

workers and the elites.⁹² The same year Gerd Hardach published a comparative economic history of the war which is still a standard work.⁹³

The shadow cast by the Second World War has lifted somewhat since the late 1980s. Strictly speaking, of course, the recent attention devoted to the First World War is not ‘memory,’ or even ‘collective memory,’ because so few adult witnesses of 1914–18 have survived into the last decade of the twentieth and the first decade of the twenty-first century. Increasingly it is seen from the distance of almost a century as the first part of a ‘Second Thirty Years War’; the rise of Nazism and the Second World War are now explained not only by reference to the crisis of democracy in the Weimar Republic (1918 to 1933), but also to the trauma of the First World War.⁹⁴

Simultaneously with the revival of interest in the First World War, there has been a turn towards new questions and methodologies: cultural history, the history of experience (especially of soldiers), and the history of mentalities. German scholarship has been rapidly catching up on the lead of France, the USA, and Britain in the ‘new history of warfare,’ which was pioneered by books such as Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975), John Keegan, *The Face of Battle* (1976), and Jean-Jacques Becker, *1914. Comment les Français sont entrés dans la guerre* (1976). The first fruits of the revival were visible before the end of the Cold War.⁹⁵ Gunther Mai combined a perceptive analysis of high politics with culture and mentalities in his book on the end of the empire.⁹⁶ In 1989 Peter Knoch published a book on everyday life in the war, based on soldiers’ letters.⁹⁷ Ute Daniel’s book of the same year on working class women remains the standard study.⁹⁸ Emulating (but not acknowledging) French and British pioneers of the genre, Wolfram Wette published a collection of essays in 1992 on ‘The War of the Little Man,’ which included five contributions on the First World War.⁹⁹ In the

⁹² Kocka (1973).

⁹³ Hardach (1973).

⁹⁴ Wehler (1995), p. 1168; idem. (2003), p. XIX and p. 985.

⁹⁵ Cf. J. Winter and A. Prost (2005), pp. 26–7, who attribute it, wrongly in my opinion, to the collapse of the Marxist paradigm after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

⁹⁶ Mai (1987).

⁹⁷ Knoch (1989).

⁹⁸ Daniel (1989).

⁹⁹ Wette (1992).

1990s pioneering research on the soldiers' experience appeared, with notable examples by Benjamin Ziemann and Bernd Ulrich.¹⁰⁰

Above all, Gerhard Hirschfeld and Gerd Krumeich have published and stimulated others to publish a stream of books and articles since the early 1990s which have made an impact not only on historical scholarship but also on the public perception of the war. Too numerous to list here, their work is best summed up in the encyclopedia of the First World War which they published in 2003.¹⁰¹ Their approach to the 'new history of the war' was manifest in the major exhibition held in the center of Berlin at the German Historical Museum in 2004, as well as in the sudden stream of articles in the high-circulation weekly *Der Spiegel* and frequent broadcasts on radio and television in that anniversary year.¹⁰²

The recent advances in the historiography of the First World War and its sharper public profile have something to do with generational change. They have taken place partly at least because its historians have not experienced either the First or the Second World War; partly also because they are far more closely integrated in international networks of scholarly exchange than their predecessors; and while they are not lacking in passion or commitment, they have liberated themselves from the prison of the obsessive ideological debates and national constraints of the past.

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¹⁰⁰ Ziemann (1997); Ulrich (1997).

¹⁰¹ Hirschfeld et al. eds. (2003b).

¹⁰² Exhibition catalog: Rother (2004).

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CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE FIRST WORLD WAR IN CONTEMPORARY BRITISH POPULAR CULTURE*

Dan Todman

Faced with the terrifying maelstrom of the Western Front, with apocalyptic artillery barrages and seemingly endless battles of attrition, it was natural enough for the soldiers of the First World War to consider their place in history and the war's effect on subsequent generations. If one reaction was traumatized pessimism, another was resigned humor. In 1917, a British medical officer recorded his reactions to a music hall show put on for the troops:

It is a kind of divisional follies, but none the less good for all that. A sort of Panto, all done by men who have been over the top, or at least done front line work... The plot is laid in 1967, and is really awfully clever. War still progressing, and the men's grandsons were rolling up. Leave only granted once in 21 years.¹

The idea that the war would resonate down the ages was clearly present at the time. It is hard to believe, however, that this 1917 audience would have predicted the march across the battlefield of the Somme in 2006 by a party of living historians dressed as members of the British Expeditionary Force, several of whom were seeking relatives' names on the Thiepval monument to the missing of the battle of the Somme. This march was just one of a number of activities and diversions arranged to mark the ninetieth anniversary of the battle. Around the battlefield itself, this included commemoration ceremonies, a cycle tour and a marathon. The wider commemorative effort in Britain included television documentaries, exhibitions at national and local museums

* I am grateful to Dr Jenny Macleod and Mr Jack McGowan for their comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

¹ Quoted Ellis (1977), p. 145. For a different version of war and generations see the poem 'Song-Books of the War,' written in July 1918, in Sassoon (1983), p. 126.

and on the World Wide Web, and theatrical performances, all of which received extensive coverage from the news media.²

As this attention illustrated, the First World War remains a key reference point in contemporary British culture. Its public visibility is perhaps more intermittent than in the period around the fiftieth anniversaries when so many of the texts central to its modern mythology were constructed, but actual participation in commemorative events such as the two minutes silence on 11 November has increased rather than fallen in the last ten years. The ninetieth anniversary of the Somme received more extensive newspaper coverage than its predecessor ten years earlier.³ This does not seem to be a war that is fading away.

Most Britons share a set of received beliefs about the First World War—that it was a muddy, horrific, futile disaster in which a generation of young heroes was senselessly sacrificed by its foolish elders. These beliefs are so strong that they can survive almost any amount of exposure to different historical interpretations, internal contradictions and partial alteration. It is quite possible, for example, for individuals to celebrate their ancestors' achievements whilst at the same time believing that the war was without purpose. The idea of the First World War as a victory is still foreign to most Britons: according to the title of a recent BBC Radio 4 series, it is one of those 'Things We Forgot to Remember.'

This view plainly reflects much of the pain and horror felt at the time in reaction to Britain's only experience of taking, briefly, the principal role in a land battle between major powers. Yet reducing the war to a few images of useless mud and pain simplifies the variety and complexity of contemporary responses. The war also meant, to different people at different times, comradeship, shared purpose, triumph and survival as well as death, horror and futility.

How and why the modern version of the war emerged—by no means inevitably—in the eighty-five years after 1914 was the subject of my 2005 book, *The Great War: Myth and Memory*.⁴ This chapter will take the arguments developed there and apply them to representations of the war produced since 2000, in the process testing the hypotheses put forward about the probable future of remembrance.

² For lists of events see Osprey (2006); Department of the Somme (2006).

³ Todman (2006a).

⁴ Todman (2005).

The Great War: Myth and Memory closed with five arguments. First, it was suggested that, contrary to some previous interpretations which had emphasized dramatic changes in popular opinion around 1930 and 1964, it was preferable to understand the modern mythology of the war in terms of continuity. Myths of the war were distortions, rather than fabrications: they did not pause but underwent a process of continual change which became more obvious at certain points. Secondly, the key change was not the abandonment of a 'true' interpretation of the war, held in 1918 and somehow lost upon the way, but rather the process by which the multitude of different versions sustainable whilst the war was being fought were adapted or abandoned so that a single, coherent version became dominant. It was only over time that the 'myriad faces of war' were reduced to the horrified scowl which confronts Britons today. A key part of this process was the way in which what had once been opinions could, when repeated without opposition, develop the status of fact.

Third, it was suggested that three factors influenced this change from polyphony to a single voice. One was the social, cultural and political context within which representations of the war were produced and consumed. This included the radicalism which helped shape, for example, the 1963 Theatre Workshop production *Oh What a Lovely War*, but also the deeper social context including changing demography. The dying out of key generations, including the parents of those who fought and the veterans themselves, had a significant effect on popular mythology. Another factor influencing the shift towards a single dominant version of the war was simply human behavior and chance. What might appear like part of a deliberate political agenda to distort the representation of the war could in fact be the result of inexperience, laziness or greed. The eventual format of the 1964 BBC television series *The Great War*, for example, owed a good deal to the fact that its main producer was a brilliant pioneer, pushing the boundaries of his field but leaving himself far too little time to live up to his own standards.⁵ A final factor was the use to which different myths could be put. Embodying as it did many of the tensions of the modern world and modern conflict, specific versions of the First World War were more or less useful to the British at different times. Particularly during the latter half of the Second World War, a set of strongly negative myths were a useful opposition against

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 29–36.

which to contrast behavior and expectations. Myths which emphasized patriotism, pride and victory were less useful to subsequent generations than they had been to veterans, and as the latter died off, the few who remained became increasingly likely to adapt their own narratives to the prevailing social context.

The fourth point made in the conclusion to *The Great War: Myth and Memory* was that five generations of Britons had been involved in representing the war down to the present day: the parents of combatants, those who served, their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. This last generation had, it was suggested, a reduced emotional connection to the war. Separated not only from those who had fought, but also, increasingly from those who even remembered them, this was a generation where the fierce sense of familial possession and passion for the war might die out. Although the great-grandchildren of the generation which served during the war retained sufficient background knowledge to laugh over *Blackadder Goes Forth* or weep over *Birdsong* they might not feel the war had sufficient relevance to return obsessively to it in the way their predecessors had. Their behavior and attitudes seemed to represent the final stage of remembrance—seemingly stable in its mythology but gradually deteriorating in frequency of reference—a chronic state which would eventually see the British able to abandon the war and its dead. Fifthly and finally, following on from this point, it was argued that distinctive features about the war might extend its shelf-life. These were threefold: the scale of effort the war required from Britain, ensuring that almost every family might have a point of personal reference; the bureaucratic bookkeeping which made those reference points more easily locatable; and the first shoots of consumer affluence which meant that soldiers created artefacts which were retained by families. It was suggested that taken together, these features would help to preserve an emotional connection to the war and thus prolong its place in British popular culture.⁶

How should these conclusions be regarded and developed in the light of developments since the start of the twenty-first century? What was overlooked in that conclusion? And what predictions should we make now with regard to the ways the British will remember the war in 2014–18?

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 221–30.

Unsurprisingly, given the brief time period under consideration, the representation of the war since 2000 demonstrates a number of continuities with what had gone before, in terms of both form and content. We might identify three themes which have remained important: 'Eyewitnesses'—the value placed on testimony from those who fought; 'Fallen Heroes'—the sanctification of all those who served and died (which now includes almost all veterans); and 'Home Towns'—a strong local element to war service and remembrance.

For all that the traumatized silence of Great War veterans has become a popular trope, our image of what the First World War was like has always depended on the willingness of some participants to recall and share their experiences. Initially, these eyewitnesses mostly rehearsed their memories in print, although even during the war a number of sound recordings of veterans discussing life in the trenches were released. The 1964 BBC television series *The Great War* was the first to integrate film of veterans remembering important events with archive footage and authoritative narration. It set the format for many subsequent documentaries.⁷ Alongside this, a number of authors from the 1970s on created works of popular history on the war based on veterans' reminiscences.⁸ The idea that veterans hold a particularly accurate view of war which conveys experience more effectively than other sources remains central to many representations. As the number of veterans grew smaller, the mystique around them grew stronger. The sheer existence of men so old lends their words an air of authority, and their evident scarcity has increased the value attached to their testimony. Collections of veterans' memories remain incredibly popular, as demonstrated by the bestseller status of Max Arthur's book *Forgotten Voices of the Great War*. Most readers are unaware that Arthur's book was initially assembled from transcripts from the interviews carried out for *The Great War* in the 1960s, often with inveterate 'rememberers' of the war such as Charles Carrington and Edmund Blunden, and as such consists of voices which have been all too audible. 'Forgotten Voices' has now become a brand of considerable strength, with volumes devoted to various aspects of both world wars, which suggests a cultural trend that extends beyond the representation of 1914–18.⁹

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 199.

⁸ Simkins (1991).

⁹ Arthur (2002); Todman (2005), pp. 211–12.

As the supply of veterans has come close to exhaustion, those who remain have attracted celebrity status, wheeled out on each anniversary to lend their experiential status to commemorations, books and documentaries. The scarcity of veterans has itself become a matter of interest, with an effort to gather the memories of the 'last Tommies.' Whether this counts as celebration or exploitation is sometimes hard to tell. What is definitely missing is any sense of analytical assessment of either process or product in these cases. Even if, despite having listened to ninety years worth of discussion about what the First World War was like and what it meant, these men have retained their own version, we might question whether individual experiences without any indication of the context in which they occurred are useful historical sources. In fact, confronted by veterans' testimony, both critics and audiences surrender their faculties in awe at these men's survival. Indeed, the degree to which the language associated with military service has remained unchanged is striking. As the BBC's Web site feature on the 'Last Tommy' states: 'Sadly some of these survivors—all over one hundred years old—have since passed on, but the story of their generation's sacrifice will endure forever.'¹⁰

So great is the expectation that veterans will appear that even those who have no direct link to the event being commemorated are encouraged to attend. The centrality to the 2006 remembrance ceremony at Thiepval of Henry Allingham—Britain's oldest man and the only survivor of the war to make it to the Somme—was based much more on his personification of the elderly veteran than on any particular relevance of his experiences to the anniversary in question. Allingham served in the Royal Naval Air Service, and recovered airplanes from the Somme battlefield in 1918, but he was not present at the battle in 1916. He seems to have seen himself as a mourner rather than a returning participant. He was reported as saying: 'I'm not here for myself, I'm here for the boys who did so much more than me, who never came home. If I hadn't come to the Somme today then I wouldn't have been showing them the respect they deserve, and so I had no choice. I had to be here.' Most newspaper reporting of the ceremony in fact pointed out that Allingham was not a veteran of the Somme. Nevertheless, the image of the Prince of Wales paying his respects to Allingham was

¹⁰ BBC (2006).

central to the presentation of this story: in visual terms, Allingham represented a vanished generation.¹¹

The rhetoric associated with veterans emphasizes the heroism and sacrifice of individuals in a manner seemingly at odds with the war's popular reputation as a futile, mistaken, misfought conflict. It also avoids the uncomfortable implications of a mass army sustained, from 1916, by conscription. An army of five and a half million drawn from across the country contained, by definition, a fair number of cowards and criminals. Military experience was hugely varied and often did not involve combat. For most men, that experience—whatever else it was—was not ennobling at the time. Yet ninety years later their participation and survival has turned these men into saints and heroes in popular culture. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the continued celebration of family members who fought and fell during the war.

Given the scale of participation, and the bureaucratic, educational and social developments of the early twentieth century, it is not surprising that so many Britons retain a mythology of family involvement in the First World War. In previous generations, this link was one of personal knowledge of a parent or grandparent. As we move into the new millennium, this is being replaced by second hand information, passed on by older family members and perhaps backed up with personal research. The continuing boom in family history, encouraged by television celebrations such as the BBC's series *Who Do You Think You Are?*, often leads modern Britons back via a relative who served in the First World War to still earlier generations. Researching the stories of these men—in the service records that have survived, in local archives or in Flanders cemeteries—remains a popular activity.

If no man is a hero to his valet, then it also seems that no man is anything but a hero to his descendants. For the rhetoric in which these family connections are expressed frequently reiterates that soldiers were 'heroes all.' This is the case even where there is abundant evidence to the contrary. Those who campaigned for pardons for soldiers shot at dawn often sought to derive moral force from their personal connection to the executed. Their belief that their ancestors were wrongfully convicted derives at least as much from a refusal to accept even the possibility that they were cowards as from the argument that the legal process was flawed, although in most cases the latter would actually

¹¹ *Guardian* (2006); *Daily Telegraph* (2006).

have more force. To take the most celebrated case, there seems little doubt that in contemporary military legal terms Private Harry Farr was guilty of cowardice on the night of 17 September 1916, the offence for which he was shot. To argue otherwise is to allow—quite understandably—family loyalty to overcome ample evidence.¹² Whether he was dealt with appropriately or humanely by those around him is perhaps more open to debate.¹³ The relatives who claim that their men were, nonetheless, heroes, are not exceptional. Instead, they are typical of the manner in which subsequent generations have come to glorify the dead for their participation.

Family connections are also a central means by which modern Britons attempt to exert authority over the war. The frequency with which books on the war, both fiction and non-fiction, are dedicated to relatives who fought is noteworthy. In the House of Lords debate on the amendment to the Armed Forces Bill which might grant a pardon to the executed men, six out of thirteen Lords who spoke validated their point of view based on their fathers' or grandfathers' experiences.¹⁴ The degree to which Britons will justify individual interpretations of the war on the basis of a familial link—as if an understanding of the war was vouchsafed to all participants and has been passed down through families—is astonishing.

The means of uncovering the familial past, and the modes of behavior to adopt whilst so doing, are represented so frequently in British popular culture that new arrivals to the field have a strong model about how to behave. *Who Do You Think You Are?* is explicitly intended to encourage family history by offering examples of how it should be done. Sebastian Faulks' novel, *Birdsong*, which has sold well over a million and a half copies and is on the examination board Advanced Qualification Authority's list of A-level set texts, features an idealized story of family discovery and emotional catharsis. Both support empathy—without any sense of context or historical change—as an appropriate response. Both provide a sentimental model with which to contemplate the challenges faced by our forebears. In fact, all too often a learned lachrymosity inhibits any attempt to understand what actually took place. Some visitors believe that they have established a stronger link to the past by

¹² Moss (2006).

¹³ Wessely (2006).

¹⁴ House of Lords (2006).

offering their sobs: in fact, they have usually re-embedded themselves more firmly in the culture and behavior of the present.

If the individualization of war is one key vector for British relationships to 1914–1918, an emphasis on local identity is another. The British war experience was in many ways a local one: in the raising of troops, the nature of voluntary effort and the pattern of memorialization. Despite, or more likely because of, population movements since 1918, the local level of participation has remained important to remembrance in the twenty-first century. It is striking how many local museums held exhibitions to mark the ninetieth anniversary of the Somme. Some of the ‘Pals’ battalions which suffered so grievously on 1 July remain the subject of considerable civic pride, particularly where the units have subsequently been celebrated, as in Accrington.¹⁵ The near universal presence of war memorials has helped to preserve a linkage of place and participation which can be exploited by schools, churches and councils to encourage participation in remembrance, even where familial links have disappeared. The celebration of local involvement seems to be particularly strong among the unionist community in Northern Ireland, where the war holds, of course, a cultural place somewhat distinct from that elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

These three points suggest a fourth continuity: an unwillingness to confront the nature of total war. A desire to render it in terms of individual sacrifice or local participation often serves to obscure rather than elucidate its scale and the difficulties of a conflict in which productive potential, accounting, management and attrition in its broadest sense were all crucial factors in deciding victory or defeat. The continued focus on the quality of British generalship—usually assessed in classical terms, so that Haig can be judged against Alexander—is symptomatic of the same trend.¹⁶ It might be suggested that the shift of both moral and representational paradigms necessary to comprehend the war in these ways has simply proved too challenging for British culture in the longer term.

In contrast to these continuities, it is possible to point to one novelty—or perhaps, better, one new emphasis. Since the turn of the twenty-first century, commemoration of the First World War has increasingly involved reconstructions and re-enactment, in which participants

¹⁵ Hyndburn County Council (2006).

¹⁶ Todman (2005), pp. 73–120.

sometimes dress in period costume, visit or live in carefully constructed trenches and even cower from mud thrown up by concealed fireworks. The 2001 BBC TV series *The Trench* put forty-one modern volunteers through a Great War program of drill before sending them out to France to live in and out of a replica front line for three weeks. Events during that period were based on the experiences in October 1916 of the 10th Battalion East Yorkshire Regiment (The Hull Pals), and the modern participants all came from Hull or the East Riding. A laudable aim of this undertaking was to widen audience understanding of the factors affecting infantrymen in the First World War beyond mud and rats.¹⁷ This effort was, however, undermined by BBC advertising and newspaper reaction which emphasized the reality television aspect of the project ('Big Brother in a Trench' as several critics described it).

The unease which the concept of recreating even part of the 'trench experience' evoked for some Britons has lessened in the past five years. The march undertaken by a group of re-enactors, relatives and historians to commemorate the Somme in summer 2006 does not seem to have aroused the same suspicions of profanity. This may have been because of the care taken to highlight that the aim was understanding and commemoration, rather than impersonation. That the emphasis was on marching rather than on the trenches—the preparation for the Somme rather than combat—may also have helped. One participant, however, has talked of his discomfort at the enthusiasm with which some re-enactors took the opportunity to pretend to loose off 'five rounds rapid' over the top of surviving trenches.¹⁸ In two events in August and September of 2006, English Heritage gave visitors to Old Sarum in Wiltshire and Scarborough Castle in Yorkshire the opportunity to meet re-enactors in the guise of First World War soldiers. The former event included a recreation of the front line, and promised visitors a chance to step back in time: 'After a briefing in the relative safety of a darkened 'dugout' behind the front line, we are led through the flooded, smoke-filled trenches for a hands-on, personal insight into the realities of the Great War.'¹⁹

Re-enactment itself is not new. In both America and Britain, the amateur re-enactment of historic battles has been a minority hobby

¹⁷ Van Emden (2003), pp. 9–22.

¹⁸ Private information.

¹⁹ English Heritage (2006).

since the late 1960s.²⁰ The focus of such activity has, however, generally centered on conflicts whose popular historical reputation is less unremittingly awful than the First World War. Less formal re-enactment also has some precedent. Replica trenches were built during the war as a tourist attraction in a number of British towns.²¹ Visitors to the battlefields have long been able to wander through more or less carefully preserved trenches. Since 1986, the Imperial War Museum has featured a detailed 'Trench Experience,' as do a number of other museums. Anyone watching the way that parties of schoolchildren interact with these exhibits will realize that they enable imaginative reconstruction. At a more private level, groups of re-enactors or historians have for a number of years sought to learn about aspects of the lives of First World War soldiers by wearing the uniforms, carrying out the drill and enduring some of the same conditions. The great difference recently has been the degree to which such behavior has become not only publicly acceptable but central to commemorations—although even now it has to be carefully negotiated so that it appears to be educational rather than enjoyable.

It is also noticeable how frequently such behavior is explained in terms of both national remembrance and the involvement of a family member.²² Some re-enactors feel a strong responsibility for preserving awareness of the war. Neil McGurk took part in the 2006 Somme march in part in tribute to his great-uncle (commemorated on the Thiepval memorial) and to his grandfather (a soldier who returned). In the diary he kept for BBC News, McGurk—a man well able to take his participation less than seriously—remarked that:

I hope that anyone who's seen some of us daft enough to do something like this will take an interest, do what I've done and see what they can find out [about their family history] and realise this is part of British history. Because nearly everybody has a connection with the Great War. The next generation has never known anyone who went through it. I think I'm one of the last few who really got to know anyone who went through it.²³

We will return to this justification, but we should also consider two other trends that have encouraged this move into the mainstream.

²⁰ Smith (2003), pp. 303–304.

²¹ Van Emden (2003), p. 43.

²² Smith (2003), p. 309.

²³ McGurk (2006).

One is that museums, teachers, and contemporary culture as a whole have all come to emphasize the importance of ‘experiential learning.’ The second trend is a more permissive one—as bereaved relatives and veterans have died off, there are far fewer voices to be raised in disapproval (or mockery) of re-enactment than would have been the case thirty years ago.²⁴

A further development relates to the reductive tendency which limited the ways in which the war was represented. At first glance, it might appear that the range of voices being heard has opened up. By the end of the twentieth century, some leading military historians saw the memory of the First World War as the site for a struggle between ‘poetry’—an emotional, irrational view which emphasized futile suffering and stupid generals—and ‘history’—an evidence based, rational analysis which had come increasingly to emphasize the range of contemporary reactions, including the perception that the war was valid, and the achievements of British generals.²⁵ Without accepting unreservedly the combative dichotomy thus presented, we might adopt its terms momentarily as a tool of analysis. If the poetic interpretation still holds the high ground of received opinion, since the turn of the century the historical view might seem to have mounted an impressive offensive. Examining media representations of the Somme in the summer of 2006, those still termed ‘revisionist’ historians in popular discourse were much in view: not least as the advisors to a BBC drama documentary, to the Corporation’s Web site and in relation to remembrance activities and exhibitions.²⁶ Whereas in 1996 the BBC’s programme *Douglas Haig: The Unknown Soldier* stood out as an effort to present a balanced picture, and even then included much historical debate and attracted much criticism, by 2006 it would have fitted more comfortably within the mainstream.²⁷

It could be that the British media and public have simply become much more discerning historians in the last ten years, but it might be more accurate to suggest several structural factors which have contributed to this development. First, the media were primarily interested in presenting a story which would gather audiences: the revision of

²⁴ But see Smith (2003), p. 310.

²⁵ Bond (2002).

²⁶ Consider, for example, Open University (2006) and Todman (2006b).

²⁷ The range of academic and popular historical works published in 2006, however, implies continuing dispute: see, for example, Prior and Wilson (2006).

received opinion seemed to offer such an opportunity. Even so, the director of the BBC's 2006 documentary program *The Somme—From Defeat to Victory* stressed that it was only because he was German that he could get far enough away from British preconceptions to understand the battle and present it in a new light.²⁸ Second, more recent research has increasingly allowed historians to move away from older debates about personalities, if they so wish, to discuss organization, learning and logistics. Revising opinion in a new way could also be media friendly. Thirdly, the demand for key institutions, including museums and archives, to have a stronger 'media presence' has made them powerful actors in diffusing academic history. In the last ten years, as a result of a number of changes including the provision of lottery funding, museums in the United Kingdom have adopted a more professional, business model to their dealings with the media. Some appear to have become more proactive. In 1996, for example, the historians at the Imperial War Museum in London logged two major interviews with newspapers in connection with the eightieth anniversary of the Somme. Ten years later, they logged ten interviews and six briefings for radio, television and print media, as well as leading a two-day tour of the battlefields for five journalists. Whilst these figures may be an inaccurate guide to the exact quantity of media interaction, the fact that museum staff are now required to record such dealings in more detail is itself indicative of a shift in approach.²⁹

In terms of popular representations of the war, this historical strength does seem to have had an effect. In terms of impact on the audience, however, its effect may be much more limited. Whilst some readers and viewers have plainly been converted, others quite definitely have not, as is apparent from any reading of visitors' books or discussion boards. The mere fact that different interpretations of the war are now being put forward in print and over the airwaves does not mean that the center ground of popular opinion has shifted.

Particularly with regard to long-running arguments about British generalship, what should be stressed is the degree to which public opinion has become locked in an 'oppositional discourse.' This is one of those historical fields, like Appeasement or Jack the Ripper, to which even

²⁸ Millar (2006).

²⁹ My thanks to Terry Charman of the Imperial War Museum for supplying me with these figures. Charman to Todman, email, 11 October 2006.

the most moderately informed layperson automatically attaches the word debate. It is assumed that controversy and argument will arise, and indeed some members of both the academy and the general public have responded to such challenges by repeating the 'Donkeys' myth that British generals were inadequate with more vehemence, strengthened in their conviction by their belief that this incompetence is being covered up by that murky figure, the Establishment. Those who would seek to popularize new developments in the history of the war face the problem that engaging with these debates—as they must do if their voices are to be heard at all—tends to confirm both sides in the views they already hold, rather than advancing the subject as a whole. To give an example, the National Army Museum's 2006 Somme exhibition—which in itself sought to present a wide variety of different interpretations and experiences of the battle—was advertised with a leaflet setting it firmly in the context of debates about generalship, with the strapline: 'Where over 300,000 lie dead, where do you stand?'³⁰

This oppositional discourse is significant in the relationship between the depiction of the First World War and contemporary events. Looking back at previous representations of the war, it is possible to see a strong connection between creative intention and contemporary geopolitical context. Famously, the emphasis in the work of A. J. P. Taylor and Joan Littlewood on the supposedly accidental way in which the war began grew out of a conviction that this was a relevant story in the nuclear era.³¹ If incompetent posturing had produced war in 1914, it could do so again, with even more devastating consequences, in 1963.³² Despite the interesting times in which we have lived since 2001, and the potentially tempting parallels—British troops again in Basra and Baghdad in another seemingly futile conflict—there is little evidence of the First World War being mobilized by journalists, writers or producers to inform modern Britons about the international situation. This may be because the unconventional nature of these modern wars makes a comparison with total war seem inappropriate: Vietnam has proved a much more natural reference point to most commentators. It may also be because the First World War is not now popularly perceived in

³⁰ National Army Museum (2006).

³¹ Theatre Workshop (1963); Taylor (1963).

³² Todman (2005), pp. 104–5, 138–39.

terms of ideological conflict, whereas much of the rhetoric, official and unofficial, of the so-called 'War on Terror' is phrased in such terms.

Where the First World War is referred to in relation to modern battles, it is predominantly in superficial or passing terms: a note that British troops are again at war, or a reminder of the need not to forget combatants each Remembrance Day. That key international event, the World Cup of 2006, provoked remarkably few references to the First World War, despite its coincidence with the ninetieth anniversary of the Battle of the Somme. Neither the Sun front page with Wayne Rooney as Lord Kitchener ('Your Country Needs Roo') or a TalkSport Radio presenter's question to Nigel Steel of the Imperial War Museum ('Was Billy Nevill any relative of Gary Neville, I wonder?')³³ were serious references to the Great War (indeed, it is arguable that the 1914 Leete poster of Kitchener has become so divorced from its context that its use makes no reference to the First World War at all). In cliché or drunken song, both English press and fans were much more likely to make use of imagery relating to the Second World War. The exception, perhaps, was Martin Rowson's *Guardian* cartoon of a distraught England fan crying on the steps of a memorial listing the missing from the Somme, with a sign at the bottom pointing to the 'Annex' for the 'War on Terror' and Afghanistan.³⁴

This should not be taken as an indication that the First World War has disappeared altogether as a point of public reference. If commentators have been reluctant to mobilize it with regard to more modern conflicts, military and civil, individual reaction to representations of the First World War often draws such parallels once the subject has been raised. This has been particularly apparent during recent discussion of pardons for those British soldiers shot at dawn. For some readers, war-time executions clearly stand for official callousness and incompetence through the ages. As one wrote on the *Times* Web site:

Perhaps a determined and concerted offensive to ensure so called authority figures are never allowed to make such "illegitimate" and incomprehensibly absurd decisions ever again is called for. It may be an idea for our

³³ *Sun* (2006), 1. Billy Nevill was the officer of the East Surreys who famously gave his men footballs to kick over the top into no-man's-land on 1 July. I am grateful to Dr Nigel Steel for this example.

³⁴ Rowson (2006).

wretched leaders and their well-trained, functional henchmen, wherever they are in the world, to simply stop fighting pointless wars.³⁵

Bearing in mind the popular reputation of the First World War, such symbolism was perhaps to be expected, as was the suggestion that all army commanders should be labelled 'mass murderers.' We might, however, juxtapose these with another comment from the same site: 'New Labour is becoming more Orwellian by the day. This is an attempt at re-writing the past. No doubt it is easier to emotively meddle with the past than to take decisive action within the present.'³⁶ In these cases, attitudes towards the war often seem a function of a political viewpoint: it has become an illustration rather than a central concern. The Ministry of Defence may have sought to mobilize the war as a means to bolster its reputation at a moment when its duty of care for modern soldiers was a matter of discussion, but popular reaction concentrated on contemporary concerns.

What is important for this discussion, however, is less the rights and wrongs of the pardons debate and more the form that this debate took in practice. The moral issues of pardoning the past were debated; however, the actual phrasing of the amendment was not. Similarly, phrases such as 'shell shock' and 'post-traumatic stress disorder' were bandied around with no attempt to understand their meanings. The mythic First World War is sufficiently well known to require no further explanation, with the result that even when the quantity of public discussion increases, the degree of interaction and interrogation remains low.

Since 2000, the political and international context has had relatively little impact on shaping popular representations of the First World War in Britain, particularly if we take as our point of comparison the excesses of the 1960s. The structural context of media and communications seem to have been at least as influential.

In terms of televisual representation, we might identify two different trends which have influenced the depiction of the war, arguably in the same direction for different reasons. Historical documentaries have moved away from a strongly 'news-based' format which juxtaposed eye-witnesses talking about events they had seen with archive footage and expert talking heads. Instead, they have increasingly preferred dramatic reconstruction based on historical research. This shift is clearly visible

³⁵ *Times* Comments (2006).

³⁶ *Ibid.*

if we compare the 1996 BBC *Timewatch* documentary *Douglas Haig: The Unknown Soldier*, with the documentaries produced on the Somme for Channel 4, in 2005, and the BBC in 2006. The reasons for this change include the availability of computer technology which allows the representation of a cast of thousands at comparatively small expense, and a desire to revitalize an old format. The increasing popular acceptability of re-enactment, noted above, has also been influential: indeed a side effect of such reconstructions may have been to provide extra funding for the re-enactors who provide kit, advice and extras.

Audiences seem to have accepted this shift with little comment, but its influence on the way the First World War looks on British screens has been dramatic. For a start, the war now takes place in color, for almost the first time since 1918. It has also proved possible for drama-documentary makers to show command decisions which may previously not have been depicted because they were not recorded in archival footage. On the other hand, it could be argued that this shift has divorced the First World War from a moment of lived experience and instead placed it in a generalized televisual past in which actors and directors play at being soldiers. If, however, we were to compare the quantity of critical reaction to the two Somme drama-documentaries with that relating to the much more traditional (at least in terms of presentation) Channel Four series on the First World War overseen by Hew Strachan in 2003, the new dramatized format seems more attractive to audiences.

The second trend, running alongside the first, is a mode of news reportage which emphasizes personal emotional reaction. Not least because of the need to fill channels devoted to 'rolling news,' editors and reporters have become keen not only to present the experiences of individuals, but to ask those individuals to emote in front of the camera. This has been encouraged by a change in British expressive culture, which it has in turn reinforced, so that the public display of emotion is now not merely accepted but expected.

At one level, this trend has merely confirmed the existing predilection for eyewitness testimony noted above. The exploitation of such interviews has, however, become increasingly difficult in recent years as the last veterans have died out. Archive footage of First World War veterans talking about their experiences tends to include too few tears for modern tastes. Yet the familial and recreational links which remain have ensured that the war remains a human interest story. The publicity afforded to the re-enactors who marched across the Somme was undoubtedly connected to the attractive story they presented to the

news media. Without veterans who could be quizzed by reporters as to how they felt, modern participants dressed as soldiers were the next best thing. The constant repetition of this question was one participant's principal memory of the march. Similarly but more controversially, we might suggest that a powerful factor in the eventual success of the appeal for pardons for executed soldiers was the use of Gertrude Harris, Harry Farr's daughter, as a figurehead for the pain suffered by the families of those sentenced for desertion or cowardice.³⁷ It also made the task of any who would argue against the pardon more difficult, since their role in proceedings would have been to increase the distress of an elderly woman. Emotional display has become a central part of popular representation of the First World War, both shaping its form and ensuring its survival.

Another key structural factor affecting the place of the First World War in British popular culture has been the communications revolution enabled by the Internet and the World Wide Web. One aspect of this revolution has been simply in terms of access to information. Since the Commonwealth War Graves Commission list of 'Soldiers Died in the Great War' went online in 1998, a potent imaginative link to the war has been only a click away.³⁸ Those who already know something about their family's experiences can find out more: those with no myths of their own can search for dead soldiers who share their name and gain an emotional connection to the past. New Web resources are frequently added for the family historian, either by enthusiastic amateurs who can now share their research, or by companies seeking to profit from the continuing popularity of the hobby. The result is that the quantity of information which can easily be gathered has greatly increased during the last ten years. In the early 1990s, searching for relatives who took part in the First World War would have meant considerable expenditure of dedicated time and money and some specialist skills. Now, a good deal can be done from home, in the space of a few evenings, by someone new to the topic.

The ways in which individuals and organizations have interacted with this democratization of information have varied in style and historical value. Much of the information available on the Web is, of course, suspect and even message boards hosted by authoritative institutions

³⁷ For example Flintoff (2006).

³⁸ Moriarty (1999), p. 653.

such as the BBC have no historical moderation. The result is often not that the Web is self-correcting or that it allows a variety of historical interpretations to flourish, but that an individual has a more effective platform to share their ignorance. The integration of new and old media has sometimes caused problems for institutions. Channel 4's effort to support its 2005 documentary on the Somme with a Web site which offered soldiers' blogs and invited entries to a 'final text message' competition was not only grotesque, but educationally inadequate.³⁹ On the other hand, the Imperial War Museum's recent online exhibition on the Somme is an excellent example of good practice, offering a variety of routes aimed at engaging the reader. It also allowed the presentation of many more artefacts than was possible in the limited physical space the Museum was able to allocate to the battle.⁴⁰

Through the contacts and networks of communication which it enables, the Web is making a second key contribution to Britons' relationship to the First World War. Just as during the immediate aftermath of the war, remembrance today requires individuals with strong reasons for commemorating the war to work together in order to build monuments or shape behavior. If these bonds do not necessarily have the emotional power of the 'fictive kinships' established at a time of mass bereavement, they remain important for motivation, support and collective influence.⁴¹ At the end of the twentieth century, amateur interest in the First World War seemed poised to slip into less and less relevant antiquarianism. Prior to the advent of the Internet, although the level of interest, and scholarship, amongst groups such as the Western Front Association was high, membership was small in number and old in years. It seemed likely to decline. The great boon of the Web is to keep existing interested amateurs in touch with each other, bolstering a sense of community. It also eases participation and involvement for those new to the subject. Those who wish to do so can now take part in a whole variety of 'memory projects,' from the construction of Web sites, via the cataloging of war memorials to the performance of living history.⁴² It has therefore served to increase the volume of the popular 'memory boom,' encouraged by an aging

³⁹ Channel 4 (2006).

⁴⁰ Imperial War Museum (2006).

⁴¹ Winter (1995), p. 30, p. 53, p. 225; Winter (1999), p. 60.

⁴² For examples, Wikipedia (2006); British Legion (2006); National Inventory of War Memorials (2006); Great War Society (2006).

population with increased leisure time and access to museums.⁴³ The reversion from increasingly solitary pursuit to communal activity seems likely to have implications for the future place of the First World War in British popular culture.

The endurance of certain popular myths and the popularity of activities connected to the First World War suggest that they fulfil some social and cultural function. Inevitably discussion of such topics is tentative, since such functions are seldom articulated. What might we suggest is the utility of the war for modern Britons?

One use relates to interpretation. Particularly since the Second World War, a significant function of the First World War in British popular culture has been as a symbol for all that is negative about conflict and its aftermath. More generally, the 1914–18 war seems to embody a host of tensions inherent in the modern world—between technology and humanity, between state and individual, and between tradition and progress. Since these tensions did not disappear with the end of the twentieth century, the war retains its value as an explanatory example. As we have noted above, however, reference to the First World War seems less automatic as we grow further away from it. The topic of the war has to be raised in its own right before it is applied as an example. We might suggest that the utility of these myths has less to do with creating new models through which to interpret the world than with the maintenance of existing paradigms.

A second use of the First World War relates to identity. It is tempting to see the celebration of the imagined past as a result of anxieties about identity in the present. In the case of Britain in particular, recent concern over the decline or confusion of national identity may be seen to have encouraged the discussion of a shared national past of which war is a principal element. The Prime Minister and former Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, has supported the foundation of a National Veterans' Day on 27 June each year. The provision of National Lottery Funding has enabled a number of schemes to encourage survivors of the Second World War to interact with schoolchildren and to return to the battlefields. Although, inevitably, the concentration here is on veterans of the later war, Brown has also been keen to include celebration of earlier soldiers, as examples of qualities he believes enshrined in national identity. Brown has defined veterans as:

⁴³ Winter (2000), pp. 69–92.

‘British people who give of themselves, whose qualities of character are the shining threads in the fabric of our society. Everyday they should be remembered in every part of our land, a legion of courage who fought for our country, who teach us through their heroism, courage and sacrifice the freedoms we enjoy today.’⁴⁴ Again, the survival of an interwar rhetoric which validates and explains wartime service and death in terms of heroism and sacrifice is apparent.

The notion that the experience of war could be mobilized to bolster a faltering British national identity is an interesting one. Given current debates about multiculturalism, there is currently a strong institutional awareness of the need to broaden the terms in which the First World War is represented. It is certainly possible to suggest means by which museums could represent the involvement of the former Empire in terms which might better engage visitors who are British West Indian or British Asian. It is also clear that such developments might raise uncomfortable issues about coercion, manipulation and exploitation, the handling of which would be extremely politically sensitive. What is not apparent is how, given the current tropes of representation, the First World War might be used to include more recent immigrants from Eastern Europe. It may be that Britain needs to adopt a version of the war based much more around mutual suffering and reconciliation—similar to that adopted by France and Germany around Verdun, and which the Turkish government seems keen to foster around Gallipoli—rather than its present staunchly isolationist interpretation.⁴⁵

It is worth noting, however, the frequency with which the preservation of the national past is a factor cited by participants in modern remembrance activities. The responsibility taken on by the re-enactor Neil McGurk is one that many others would recognize: to ensure that modern Britons remember the war and that it is not forgotten. Taken alongside the ‘revisionist’ view of 1918 which can overemphasize the British role in Entente victory, this might be taken as evidence of a conservative concern to celebrate a nationhood threatened by the dislocations of the modern world.⁴⁶ Another interpretation, however, might see this in more individual terms. Given the rapid changes undergone by British society in the twentieth century and the sense of

⁴⁴ Brown (2006).

⁴⁵ On the need to study the changing demography of the ‘rememberers’ see Winter (2006), p. 180.

⁴⁶ Smith (2003), p. 311.

uncertainty surrounding the future, it is perhaps natural that many seek both a foundation and an explanation by retelling the history of their own families. Both re-enactment and rediscovering dead relatives are a means to combine the national, the familial and the individual.

If identity is often a factor, it might be interpreted more effectively in terms of individual self-definition rather than national heritage. Discussing the meaning of the First World War, in terms of both historical fact and broader concepts, has become for most Britons a matter of leisure choice rather than a burning personal issue whose resolution becomes all encompassing. Modern Britons are First World War obsessives in the same way that they might otherwise be caravanners, golfers or knitters. This does not mean that passions are less strongly felt, but in most cases that is surely the case. We might draw a comparison between different generations' involvement with the campaign for pardons for executed soldiers. For the surviving children of those shot at dawn, pardons are a matter of righting an injustice which they personally experienced—whatever the rights and wrongs of the cases themselves, the treatment of at least some widows and children was deeply unfair. But for more recent descendants, the suspicion has to be that any actual harm or shame is more imagined than experienced. On the contrary, so widely accepted is the belief that all these poor men were shell-shocked heroes, shot after inadequate trials, that having such a relative is a matter for sympathy and minor celebrity. Taking on the identity of a campaigning relative is then a matter of choice rather than a matter of life and death.

This example leads us to consider the effect of generational change more generally. It is noticeable how many of those currently involved in remembrance work are the children and grandchildren of those who fought in the war, with the latter particularly active because of their comparative youth. Many of these Britons retain a personal memory, however vague, of those who experienced the war at first hand. It is a matter of speculation whether once this link has been lost subsequent generations will continue their emotional attachment. Although the great-grandchildren of the war have lost that personal connection, the sheer quantity of remembrance now occurring may ensure that they retain an interest. As they too reach middle age—which, for a variety of reasons does seem to encourage the consideration of the familial past—they may continue the British fascination with the First World War. It seems likely that the functional needs described above will continue into the foreseeable future.

On the other hand, there is another, later war, the remembrance of which could fulfil many of the same needs. If it is that personal connection which is important, it seems far more likely that this generation will follow its parents' example and seek to rediscover their own grandparents' world. Given the level of government support, the availability of many of the same resources—some in much better condition—and the increasingly rapid passing of the Second World War generation, it is possible that this later war will become an even more popular site for imaginative tourism than it is at present.

At least for the immediate future, however, the presence of the First World War in British popular culture seems secure. Indeed, it seems highly unlikely that the myths associated with the war will significantly develop, notwithstanding the increased visibility of 'revisionist' history. At the end of *The Great War: Myth and Memory* it was suggested that the reasons for the war's enduring power might be more prosaic than sometimes assumed. The combination of mass involvement, consumer society and bureaucratic necessity had left a residue of artefacts which encouraged continued emotional engagement. I would now go further. The distinctive combination of the society and culture which fought the First World War with the technological developments of the twenty-first century will extend its historical shelf-life beyond that of many of its predecessors. To the photographic plate, the filing cabinet and the loft, those key enablers of 'modern memory,' we should add Computer Generated Imagery, broadband and the Web. It is these which will shape popular remembrance of the war in 2014–18.

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