

## Small Nations and Colonial Peripheries in World War I

# History of Warfare

*Editors*

Kelly DeVries (*Loyola University Maryland*)

John France (*University of Wales, Swansea*)

Michael S. Neiberg (*United States Army War College, Pennsylvania*)

Frederick Schneid (*High Point University, North Carolina*)

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# Small Nations and Colonial Peripheries in World War I

*Edited by*

Gearóid Barry  
Enrico Dal Lago  
Róisín Healy



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## List of Contributors

*Steven Balbirnie*

is currently completing a doctorate in History at University College Dublin on British military intervention in Northern Russia in 1918 and 1919.

*Gearóid Barry*

is Lecturer in Modern European History at NUI Galway. Author of *The Disarmament of Hatred: Marc Sangnier, French Catholicism, and the Legacy of the First World War, 1914–1945* (2012), he currently researches on wartime pacifism.

*Jens Boysen*

holds a D. Phil. from Tübingen University and is currently a postdoctoral student at the German Historical Institute, Warsaw, specializing in the ethno-political, cultural and military histories of Germany and East Central Europe.

*Ingrid Brühwiler*

is a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Lausanne, Switzerland, engaged in the international project “Educating the Future Citizens” of the Swiss and Luxembourgish National Funds.

*William Buck*

completed his PhD in History at Mary Immaculate College, Limerick, in 2013 and has worked as a postdoctoral researcher in Maynooth University. His doctoral thesis dealt with enemy aliens in Ireland in World War I.

*Aude Chanson*

is a Ph.D. candidate at Paris-Diderot University, working on colonial school policies in German East Africa and Tanganyika Territory in the period to 1961.

*Enrico Dal Lago*

teaches American History at NUI Galway. He is author of several books, the latest of which is *The Age of Lincoln and Cavour* (2015).

*Matias Gardin*

is postdoctoral researcher at the University of Luxembourg and is currently engaged in a project dealing with multiculturalism. He obtained a Ph.D. from King's College London in 2013.

*Richard Gow*

is an Irish Research Council-funded doctoral candidate at Trinity College Dublin working on the Spanish military after World War I.

*Florian Grafl*

is currently completing his PhD on interwar urban violence in Barcelona during the years 1918 to 1936 at the University of Gießen in Germany. His research interest is contemporary Spanish history, especially that of Catalonia.

*Dónal Hassett*

is a final year doctoral researcher at the European University Institute. His thesis examines the strategic evocation of participation in World War I by political actors in the French colony of Algeria.

*Guido Hausmann*

specializes in the history of modern Russia and Ukraine and teaches at the University of Munich. He is the author of *Mütterchen Wolga: Ein Fluss als Erinnerungsort vom 16. bis ins frühe 20. Jahrhundert* (2009).

*Róisín Healy*

is Lecturer in Modern European History at NUI Galway. Her most recent book is *The Shadow of Colonialism on Europe's Modern Past* (2014). She is currently completing a monograph on Irish attitudes to Poland in the partition era.

*Michael Jonas*

is Lecturer and Postdoctoral Research Fellow in Modern History at Helmut-Schmidt-University, Hamburg. He is co-editor of *Stabilität durch Gleichgewicht? Balance of Power im internationalen System der Neuzeit* (2015).

*Conor Morrissey*

did a PhD in Trinity College Dublin on 'Protestant nationalists in Ireland, 1900–1923', with funding from the Irish Research Council and has published in the *Journal of the Cork Archaeological and Historical Society*.

*Michael S. Neiberg*

holds the Stimson Chair of History and Security Studies at the US Army War College, Carlisle, Pennsylvania. He is the author of *Dance of the Furies: Europe and the Outbreak of War in 1914* (2011) and, most recently, *Potsdam: The End of World War II and the Remaking of Europe* (2015).

*David X. Noack*

is a PhD candidate at Mannheim University studying the policy of the Great Powers in Soviet and Chinese Turkestan from 1919 to 1933.

*Chris Rominger*

is completing his PhD in History at the City University of New York on the political and social transformations in North Africa after World War I.

*Danielle Ross*

holds a Ph.D. from University of Wisconsin-Madison and is an Assistant Professor of Asian History at Utah State University. Her research focuses on the Muslim communities of central and eastern Russia.

*Christine Strotmann*

is a PhD candidate at Humboldt University, Berlin, pursuing a project on the application of nitrogen distribution in the era of the World Wars.

**PART 1**

*Shifting Identities in the Global War*





# Towards an Interconnected History of World War I: Europe and Beyond

*Gearóid Barry, Enrico Dal Lago and Róisín Healy*

In recent years, the historiography of World War I has undergone a very significant transformation in terms of its geographical scope and thematic reach. While most studies of World War I up to the 1990s focused on national experiences, a generation of new scholars subsequently began analyzing the War in comparative perspective across Europe and the world.<sup>1</sup> The following decade saw the emergence of a global approach to First World War studies, pioneered by Hew Strachan and Michael Neiberg and developed in a range of recent reference works.<sup>2</sup> Jay Winter has identified a significant increase in studies of the War as a transnational phenomenon, an approach defined by Ian Tyrell as placing emphasis on “the movement of peoples, ideas, technologies, and institutions across the border.”<sup>3</sup> Due to both the transnational training of World War I historians and the collapse of political and ideological dichotomies with the end of the Cold War, a transnational view has emerged in opposition to an international approach which privileges the diplomatic history of the War.<sup>4</sup>

- 1 See specifically Jay Winter and Jean-Louis Robert, ed. *Capital Cities at War: Paris, London, Berlin*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1999–2007).
- 2 Hew Strachan, *The First World War*, vol. 1, *To Arms* (Oxford, 2001); Michael Neiberg, *Fighting the Great War: A Global History* (Cambridge, 2005). Jean-Jacques Becker and Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, eds. *Encyclopédie de la Grande Guerre* (Paris, 2004); John Horne, ed., *A Companion to World War I* (Oxford, 2010); Jay Winter, ed., *The Cambridge History of the First World War*, 3 vols. (Cambridge, 2014); “International Encyclopedia of the First World War, <<http://www.1914-1918-online.net/>>. For a recent appraisal of the current historiography, see Alan Kramer, “Recent Historiography of the First World War,” *Journal of Modern European History*, 12 (2014): 5–27, 155–74.
- 3 Ian Tyrell, *Transnational Nation: United States History in Global Perspective since 1789* (New York, 2007), 3; Jay Winter, “The Transnational History of the First World War,” *Teaching History* 156 (2014): 20–21.
- 4 Jay Winter, “Historiography 1918–Today,” in: 1914–1918-online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War, ed. by Ute Daniel, Peter Gatrell, Oliver Janz, Heather Jones, Jennifer Keene, Alan Kramer, and Bill Nasson, issued by Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin 2014-11-11. DOI: <<http://dx.doi.org/10.15463/1e1418.10498>>. On the rise of transnational history in the wake of the end of the Cold War, see Akira Iriye and Pierre-Yves Saunier, eds., *Palgrave Dictionary of Transnational History* (New York, 2009). For the best discussion of methodological issues in both comparative and transnational history, see “Introduction: Comparative History, Cross-

The historiography of World War I no longer fixates upon the actions of the Great Powers, but now embraces all the nations and regions of Europe, whether directly or indirectly involved in the War.<sup>5</sup> Ireland, Serbia and the Netherlands are among the hitherto understudied locations that have been examined in recent volumes.<sup>6</sup> The increasingly global focus of World War I studies has resulted in the systematic inclusion of the colonies and, as a corollary of that, the role of race in military and civilian experience. French soldiers' views of their own indigenous troops were ambivalent, ranging from admiration to fear. Both the British and the French favoured particular groups within their colonies. The British enthusiasm for the Gurkhas endured into the War.<sup>7</sup> The Senegalese elite considered it a matter of pride to assist the French in the War and expected to be rewarded for their efforts at the end of hostilities. The same cannot be said, however, for the rest of the Senegalese population. Comparable cleavages, whether based on class or ethnicity, also operated in other European overseas colonies and were responsible for uneven investment in the war effort by the indigenous population.<sup>8</sup> The use of racialized language reverberated through Europe. In her recent historiographical review, Heather Jones has claimed that recent studies of World War I have "also shown how imperial and anthropological discussion about race overseas now shifted to the European heartland as racialized language was increasingly used to describe the enemy and to denigrate his ethnic origins."<sup>9</sup>

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National History, Transnational History – Definitions," in *Comparison in History: Europe in Cross-national Perspective*, eds. Deborah Cohen and Maureen O'Connor (London, 2004), ix-xxiv.

- 5 Joachim Bürgschwentner, Matthias Egger and Gunda Barth-Scalmani, eds., *Other Fronts, Other Wars? First World War Studies on the Eve of the Centennial* (Leiden, 2014).
- 6 John Horne, ed., *Our War: Ireland and the Great War* (Dublin, 2008); Jonathan Gumz, *The Resurrection and Collapse of Empire in Habsburg Serbia, 1914–1918* (New York, 2009); Maartje M. Abbenhuis, *The Art of Staying Neutral: The Netherlands in the First World War, 1914–1918* (Amsterdam, 2014).
- 7 Heather Streets, *Martial races: the military, race, and masculinity in British imperial culture, 1857–1914* (Manchester, 2014).
- 8 Richard S. Fogarty, *Race and War in France: Colonial Subjects in the French Army, 1914–1918* (Baltimore, 2008).
- 9 Heather Jones, "As the Centenary Approaches: the Regeneration of First World War Historiography," *Historical Journal* 56 (2013): 874; Andrew D. Evans, *Anthropology at War: World War I and the Science of Race in Germany* (Chicago, 2010). See also Santanu Das, ed. *Race, Empire and First World Writing* (Cambridge, 2011); Daniel Olusoga, *The World's War: Forgotten Soldiers of Empire* (London, 2014); Ashley Jackson, ed., *The Round Table* 103, Special Issue, "The First World War and the Empire/Commonwealth" (2014); Margit Viola Wunsch, ed., *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 14, Special Issue "World War One Beyond Europe" (2014).



Taking inspiration from these studies and an earlier conference, we organized an international conference in 2014 dedicated to the comparative and transnational history of small European nations and colonial peripheries in World War I, a conference held at the Centre for the Investigation of Transnational Encounters (CITE) at the National University of Ireland, Galway.<sup>10</sup> This conference brought together scholars from a wide variety of countries, institutions and research fields and showed the benefits for First World War Studies of combining research perspectives on small European nations and colonial peripheries. This volume builds on the discussions held at the conference.

With the seventeen essays in this volume, we intend to further contribute to this historiography by providing a transnational and comparative study of a neglected facet of the War – the particular experience of peoples on the European and non-European peripheries of empires. In his introduction to the first volume of the *Cambridge History of the First World War* (2014), Jay Winter claimed that: “The history of the Great War that has emerged in recent years is additive, cumulative and multi-faceted. National histories have a symbiotic relationship with transnational history; the richer the one, the deeper the other.”<sup>11</sup> Moreover, this volume reconceptualizes the history of World War I as a single narrative that includes both European metropolises, Europe’s small nations and extra-European colonies and thus acts as an addition to the current historiographical agenda.<sup>12</sup> Many of these essays draw on previously unpublished research and thus introduce the work of emerging scholars to the wider historical public. The volume also includes several specially commissioned essays. The approach is novel in several respects: it brings together essays that span the globe, from the United States through Ireland to Kazakhstan and from equatorial Africa to the Arctic circle; it replaces the conventional historical focus on the metropolises of European empires with a wider consideration of their ethnic peripheries and overseas colonies; it examines the transnational movement of members of subject ethnic populations to the European theatres of war and ruling national groups’ soldiers and settlers to the imperial peripheries. The combination of studies of soldiers and civilians

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10 “Colonialism within Europe: Fact or Fancy?”, National University of Ireland Galway, June 2012 and “Small Nations and Colonial Peripheries in World War I: Europe and the Wider World” June 2014.

11 Jay Winter, “General Introduction,” *Cambridge History of the First World War*, ed. Winter, vol. 1, *Global War*, 9.

12 On this specific point, see Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper “Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda,” in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, eds., Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper, (Berkeley, 1997), 1–56.

on the home front and the war front helps to highlight similarities in the war-time experiences of European and colonial peripheral populations.<sup>13</sup>

In chronological terms, the essays in this book begin with the Home Rule crisis in Ireland in 1912 and end with the War's legacies in Tunisia in the 1920s. John Horne has recently argued for an expanded chronology of the War by saying that "the War was the epicentre of a larger cycle of violence that went from 1912 to 1923, from the Balkan Wars in 1912–13 to the end of violence in the collapsed border zones of the former empires in eastern Europe."<sup>14</sup> His periodization reflects the importance of conflicts in European peripheries in defining the World War I experience of populations on the periphery of empires. The benefits of this approach are evident in the recent survey of multiple empires during this extended period, entitled *Empires at War*.<sup>15</sup> Following the lead of Jay Winter and Jean-Louis Robert with their celebrated comparative study of capital cities in World War I, this volume examines a variety of regional case studies, while maintaining a cohesive interpretive framework on the importance of peripherality in the experience of the War. Thus it builds on significant current work in three fields: firstly, the military service of colonial subjects in Europe's various theatres of war; the transfer of colonial attitudes by elites to the European theatres during and after World War I; and the civilian experience of war both close to and distant from the battlefield.<sup>16</sup>

Some of the most innovative recent scholarship on World War I has dealt with topics that are either inherently transnational or are now recognized as being best approached through a transnational prism. As Jay Winter has pointed out: "The term 'transnational' is the only suitable one for the War's massive effects on population movements of staggering proportion."<sup>17</sup> There

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13 For a view that highlights the importance of looking at connections between the experiences of European peripheral and colonial peripheral populations from the 1860s to the 1960s, see Róisín Healy and Enrico Dal Lago, "Investigating Colonialism within Europe," *The Shadow of Colonialism on Europe's Modern Past*, eds. Róisín Healy and Enrico Dal Lago (New York, 2014), 3–22.

14 John Horne, "Introduction", in John Horne, ed. *A Companion to World War One* (Oxford, 2010), xxv.

15 Robert Gerwarth and Erez Manela, eds. *Empires at War, 1911–1923* (Oxford, 2014). These include the Libyan War of 1911–1912 in their periodization.

16 J. Jenkinson, "All in the Same Uniform? The Participation of Black Colonial Residents in the British Armed Forces in the First World War," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 40 (2012): 207–230; Tammy Proctor, *Civilians in World at War* (New York, 2010), and Heather Jones, "The Great War: How 1914–18 Changed the Relationship Between War and Civilians," *The RUSI Journal* (2014): 1–8.

17 Winter, "Transnational History," 20.

are numerous examples of voluntary population movements during the War. In addition to conscription, economic pressures and cultural motives encouraged millions of men and thousands of women to offer their services for the benefit of their imperial metropole. Many of these saw service in war theatres very far from home, making World War I a watershed in the global history of transnational movement and cross-cultural encounters. The Battle of Gallipoli, for example, saw participants from places as far apart as Ireland, France, Germany, Turkey, India, Australia and New Zealand.<sup>18</sup> Another is the Battle of Verdun, which involved American volunteer soldiers and medical personnel and Indochinese labourers as well as western European and African combatants.<sup>19</sup> Women from across the globe nursed military casualties in field units in multiple theatres of the War.<sup>20</sup> Some of the most exciting new research on the War has focused on forced population movement, most notably prisoners of war, refugees, and Chinese labourers.<sup>21</sup> Civilians who remained at home were also affected by transnational developments and many recent studies have increased our understanding of the gendered experience of war.<sup>22</sup> Residents of belligerent nations who were citizens of the opposing alliance, especially if suspected of collaboration, were liable to be arrested and interned. For example, Panikos Panayi has examined the experience of German nationals in Britain during the War, some of whom were considered disruptive enough to be interned on one of Britain's offshore islands, namely the Isle of Man.<sup>23</sup>

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- 18 Peter Hart, *Gallipoli* (London, 2013); Jenny Macleod, *Gallipoli: Making History* (London, 2012).
- 19 Michael S. Neiberg, *The Western Front, 1914–1916: From the Schlieffen Plan to Verdun and the Somme* (London, 2008).
- 20 Alison S. Fell and Christine E. Hallett, eds., *First World War Nursing: New Perspectives* (London, 2013).
- 21 Heather Jones, *Violence against Prisoners of War in the First World War: Britain, France and Germany, 1914–1920* (Cambridge, 2011); Peter Gatrell, *A Whole Empire Walking: Refugees in Russia during World War I* (Bloomington, 1999); Guoqi Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front. Chinese Workers in the Great War* (Cambridge, 2011).
- 22 Annette Becker, *Oubliés de la Grande guerre: humanitaire et culture de guerre, 1914–1918: populations occupées, déportés civils, prisonniers de guerre* (Paris, 1998); Christa Hämmeler, Oswald Uberegger, Brigitta Bader-Zaar, eds., *Gender and the First World War* (Basingstoke, 2014).
- 23 Matthew Stibbe: Enemy Aliens and Internment, in: 1914–1918-online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War, ed. by Ute Daniel, Peter Gatrell, Oliver Janz, Heather Jones, Jennifer Keene, Alan Kramer, and Bill Nasson, issued by Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin 2014–10–08. DOI: <<http://dx.doi.org/10.15463/ie1418.10037>> Panikos Panayi, *Prisoners of Britain: German Civilian and Combatant Internees during the First World War* (New York, 2012).

Another example of the mistreatment of civilians is the proliferation of labour camps in various belligerent nations.<sup>24</sup>

The communities of belief to which individual citizens of the various belligerent nations belonged helped to provide “one of the frameworks of meaning by which contemporaries sought to grasp the significance of the conflict”.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, transnational ideological or religious affiliations caused a dilemma in terms of allegiance. German socialists split over the question of war credits in 1914 and an international anti-war movement emerged among radical socialists.<sup>26</sup> The papal peace note of August 1917 divided Catholics of both camps across Europe.<sup>27</sup> Civilians were also affected by transnational developments in scientific, technological and economic terms. For example, the civilian experience of war involved aerial bombardment from planes and airships that had flown across national borders and resulted in the deaths of many civilians in cities such as London, Freiburg, Karlsruhe and Paris.<sup>28</sup> Adam Tooze has recently argued that World War I led to a reorganization of the world economy that facilitated American expansion globally, affected the civilian populations of even non-belligerent nations and raised Japan to an international power.<sup>29</sup> A major new arena of scholarship in the transnational history of World War I is represented by humanitarianism. The staggering human cost of war galvanized the international humanitarian community to an unprecedented level of co-operation across borders, transforming humanitarianism into a truly global movement.<sup>30</sup> At the forefront of humanitarian activities during the War

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24 Alan Kramer and Bettina Greiner, eds., *Welt der Lager: Zur Erfolgsgeschichte einer Institution* (Hamburg, 2013).

25 John Horne and Alan Kramer, *German Atrocities, 1914: A History of Denial* (New Haven, 2001), 262.

26 Geoff Eley, *Forging Democracy: A History of the Left, 1850–2000* (Oxford, 2002).

27 For an overview, see Adrian Gregory, “Beliefs and Religion,” *Cambridge History*, ed. Winter, vol. 3, *Civil Society*, 418–44. For a comprehensive new study, see Philip Jenkins, *The Great and Holy War: How World War I Changed Religion for Ever* (Waco, 2014). On the papal peace initiatives, see John Pollard, *Benedict xv: The Unknown Pope and the Pursuit of Peace* (London, 2005) [orig. 2000].

28 Jones, “The Great War”, 84.

29 Adam Tooze, *The Deluge: The Great War and the Remaking of the Global Order, 1916–1931* (New York, 2014); Frederick Dickinson, *World War I and the Triumph of a New Japan, 1919–1930* (New York, 2013).

30 Bruno Cabanes, *The Great War and the Origins of Humanitarianism, 1918–1924* (Cambridge, 2014); William Mulligan, *The Great War for Peace* (New Haven, 2014).

was the International Red Cross, spearheaded by the American branch, which has received a great deal of scholarly attention.<sup>31</sup>

The recent focus on the unprecedented scale and scope of violence in the War has been the driving force behind the new periodization of the War suggested by John Horne and Robert Gerwarth.<sup>32</sup> They have situated the War in a continuum of violence which both preceded and followed the War. The violence that occurred before 1914 and after 1918 was concentrated in areas peripheral to the Great Powers, but it must be understood as part of this period of intense violence all the same. The period of intense violence began with the First Balkan War and ended in multiple arenas, ranging from Ireland in the northwest to Greece and Turkey in the southeast. The Balkans saw continuous violence from 1912 to 1923. It is no coincidence that in *The Sleepwalkers* (2012), Christopher Clark began his account of the 1914 July Crisis not in Berlin or Vienna, but in Serbia in 1903. He thus challenged the traditional mental map of the War's genesis.<sup>33</sup> Equally, the region demonstrates that armed conflict persisted far beyond 1918. In the wake of the Greek-Turkish War of 1919–1921, Greeks from Asia Minor were forcibly resettled in Greece and Turks from Greece in turn resettled in Turkey after the failed Greek expedition to Turkey in 1921.<sup>34</sup> The Balkans typify the drive of small nations to liberate themselves from imperial powers through violence. They demonstrate the difficulties of achieving self-determination in a region occupied by competing imperial powers and emerging states. The multiple possibilities for political expression – full independence, autonomy within an empire, or something in between – intensified the potential for violence in the region, as demonstrated in the case of Bosnia.<sup>35</sup>

In order to capture the full texture of political experiences, this volume presents case studies drawn from across Europe including the Iberian peninsula, Scandinavia, east central Europe, Luxembourg, Switzerland and Ireland. For the purpose of this study, we have defined “small nations” in terms of their

31 Julia Irwin, *Making the World Safe: The American Red Cross and a Nation's Humanitarian Awakening* (New York, 2013).

32 Robert Gerwarth and John Horne, eds., *War in Peace: Paramilitary Violence in Europe after the Great War* (Oxford, 2012); Peter Gatrell, “War after the War: Conflicts, 1919–23”, in Horne, ed., *Companion*, 558–75.

33 Christopher Clark, *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914* (London, 2012).

34 Renée Hirschon, *Crossing the Aegean: An Appraisal of the 1923 Compulsory Population Exchange between Greece and Turkey* (London, 2003).

35 Janko Pleterski, “The Southern Slav Question,” in *The Last Years of Austria-Hungary: A Multinational Experiment in Early Twentieth Century Europe*, ed. Mark Cornwall (Exeter, 2002), 119–48.

relative weakness vis-à-vis the major actors in European diplomacy. Thus, while Luxembourg qualifies both geographically and politically, Spain qualifies by virtue of its weakness by comparison with Britain and France. Unlike Portugal, most small nations already endowed with statehood opted for neutrality of one kind or another and usually leant more towards one power bloc or another. Even as neutrals, these nations' economies and internal political dynamics were deeply affected by the War.<sup>36</sup> Nations outside Europe, such as those in Latin America, adopted similarly ambivalent policies of neutrality. Like the USA, some of these states also found it opportune to join the War some time after the initial mobilization.<sup>37</sup>

The impact of the War in fact extended far beyond Europe and shaped the experiences of a number of civilian populations in colonial peripheries across the world. These experiences were strikingly similar to those of European populations in small nations. A Catholic missionary in the Congo described the impact of the War on the local indigenous population in terms that could have been used to depict the daily stresses of wartime in many parts of Europe: "The father of the family is at the front, the mother is grinding flour for the soldiers, and the children are carrying the foodstuffs!"<sup>38</sup> Exciting new work has emerged from Africa on the importance of the African dimension of the War and great strides have been made to provide narratives that integrate European and non-European theatres of war.<sup>39</sup> Moves to introduce conscription led to comparable resistance by civilian populations in parts of Europe and the colonial peripheries. For example, rebellions broke out in British Nyasaland, Portuguese

36 For a recent view of small powers in the First World War, see Herman Amersfoort and Wim Klinkert, eds., *Small Powers in the Age of Total War, 1914–1940* (Leiden, 2011); Filipe Ribeiro de Meneses, *Portugal 1914–1926: From the First World War to Military Dictatorship* (Bristol, 2004); José Antonio Montero, "La I Guerra Mundial en la visión de los españoles, un siglo después," *Rubrica Contemporanea* 3 (2014): 27–36. For an examination of the international impact of the British blockade, see Nicholas A. Lambert, *Planning Armageddon: British Economic Warfare and the First World War* (Cambridge, 2012).

37 Olivier Compagnon, "Latin America," in *Cambridge History*, vol. 1, ed. Winter, 533–55.

38 Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror and Heroism in Colonial Africa* (London, 1998), 278.

39 Koller, Christian: *Historiography 1918-Today (Africa)*, in: 1914–1918-online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War, ed. by Ute Daniel, Peter Gatrell, Oliver Janz, Heather Jones, Jennifer Keene, Alan Kramer, and Bill Nasson, issued by Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin 2014–10–08. DOI: <<http://dx.doi.org/10.15463/ie1418.10426>>; Moyd, Michelle: *Extra-European Theatres of War*, in: 1914–1918-online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War, ed. by Ute Daniel, Peter Gatrell, Oliver Janz, Heather Jones, Jennifer Keene, Alan Kramer, and Bill Nasson, issued by Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin 2014–10–08. DOI: <<http://dx.doi.org/10.15463/ie1418.10318>>.

Mozambique and in numerous French possessions, most notably the Grande Rivière Rebellion in French West Africa.<sup>40</sup>

For the purposes of this work, we define “colonial peripheries” as those areas that were subject to colonial rule by European empires and were located far from the heartland of these empires. The case studies in this volume were peripheries in relation to their respective European metropolises, not simply in geographical terms, but also in geopolitical and economic terms. In that sense, their position was akin to that of small European nations vis-à-vis the major international state actors in Europe. The geographical regions covered in this volume include the Northern Arctic region of the Russia Empire, the Russian steppes straddling Europe and Asia, Central Asia, North Africa and East Africa. These case studies provide a broad range of peripheral colonial experiences during World War I. The War not only led directly to the independence of several small European nations, but also provided the first major moment of crisis for European empires and therefore started the process that culminated in decolonization after World War II. As James E. Kitchen has argued, “1914–18 can be seen as paralleling, or anticipating, the events that would follow thirty years later when the Second World War invigorated a series of anti-colonial nationalist movements that would ultimately pull down the imperial edifice by the mid-1960s”.<sup>41</sup> The Wilsonian moment, with its emphasis on self-determination, held within it the promise of sovereignty for peoples under foreign rule both in Europe and beyond.<sup>42</sup> The enormous economic strain that the War put on European empires, by requiring them to transfer troops, administrators, food supplies and material resources to multiple theatres of war, shortchanged the imperial peripheries and their populations, prompting further unrest.<sup>43</sup>

We are following in the path of scholars who have made connections between different regions of Europe and colonial peripheries in the era of

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40 Bill Nasson, “More Than Just von Lettow-Vorbeck: Sub-Saharan Africa in the First World War,” *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 40 (2014): 160–83.

41 Kitchen, James E.: Colonial Empires after the War/Decolonization, in: 1914–1918-online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War, ed. by Ute Daniel, Peter Gatrell, Oliver Janz, Heather Jones, Jennifer Keene, Alan Kramer, and Bill Nasson, issued by Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin 2014-10-08. DOI: <<http://dx.doi.org/10.15463/1e1418.10370>>.

42 For examples in French colonies, see Jacques Frémeaux, *Les Colonies dans la Grande Guerre: combats et épreuves des peuples d'outre-mer* (Paris, 2006); Leonard V. Smith, “Empires at the Paris Peace Conference”, in *Empires at War*, eds., Gerwarth and Manela, 254–76.

43 Avner Offer, *The First World War: An Agrarian Interpretation* (Oxford, 1990).

World War I, broadly defined.<sup>44</sup> The novelty of this volume consists particularly in the juxtaposition of and comparison between European and non-European regions in these terms. This perspective allows us to explore the reciprocal influence of transnational movements of ideas and people on the colonies and the European metropolises. The case studies provided here demonstrate the high degree of interdependence between regions often considered separately. Ultimately, with this project we intend to stimulate further research into the transnational connections and comparisons between the paths to self-determination taken by small European nations and colonial peripheries from World War I to the mid-twentieth century.

This introduction forms the first chapter of Part One of this volume and is followed by two essays that explore the relationship between major global powers and small nations in Europe, using the example of Germany and Ireland. They demonstrate the increased significance that small nations won in international affairs, both within Europe and beyond it, as a result of the War. They also highlight the complexity of the relationship between major and minor players in international affairs by drawing attention to the role of diasporic communities in the United States.

Christine Strotmann describes how the German government sought to foment unrest in small nations and colonial peripheries belonging to Allied powers.<sup>45</sup> This so-called “revolutionary program” was designed to allow Germany to overcome the reputational damage caused by Allied propaganda about atrocities in Belgium as well as to weaken its enemies from within. Successful revolts of small European nations would, the Germans hoped, trigger further revolts in colonial peripheries outside Europe. She examines in particular the collaboration between the German government and Irish nationalists who sought to use the War to achieve independence from Britain. While most scholarly accounts have focused on the inadequacy of German

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44 For a recent view of the eastern front that includes both Russian and Ottoman empires, see Aileen Kane, “World War I on the Eastern Front,” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 15 (2014): 207–16; James Perkins, “The Congo of Europe: The Balkans and Empire in Early Twentieth-Century British Culture,” *Historical Journal* 58 (2015): 565–87; Sarah Abrevaya Stein, “Citizens of a Fictional Nation: Ottoman-born Jews in France during the First World War,” *Past and Present* 226 (2015); Ulrike Lindner, “The Transfer of European Social Policy Concepts to Tropical Africa, 1900–1950,” *Journal of Global History* 9 (2014): 208–31.

45 It should be noted that the German authorities also encouraged disturbances in areas beyond Europe, including Mexico, Egypt and Central Asia. See Felix Kloke, *Von innen schwächen – von außen besiegen. Aufstände im Feindesland als Instrument Deutscher Kriegsführung im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Munich, 2011).



military assistance to the Irish, Strotmann demonstrates, on the basis of the records of the Imperial German Foreign Office, that the German government saw the Irish alliance in particular as an opportunity less to divert British troops away from continental theatres of war than to ensure that Irish-Americans continued to support American neutrality in the War.<sup>46</sup>

Michael Neiberg explores the particular experiences of Irish-Americans and German-Americans. Despite coming from a small nation and major European power respectively, their experiences in the USA were quite similar. Well integrated into American society by the beginning of the War, they both tended to be disproportionately skeptical of Allied motives as a result of their heritage from 1914 to 1916. Contrary to much scholarship, however, many Irish-Americans were not overtly pro-German in their outlook on the War, even after the Easter Rising, when the executions of its leaders intensified hostility to Britain. The need to prove themselves loyal USA citizens, along with Wilson's promises of self-determination for small nations, persuaded Irish-Americans to support the American leadership's stance on the War. German-Americans likewise endorsed American neutrality and took a middle course, seeking to distance themselves from Prussian aggression, while pointing out the deficiencies of the Allies. Neiberg thus concludes that domestic motives encouraged a broad consensus on American foreign policy.<sup>47</sup>

Ireland, a "small nation", which was not yet a state, was poised precariously during World War I between the maintenance of the union with Britain and opposition to the War, potentially coupled with revolution. Part Two thus moves outwards in a circle of comparative "national" case-studies encompassing northern and southern Europe. The ambivalent relationships of "small nations"—broadly understood—to the War and to their more powerful belligerent neighbours are examined from a variety of innovative perspectives, in the six essays in Part Two which, when taken together, have the internal dynamics of politics as their presiding concern. Thus, these chapters examine a range of stances towards the War by small nations by taking examples such as regional identities, the reception of enemy aliens and prisoners, education policy and the cross-cutting cleavages of religious minorities, within both recognized and aspirant nation-states.

The heterogeneity of political and religious identities within "smaller nations", which forms one theme of this volume, is particularly well demonstrated

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46 See Chapter 2, "The Revolutionary Program of the German Empire: the Case of Ireland," in this volume.

47 See Chapter 3, "'I Want Citizens' Clothes': Irish and German-Americans Respond to War, 1914–1917," in this volume.

in Conor Morrissey's contribution, the first in this section. Morrissey considers the Irish conscription crisis of 1918, a pivotal event in undermining the legitimacy of British rule in nationalist Ireland. He asks how Irish Protestant nationalists – a political minority within a religious minority – negotiated an identity both distinctly Irish and Protestant amid a popular anti-conscription front in which the Catholic Church took pride of place. These “rebel” or, more accurately, anti-government Irish Protestants were a small portion of the Protestant quarter of the Irish population, a demographic group that in turn had strongly contrasting regional experiences as either a majority or a minority vis-à-vis Irish Catholics. Morrissey presents us with a finessed profile of Irish Protestant political and cultural pluralism of intrinsic interest and of wider significance in the study of minorities.<sup>48</sup>

Minorities of another sort – enemy aliens – are at the heart of our second Irish-related contribution, William Buck's account of POWs and enemy alien civilian internees from the territories of the Central Powers held in Ireland during World War I. Viewing Irish responses to the enemy within the context of the then United Kingdom, Buck explains the material organization of such detention in Ireland and its political import for a nation at war. Dispersed, by government design, to hastily-adapted camps in various parts of small-town Ireland, this small but significant foreign presence – made up of POWs or luckless members of Ireland's tiny Central European immigrant population incarcerated willy-nilly as potential spies – gave the “enemy” corporeal form, yet elicited quite sparse instances of active xenophobia or physical hostility in comparison with Great Britain. Curiosity, nationalism and economic self-interest could indeed trump official enmity when Germans became customers, instead of burdens, and potential allies instead of foes.<sup>49</sup>

Michael Jonas's chapter also scrambles somewhat the categories of friend and foe by examining the ambiguities of Scandinavian neutrality during World War I, especially as mediated through the records of German and British diplomats. Classic “small nations” negotiating fraught relations with larger belligerent neighbours, Sweden, Norway and Denmark were all affected by the British naval blockade and the German submarine campaign in which the North Sea was an important theatre of war. Their neutrality coincided with British interests more than it did with Germany's. The War nevertheless presented business opportunities, especially for Sweden, whilst conservative,

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48 See Chapter 4, “Protestant Nationalists and the Irish Conscription Crisis, 1918,” in this volume.

49 See Chapter 5, “POWs and Civilian Internees during World War I,” in this volume.

monarchist and pro-German “activism” in that country – encouraged from Berlin – fed a perception of Swedish partiality. In all three kingdoms, though, Jonas argues that, however unevenly, the war years occasioned a shift from legalistic and commercially opportunistic neutrality to more principled, moralistic neutrality presaging an epochal turn in Scandinavian politics towards social democracy.<sup>50</sup>

More brutally polarized, meanwhile, were Spanish politics, still anger-laden from defeat in the Spanish-American War of 1898. As Richard Gow shows, long-fraught civil-military relations deteriorated in wartime neutral Spain to the point of effective army insubordination by 1916–17. Relegated by history to “small nation” rank, the once-mighty Spanish kingdom and its military compensated for these frustrations with enhanced neo-colonial repression in Spanish Morocco while, at home, the army loudly and heavy-handedly opposed the gathering threat from anti-national forces of regional nationalism and class politics. As neutrals, the Spanish traded abroad, increasingly with the USA, while fighting a domestic war of words broadly between pro-German conservatives and pro-Entente liberals. Neutrality, overall, though, sent the army (led by a top-heavy officer corps resistant to reform) into even steeper decline as a military outfit whilst its increasingly pronounced politicization during World War I helped to pave the way for the advent of dictatorship in Spain in 1923.<sup>51</sup>

The rhetoric of small nations’ rights could, in turn, be mobilized even against neutral states that were themselves deemed small powers. Catalan nationalism posed just such a challenge, in a manner completely bound up with the World War I context, as Florian Graf’s chapter argues. Pro-Entente “Catalanist” street protesters seized on the Wilsonian moment of 1918 and took to the boulevards of Barcelona to call for, at a minimum, the decentralization of power within Spain, drawing the wrath of police and of self-styled pro-state patriots. The war context brutalized Catalan class politics too; in the years 1918 to 1923, the streets of the Catalan capital became sites of targeted assassination of class opponents, either industrial magnates or union agitators. Barcelona was a den of foreign fugitives and of vice. World War I and its aftermath witnessed the super-abundant availability of pistols to malfeasants while normalizing violence in cultural terms.<sup>52</sup>

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50 See Chapter 6, “Neutral Allies or Immoral Pariahs? Scandinavian Neutrality, International Law and the Great Power Politics in World War I,” in this volume.

51 See Chapter 7, “Civil and Military Relations in Spain in the Context of World War I,” in this volume.

52 See Chapter 8, “World War I and its Impact on Catalonia,” in this volume.

Meanwhile, neutral Switzerland and Luxembourg had contrasting experiences of World War I. Luxembourg, akin to Belgium, was invaded and occupied by the German Empire, in 1914, even if it chose, on account of its meagre military resources, the path of minimum resistance to the Germans and retained its own (circumscribed) government throughout. Switzerland went unmolested but experienced press wars between its French- and German-speaking communities. Ingrid Brühwiler and Matias Gardin discuss here how these fraught contexts played out in the realms of the Swiss and Luxembourgish education systems, using the evidence of teachers' professional periodicals. The War's raging storm imposed new priorities on teachers' magazines; first, discretion, in the case of Luxembourg in the face of an occupier but also, over time, both Swiss and Luxembourgish teachers expounded a version of patriotism that would be simultaneously internationalist and multi-lingual as befitted their composite nations.<sup>53</sup>

The case of wartime Poland, considered here by Jens Boysen, is essentially a story of the internationalization of the domestic affairs of a small nation, or more accurately of an aspirant Polish nation-state. Here again, complications abound: ethnic Poles were distributed amongst three dynastic empires and, in Habsburg-ruled Galicia, themselves became for the Ruthenians just another unloved dominant caste. Many Poles instinctively contested the label of "small nation" and saw the War and its end as a chance to restore an eighteenth-century Polish imperial project in the Baltic particularly. Boysen contextualizes and recounts the creation of space during World War I for new Polish national projects, ranging from federal Austrian- or Russian-sponsored nationhood to full-blown independence backed up with the democratic rhetoric of the victorious Entente powers. Far from inevitable, as the Polish Second Republic's received history would have it, the new Poland of 1918 came to many as a surprise and to many others as an unwelcome presence, sowing seeds for future conflict.<sup>54</sup>

Guido Hausmann relates the wartime experience of Ukraine, which, like Poland, constituted a small nation in terms of its relative powerlessness in European politics rather than its size. Ukrainian-speakers were split between the Habsburg and Russian Empires and thus, like the Poles, fought on opposite sides during the War. Hausmann demonstrates that the February Revolution of 1917 in Russia allowed for the development of a distinct Ukrainian army under

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53 See Chapter 9, "Fabricating National Unity in Torn Contexts: World War I in the Multilingual Countries of Switzerland and Luxembourg," in this volume.

54 See Chapter 10, "Imperial Service, Alienation, and an Unlikely National "Rebirth": The Poles in World War I," in this volume.

Russian authority and resulted in the rapid “Ukrainization” of its soldiers. Ukrainian nationalists were also active in promoting their cause and courted the support of the Central Powers for an expansive new state drawing heavily on Russian territory. In the wake of the October Revolution, the Central Powers authorized the establishment of a Ukrainian state for the first time, but their defeat in war led to its collapse in December 1918. The experience of World War I, Hausmann concludes, led Ukrainian nationalists to realize the precariousness of the Ukrainian nation-building process, while at the same time remaining committed to it.<sup>55</sup>

Part Three focuses on colonial peripheries, which we have defined earlier in the introductory chapter and which we understand here both as formal colonies of European empires and also as regions far removed from the metropolises that became objects of foreign interventions for ideological and/or strategic purposes. The similarities and connections between European and non-European regions situated at the periphery of the centres of power at the time of World War I become particularly evident when we look at the geographical areas covered by the chapters in this section. The case-studies come from colonial peripheries in three continents, and focus specifically on the Arctic region in Northern Russia, on the Tatar and Kirgiz steppes in the eastern fringes of Europe, on Turkestan in Central Asia, and on both North Africa and subequatorial East Africa.

Part Three starts with a chapter by Steven Balbirnie, which epitomizes the transnational approach of this volume, since it looks at the influence of ideas and practices of colonial warfare learned by British officers and troops in India and Ireland and applied to the Russian Civil War. Balbirnie looks specifically at the landing of British troops in Murmansk in Northern Russia in 1918 and interprets this event as both a chapter in the history of World War I and a chapter in British imperial history in a peripheral region of Europe. Even though the action had the specific objective of interrupting critical supplies to the Germans, the British army essentially conducted a small colonial war with a relatively small number of soldiers. As in Britain’s colonial wars in Asia and Africa, the British army relied on the support of native auxiliaries and effectively employed British imperial tactics against the Russian Bolsheviks’ guerrilla warfare.<sup>56</sup>

The next two chapters in this section focus on the Russian steppes and Turkestan as important case-studies of how World War I affected local

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55 See Chapter 11, “The Ukrainian Moment of World War I,” in this volume.

56 See Chapter 12, “Small War on a Violent Frontier: Colonial Warfare and British Intervention in Northern Russia, 1918–1919,” in this volume.

populations in colonial peripheries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Danielle Ross looks at the traditional societies of the Tatar and the Kirgiz, at the periphery of the Russian Empire, where oral and musical traditions were much more effective than written means of propaganda, given the region's widespread illiteracy. Ross focuses on the particular use of songs and musical compositions by successive groups such as monarchists, nationalists, and finally Bolsheviks as a means to convince Tatar peasants and Kirgiz shepherds to join first the Russian effort in the War and then the Soviet side in the Russian Civil War. Ultimately, Ross concludes that "while in some ways the Great War and the Russian Revolution precipitated a decolonization of the Russian Empire, these events also refined and expanded practices of government-minority relations that were born under the old regime but were retained under the new one."<sup>57</sup> In the following chapter, David Noack looks at Turkestan as another colonial periphery of the Russian Empire – one at the centre of the Great Powers' ambitions in Central Asia since the late nineteenth-century's "Great Game"—and at the impact of German and British plans for control of the area during World War I. Following an uprising by Turkestan's Muslim population and the subsequent collapse of Russian power in 1917, Germany planned an invasion, which the British opposed with two subsequent expeditions, fearing the fall of a vitally strategic area located in Central Asia into enemy hands. Subsequently, in 1918 and 1919, the British Indian Army, headed by Wilfrid Malleon, actively supported the Whites against the Reds in the Russian Civil War fought in the area.<sup>58</sup>

With the next two chapters in this section, our focus moves from Asia to Africa, and specifically to French Tunisia and Algeria as examples of colonial peripheries in the North African region in which anti-colonial movements anticipating future nationalist aspirations arose in the wake of World War I. Christopher Rominger shows how, as a result of the censorship imposed by the French Protectorate over Tunisian papers and public opinion in the period 1912–1920, historiography has overlooked the presence of important instances of opposition to the French war effort by Tunisian anti-colonial activists at the time of World War I. Looking at previously little researched documents, Rominger focuses his analysis specifically on Mukhtar al-Ayari, who fought for France as a volunteer soldier during the War and then became a communist and anti-colonial Tunisian nationalist. In his chapter, Rominger concludes that

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57 See Chapter 13, "Fighting for the Tsar, Fighting against the Tsar: The Use of Folk Culture to Mobilize the Tatar Population during World War I and the Russian Revolution (1914–1921)," in this volume.

58 See Chapter 14, "Continuing the Great Game: Turkestan as a German Objective in World War I," in this volume.

the War itself was instrumental in the emergence of voices such as that of al-Ayari, which dissented from the view of the largely European Tunisian elite.<sup>59</sup> In his chapter, Dónal Hassett looks at neighbouring Algeria, France's most important colony, and at the effect that World War I had on both the indigenous and European populations there. He argues that the War had a transformative effect, as a result of the unprecedented experience of large numbers of European and indigenous Algerians who fought for France on the European fronts. Hassett concludes that this experience helped to shape the political life of Algeria through the people's engagement in political debates in which European and indigenous leaders confronted each other on the crucial issues of equality and difference while "they recognized the potential to negotiate a new form of imperial citizenship". At the same time, however, Algerians were deeply divided over support for the opposite aims of defense of political rights for the indigenous communities and of creation of a European-dominated autonomous Algeria.<sup>60</sup>

In the final chapter, Aude Chanson looks at German East Africa as a representative case-study of a colonial periphery in the subequatorial area of the African continent during World War I. Chanson looks first at how German forces succeeded in fending off the Allies from Germany's largest colony until November 1918, despite being few in number and completely surrounded by Allied colonies. She then focuses specifically on the impact of the four-year war period on the majority local African populations, which were extremely diverse, both ethnically and linguistically, and on the German minority's treatment of them. Looking also at the indigenous populations' response, Chanson shows how the needs of the War led to a reorientation of the economy of German East Africa with the privileging of newly established war industries over agricultural production, while, at the same time, the war effort also led to the employment of large numbers of local *Askaris* as German troops. Ultimately, Chanson concludes that World War I had a major negative impact on the local population of German East Africa, both in terms of human cost and the disruption of the environment and infrastructure, phenomena that made the lives of ordinary people extremely difficult after the end of the War.<sup>61</sup>

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59 See Chapter 15, "Paths not Taken: Mukhtar al-Ayari and Alternative Voices in Post-War Tunisia," in this volume.

60 See Chapter 16, "Defining Imperial Citizenship in the Shadow of World War I: Equality and Difference in the Debates around Post-war Colonial Reform in Algeria," in this volume.

61 See Chapter 17, "German East Africa: A Territory and People in World War I," in this volume.

Ultimately, we would hope that this volume demonstrates the value of an interconnected history of World War I. Our work embraces the current trend towards transnational approaches to world history, which have interconnectedness as their presiding concern.<sup>62</sup> The interconnected nature of the War on a global scale was particularly highlighted by the rapid spread of the 1918–1919 Influenza Pandemic to all corners of the earth to devastating effect. Indeed the difficulties faced by Great Powers in managing the pandemic crisis exposed them to challenges from colonial populations in particular. For instance, colonial mismanagement of the pandemic stimulated indigenous peoples in Western Samoa to demand colonial reform and ultimately greater autonomy from the British Empire.<sup>63</sup> Following this example, we can envision future studies of small nations and colonial peripheries that focus on the wartime experience of groups, such as gypsies, Berbers and Bengali, which were doubly marginalized by colonial powers and neighbouring ethnic groups. It is our aspiration that scholars will generate transnational research that will continue to advance our understanding of World War I as an integrated, global phenomenon.

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62 Emily S. Rosenberg and Akira Iriye, eds., *World Connecting (A History of the World)* (Cambridge, 2012).

63 Anne Rasmussen, "The Spanish Flu," in *Cambridge History*, ed. Winter, vol. 3, 334–57; Susan Pedersen, "Samoa on the World Stage: Petitions and Peoples before the Mandates Commission of the League of Nations," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 40 (2012): 231–61.



# The Revolutionary Program of the German Empire: The Case of Ireland<sup>1</sup>

*Christine Strotmann*

Soon after the outbreak of the First World War, the German High Command asked the Imperial German Foreign Office (Auswärtiges Amt) to trigger sabotage and revolution in Allied spheres of influence, mostly with the intention of drawing Allied troops away from the main theaters of war. The term “revolutionary program”, later coined by historians, refers to a set of different strategies developed for this purpose.<sup>2</sup> This paper examines how these were applied in Ireland. It presents the common interests and different opinions of the Foreign Office, the German army and the navy, as well as the strategies they chose to achieve their goals.<sup>3</sup> Roger Casement is often treated as the key figure in this dialogue, but to understand the various German, Irish and Irish-American views on cooperation, it makes sense to consider the whole course of the war and not just the period up to the Easter Rising, when he was arrested and then executed.

The German program for Ireland focused on public opinion for geostrategic and military reasons and because of the (presumed) strong influence of Irish matters on US foreign policy. Irish separatists were, by contrast, interested in military aid. Negotiations with the American Clan na Gael, its emissaries Roger Casement and Robert Monteith, as well as Joseph Mary Plunkett from the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) in Dublin, soon revealed a huge difference in expectations: The Irish negotiators were mainly interested in forming an Irish Brigade and continually asked for German weapons, troops and submarines to be landed in Ireland. Their German partners were more interested in the use of the Irish question for propa­ganda purposes and knew next to nothing about

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1 I am very grateful to Mahon Murphy and William Mulligan for proofreading this article and suggesting further additions. Mistakes are obviously the sole responsibility of the author.

2 For a discussion of the term: Hans-Dieter Kluge, *Irland in der Deutschen Geschichtswissenschaft, Politik und Propaganda vor 1914 und im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Frankfurt am Main, 1985), 122–24.

3 The main sources analyzed here are found in the Political Archive of the Foreign Office in Berlin: PA Berlin, *Weltkrieg 11k geheim, Unternehmungen und Aufwiegungen gegen unsere Feinde: Unter den Iren*, 14 vol, PA-R 21153–21166 and England 80, Akten betreffend „Die Verhältnisse in Irland“, vol 9–16, 1893–1916, PA-R 5865–5872.

the state of affairs in Ireland. After the failed attempt to land weapons for the Easter Rising, the German High Command and navy did show interest in increasing the quantity of aid, although it was still minimal. Here the differences between Irish separatists and the Germans became clear: While Germany was only ever prepared to invest sparingly, to exploit nationalists and create unrest within the British Empire, the Irish wanted sufficient quantities of weapons and German military support to ensure a successful revolution that would lead to independence. Notwithstanding the division between the Germans and Irish separatists, the Irish question was still exploited in German propaganda in the United States and, after its entry into the war, in neutral countries.

Once empires were at war with each other they recognized small nations, but, of course, only in their enemies' territories. Unlike other areas where Germany sought to gain influence during the war, Ireland was not an important issue for German political and military elites before the war broke out. While its geostrategic position was important, Ireland was too clearly dominated by the British Empire and the "Irish question" was considered a domestic problem.<sup>4</sup> The two successive German ambassadors to London, Paul Graf von Wolff Metternich zur Gracht and Karl Max von Lichnowsky constantly sent reports about the matter, but did not emphasize it.<sup>5</sup> This is easily explained by the fact that both ambassadors were considered anglophile and frequently displayed interest in a strong British-German alliance.<sup>6</sup> Reports on Irish matters from the London embassy were not completely unsympathetic to Irish problems, but clearly displayed a colonial attitude claiming "Logic is a weak spot for the Irish"<sup>7</sup>, or calling them "fanatic Catholics" and "poor and barely cultured".<sup>8</sup> While the Foreign Office was relatively well informed about how the "Irish question" was discussed and debated in London and by Irish moderate nationalists, there was little information on Irish separatists. Furthermore, there is

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4 In fact, Irish nationalists lamented the neglect of their "Western question" in comparison to the "Eastern question" of small nations in the Balkans. See Florian Keisinger, *Unzivilisierte Kriege im zivilisierten Europa? Die Balkankriege und die öffentliche Meinung in Deutschland, England und Irland, 1876–1913* (Paderborn, 2008), 155.

5 For analyses of the London embassy reports prior to the war see Wolfgang Hünsele, *Das Deutsche Kaiserreich und die Irische Frage 1900–1914* (Frankfurt am Main, 1978) and Kluge, *Irland in Geschichtswissenschaft*.

6 Joachim Lerchenmüller, *"Keltischer Sprengstoff" Eine wissenschaftsgeschichtliche Studie über die deutsche Keltologie von 1900 bis 1945* (Berlin, 1997), 38.

7 Report from Ambassador Metternich, 13 April 1912, PA-R 5868 [own translation].

8 Report from Counsellor to the Embassy, Kühlmann, 14 Sept. 1912, PA-R 5868 [own translation].

also no reliable information on German spies or sabotage in Ireland before the outbreak of the war.<sup>9</sup> It is unlikely that such networks would not have been used or been referred to during the war. The outbreak of the war turned the tables – even though the Irish, who were just as willing as other groups to cooperate with the German Empire, were never treated as peers, they had a key asset that made them interesting for Germany: Irish-Americans.

With the cutting of Germany's undersea cables, the US embassy was one of only a few sources of information about Ireland, albeit second-hand. This lack of information reinforced the Foreign Office's leading role in the revolutionary program for Ireland and in agitating within the British Empire as ordered by Chief of General Staff Helmuth von Moltke: On 2 August 1914, he asked the Foreign Office to create revolutions in India and Egypt, regions that were being constantly broadened.<sup>10</sup> Nonetheless the Foreign Office had to cooperate with the army, which created a Political Section of the General Staff for this purpose, which had the responsibility for supplying weapons, soldiers and privileges for certain POWs. In the Irish case, the navy also had to be involved since it was in charge of intelligence reports from Britain and Ireland and was obviously needed if any delivery was ever to take place.

Irish separatists in the US saw the war as an opportunity for an alliance with the German Empire. The unlikely and opportunistic alliance was to be forged via the German ambassador, Count Johann Heinrich von Bernstorff. He was not necessarily receptive to the revolutionaries since he was strictly committed to keeping the US neutral. The first offers of collaboration by Clan na Gael members and Roger Casement were received sympathetically, but not enthusiastically, in Berlin. Casement approached the military attaché, Franz von Papen, who subsequently called Berlin on 9 August 1914. He claimed that Casement, "the leader of all Irish associations in America", had contacted him and explained that the Irish-Americans themselves could land 50,000 rifles in Ireland and only needed a German declaration of assistance to free Ireland after the victory.<sup>11</sup> It is quite surprising that von Papen, who had been military attaché in the US since 1913 and led a spy network, mistook Casement for the

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9 Compare Jérôme aan de Wiel, *The Irish Factor 1899–1919: Ireland's Strategic and Diplomatic Importance for Foreign Powers* (Dublin; Portland, Oregon, 2008), 81.

10 Hew Strachan, *The First World War. Vol. 1: To Arms* (Oxford, 2003), 696–97.

11 Military attaché in New York to German Foreign Office, 9 August 1914, telephone message of the General Staff, transcription, Berlin, 24 August 1914, PA-R 21153. Translation taken from Reinhard R. Doerries, ed. *Prelude to the Easter Rising. Sir Roger Casement in Imperial Germany* (London, 2000). Where available, Doerries' translations will be used.

leader of the Irish-Americans.<sup>12</sup> Von Papen was the instigating power behind a lot of similar schemes that mostly ended fatally and it seems, as a military man, he always opted for action.<sup>13</sup>

The diplomats receiving such offers in Germany were not as easily fooled by separatist propaganda. Foreign Minister Gottlieb von Jagow replied: "As far as is known here, the Irish in Ireland have been loyal. It should furthermore be considered, whether we might not lose the sympathy of the English and American populations if we made a declaration regarding the liberation of Ireland."<sup>14</sup> He left the ultimate decision on whether collaboration with separatists was advisable to Count Bernstorff, who replied:

... we are most likely to make friends here by liberating suppressed people like Poles, Finns and the Irish [...] The main point to me in this seems to lie in the question of whether there is any possibility of reconciliation with England or if we have to be prepared for a mortal fight. In the latter case, I advise that we fulfil the Irish demands, that is, if we actually find Irishmen to help us.<sup>15</sup>

Interestingly, a warning from September 1914 written by German spy Hans-Adam von Wedell was filed amidst the general and not the Irish "Insurrection" material: "The Irish question is still virulent in certain Irish nationalist circles. However, we should not make the mistake of overestimating the size and influence of those circles. [...] Whether the Irish in America act depends on the stance the Irish in Ireland take!"<sup>16</sup>

The warning was ignored and Casement arrived in Germany as emissary of Clan na Gael on 31 October 1914.<sup>17</sup> In hindsight, it seems as if the Germans were

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12 Von Papen was subsequently asked to leave the USA, his espionage and sabotage being too obvious to the US government. Reinhard R. Doerries, "Die Mission Sir Roger Casements im Deutschen Reich 1914–1916, Dietrich Gerhard Zum 80. Geburtstag," *Historische Zeitschrift* 222 (1976): 621.

13 Doerries, "Mission Casements," 593.

14 Jagow to Foreign Office, Coblenz 25 Aug. 1914, PA-R 21153 [own translation].

15 Letters from Washington of 25 Sept. 1914, via Stockholm, Bernstorff, Stockholm 28 Sept. 1914, PA-R 21153 [own translation].

16 Hans-Adam von Wedell, Berlin, 30 Sept. 1914, PA-R 20936 [own translation]. Hans-Adam von Wedell was a German spy, known to the US government. See Earl E. Sperry, ed., *German Plots and Intrigues in the United States during the Period of our Neutrality*, Red, White and Blues Series, No. 10, Washington DC, July 1918. I am grateful to the English local historian, Simon Fielding, for this information.

17 Officially Casement's arrival was declared, together with the declaration of sympathy for Irish freedom, on 20 Nov. 1914. Doerries, "Mission Casements," 592.

careless in choosing the separatists as their allies<sup>18</sup>, but, in fact, they could not but benefit from the connection, since the Irish-Americans were powerful allies. Being under pressure since the “timetable war” the Schlieffen Plan had foreseen did not work out as planned, the German High Command had to look for other strategies and hence depended on intelligence to suggest new options.<sup>19</sup> Keeping the US out of the war certainly was the main goal here and hence the opportunity to work with one of the major ethnic groups could not have been missed.

Casement's goals were fourfold: permission for an Irish Brigade to be constituted from POWs, an official declaration of sympathy for Irish independence, a commitment to provide weapons and military aid, and finally, the circulation of pro-Irish propaganda in Germany.<sup>20</sup> It is difficult to tell whether he and Clan na Gael had any clear priorities at that stage. While Reinhard Doerries identified the declaration as Casement's main goal, this is unjustified given the lengths to which Casement went to build up the Irish Brigade.<sup>21</sup> What can be established is that some wishes were – at least in theory – a lot easier for the Germans to grant and all of them were representative of methods and goals of other “revolutionary programs” operated by the Foreign Office.<sup>22</sup> The program was at the core of anti-British propaganda activities.<sup>23</sup> And even though the Foreign Office invested a lot of money and manpower in Islamic regions (they even had a specific office for this purpose, the “Nachrichtenstelle für den

18 Felix Kloke suggests as much. Felix Kloke, *Von innen schwächen – von außen besiegen. Aufstände im Feindesland als Instrument Deutscher Kriegsführung im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Munich, 2011), 41.

19 Pöhlmann argues this point in detail. Markus Pöhlmann, “Towards a New History of German Military Intelligence in the Era of the Great War: Approaches and Sources,” *Journal of Intelligence History* 5 (Winter 2005): vi.

20 Andreas Kratz, “Die Mission Joseph Mary Plunketts im Deutschen Reich 1915 und ihre Bedeutung für den Osteraufstand 1916,” *Historische Mitteilungen* 8 (1995): 202.

21 Doerries, “Mission Casements,” 591.

22 The main problem when dealing with the “revolutionary program” is that such a program was never written down. Max von Oppenheim, who was in charge of the Islamic countries, wrote a memorandum listing the same methods as used everywhere: Propaganda in enemy territory, special treatment for POWs from targeted regions, recruiting as volunteers from said POWs and aiding revolutions in the regions. Max von Oppenheim, „Denkschrift betreffend die Revolutionierung der islamischen Gebiete unserer Feinde“, Oct. 1914, PA-R 20938.

23 Stefan Kestler, *Die Deutsche Auslandsaufklärung und das Bild der Ententemächte im Spiegel zeitgenössischer Propagandaveröffentlichungen während des Ersten Weltkrieges* (Frankfurt am Main, 1994), 272.

Orient" [Intelligence Service for the Orient])<sup>24</sup>, whenever referring to positive propaganda for neutral or enemy countries, the German officials would mention cases like Ireland, Finland and Poland. In the clash between the Empires, small European nations certainly made for a better challenge to Allied propaganda than Arabic regions and people, especially for Germany, since it had to counteract the propaganda related to German atrocities in Belgium.<sup>25</sup> The Germans were also hoping for a domino effect in the British colonies. Roger Casement never missed a chance to make a strong point about international opportunities: "The effect of a German pronouncement in favour of Irish independence would be, perhaps as fully evident in Egypt and India as in Ireland itself. Ideas cannot be arrested at a frontier."<sup>26</sup>

Other nationalists also contacted Berlin to ask for aid for Irish separatists – for example the editor of "Pro India", Mr. Pillai cited as justification the pro-German propaganda Irish-Americans were distributing in the US.<sup>27</sup> Irish and Indian separatists in the US had a longstanding network and managed to coordinate and present Berlin with the opportunity of helping rid England of its biggest colony and an integral part of the union. However, a weapons delivery planned by members of Clan na Gael and the Indian nationalist Gadar Party, financed by German military attaché von Papen in 1915, failed and led to the uncovering of the network in the ensuing trials.<sup>28</sup>

Casement initially knew how to play the Germans and – rightly – pointed out that "a declaration in favor of Irish independence would cost Germany nothing."<sup>29</sup> Hence Under-Secretary of State at the Foreign Office (and later Foreign Minister) Arthur Zimmermann, after first meeting Casement in

24 Wolfgang G. Schwanitz, "Max von Oppenheim und der Heilige Krieg. Zwei Denkschriften zur Revolutionierung islamischer Gebiete 1914 und 1940," *Sozial.Geschichte* 19 (2004): 28–59.

25 Salvador Oberhaus, "Zum wilden Aufstande entflammen" – *Die Deutsche Ägyptenpolitik 1914–1918. Ein Beitrag zur Propagandageschichte des Ersten Weltkrieges* (Saarbrücken, 2007), 18.

26 Memorandum "von hiesigen Iren", "How Ireland might help Germany and how Germany might help Ireland. The part of Ireland", Attachment to report by von Bernstorff, 6 Sept. 1914, PA-R 21153.

27 Attachment, Memorandum to Romberg, Bern 2 Sept. 1914, PA-R 21153.

28 For description of the course collaboration took in the USA during the War see: Matthew E. Plowman, "The Odd at Odds: British Spies and the US Attorneys versus a Conspiracy of German Junkers, Indian Revolutionaries, and Irish Republicans during WW I," *Journal of the Oxford University History Society* 7, Special Issue, Colloquium 2009.

29 Memorandum "von hiesigen Iren", "How Ireland might help Germany and how Germany might help Ireland. The part of Ireland", Attachment to report by von Bernstorff, 6 Sept. 1914, PA-R 21153.

person, quickly wrote such an announcement and presented it to Imperial Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg. Foreign Minister von Jagow refused the form of a proclamation claiming it to be “simply not practicable”<sup>30</sup>, and therefore the declaration was published as an authorized interview with Bethmann Hollweg in the German press on 20 November. Jagow was careful to remain within the bounds of international law and a certain international code of conduct. The declaration said little more than that Germany – if it was ever to land on Ireland’s shores – would not come as an enemy and that it wished Ireland “national welfare and freedom”.<sup>31</sup> Casement directly quoted the German State Secretary of the Colonial Office, Dr. Wilhelm Solf: “the declaration was an entirely new departure in German foreign policy, for until that statement Germany had never said or done anything that implied a desire to meddle in another country’s internal affairs.”<sup>32</sup> It is strange that Germany would not deliver a full declaration of sympathy at this stage in the war and that Casement was content with what he received – the chances of Germany landing in Ireland were practically zero. While the Germans were satisfied with the propaganda coup they assumed they had achieved, Casement saw the interview as a stepping stone towards a fruitful collaboration. For one thing, he was now willing to name possible agent-provocateurs for sabotage in the US.<sup>33</sup> But this double strategy of propaganda and sabotage could easily implode, since now Casement’s role was public and all the pro-Ireland propaganda in the US could not make up for sabotage discovered there. In 1915 von Papen, who operated the spy network in the US was asked to leave the country, and his successor, Wolf von Igel, also made mistakes while under surveillance by the Secret Service, which proved fatal to the German-Irish conspiracy.<sup>34</sup>

For the present, Casement and his German negotiating partners had relatively high hopes. The Germans focused on the propaganda effect a positive recruitment effort among Irish POWs and civilian internees might have.<sup>35</sup> There was a fundamental misunderstanding as Casement was not just interested in the propaganda effect of the planned Irish Brigade, but was interested

30 Jagow to Zimmermann, Großes Hauptquartier 7 Nov. 1914, PA-R 21153 [own translation].

31 Article in *Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, 20 Nov. 1914, in PA-R 21154.

32 NLI, Roger Casement Papers MS 1689, Diary, 13 Dec. 1914, quoted in Thomas Hennessey, *Dividing Ireland: World War One and Partition* (London, 1998), 135.

33 Note Richard Meyer, Foreign Office, 6 Jan. 1915, PA-R 21156; the naval staff had asked to recruit Irish saboteurs for actions in the US and Canada through Casement.

34 Doerries, “Mission Casements,” 620–21.

35 The recruitment efforts among the civilian internees at Ruhleben camp are usually ignored, but have been documented by Matthew Stibbe, *British Civilian Internees in Germany. The Ruhleben Camp, 1914–18* (Manchester/New York, 2008), 125–26.

in actually using it to conquer Ireland. Claiming that there were enough Irish POWs in German camps to raise a battalion, Jagow had allowed Bernstorff to decide whether to do so in October 1914, objecting only to the Germans calling on the prisoners, as it would violate international law.<sup>36</sup> The reluctance of von Jagow to adopt the revolutionary agenda is striking and reflects his earlier opposition to an official declaration. It is also telling of the Foreign Office's attitude: They wanted to collaborate with revolutionaries, but were somewhat opposed to revolutionary strategies. Leaving the decision to Bernstorff, who could not have any insight into the numbers and political affiliations of Irish POWs in Germany, proved a substantial first mistake. While Jagow was well aware that the outcome of the recruiting efforts would not be an effective military unit, he put his hopes on a great propaganda success – to present the world with a sufficient number of Irish deserters willing to fight against the British Empire.<sup>37</sup> Altogether 2,486 POWs, who were assumed to be Irish Catholics, had been brought to a special camp in Limburg to allow the recruiting process in December 1914.<sup>38</sup> During the same month, an agreement was made between Casement and the Foreign Office, to keep up the appearance that it was an independent Irish endeavor – an absolutely irrational effort since, as Joachim Lerchenmueller has pointed out, it was simply not possible to “separate British POWs of Irish nationality from their comrades, bring them to another camp, arm them and train them and all of that without substantial help of the German military”.<sup>39</sup> But it soon became clear that Casement had promised too much: The recruiting effort never amounted to more than 55 volunteers.<sup>40</sup> Irish POWs in the camps were – as was to be suspected – mostly Unionists and Home Rulers. Being approached in an open manner by a former British diplomat now turned Irish revolutionary was not likely to bring out any substantial numbers of recruits – instead Casement was despised and called a traitor by most prisoners and civilian internees alike.<sup>41</sup> Germany did not make the agreement public. The affair was a resounding failure: The Germans had taken Casement's bragging about the number of recruits too seriously and were rightly disappointed, while Casement felt that Germany was not making enough efforts, for example by treating the prisoners better.<sup>42</sup> The fact that the

36 Jagow to Foreign Office, Gr. HQ 1 Oct. 1914, PA-R 21153.

37 Von Jagow to Zimmermann, 7 Nov. 1914, PA-R 21153.

38 Note to a letter from Mühlberg, Embassy in Rome, 16 Dec. 1914, PA-R 21155.

39 Lerchenmüller, “*Keltischer Sprengstoff*”, 52 [own translation].

40 Doerries, “Mission Casements,” 595.

41 Doerries, “Mission Casements,” 605; Stibbe, *Ruhleben Camp*, 126.

42 Roger Casement to Georg von Wedel, Limburg a.d. Lahn 13 Jan. 1915, PA-R 21156; Roger Casement to Böhm, 3 July 1915, in UCD Archives Boehm/Casement Papers, P127/12. These



agreement had also contained a clause entertaining the possibility of using the Irish Brigade in Egypt additionally led to a serious crisis between Casement and Clan na Gael, since despite the internationalist rhetoric, they would not allow Irish separatists to fight anywhere but in Ireland.<sup>43</sup>

The recruitment failure was not only due to Casement's misfortune, but to a twofold problem that lay at the heart of German-Irish relations at the time: The Germans wanted yet another propaganda coup, but needed the recruitment to be by an Irishman. Casement might have been a lot more successful, had he used the "normal" approach taken by Irish separatists,<sup>44</sup> and probably most revolutionary groups: Talking to each and every recruit alone. Such conspiracy could not serve the Germans' needs. On the other hand, they clearly sealed their fate by refusing to treat the Irish prisoners better. No positive propaganda came out of the efforts that were being made – quite the opposite – and the chance to gain publicity in Ireland, the US and other neutral countries was wasted.

Germany was keen on getting rid of the volunteers and the planned revolution in Ireland offered that opportunity. The Rising had been an integral part of separatists' plans as well as German-Irish negotiations from the beginning of the war. Firstly, Casement negotiated weapons deliveries with the Germans, reporting back to Clan na Gael on 1 November 1914: "The *sanitary pipes* will be furnished and on a big scale with a plenty stock of *disinfectants*. Enough for 50,000 health officers at least. I made that the first condition and they agreed."<sup>45</sup> Additionally he and Clan na Gael demanded German military assistance in Ireland or at least the landing of volunteers there. Germany was not ready to give any of its soldiers or marines to such a risky undertaking. Germany did not formulate any concrete plan of naval warfare outside of the Northern Sea.<sup>46</sup>

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problems stemmed mostly from the fact that the Germans failed to separate Irish separatists from other Irish nationals and even Englishmen. Casement urged their removal from Limburg, attaching lists: Casement to von Wedel Berlin, 6 April 1915, PA-R 21159.

43 Doerries, "Mission Casements," 596. Also Joseph MacGarrity's letter to Devoy, 1 Aug. 1915, in O'Brien, William/Desmond Ryan, eds., *Devoy's postbag*, Volume II, 1880–1928 (Dublin, 1953), 473.

44 As lamented by John Devoy after the war, John Devoy, "Roger Casement and the Irish Brigade in Germany," *The Gaelic American*, 28 June 1924, 2.

45 Copy Foreign Office, Casement to "Joe", Berlin, 1 Nov. 1914, PA-R 21153. Underlining in original.

46 They strictly followed the Tirpitz Plan. Kluge, *Irland in Geschichtswissenschaft*, 247.

Only a major naval battle would have opened up the opportunity to get to Ireland, but that was not in sight in 1914 (or thereafter).<sup>47</sup>

When conscription became topical in Ireland and with the ensuing public unrest, the IRB saw its chance to launch a revolution. Since Casement's efforts to have weapons delivered had not been successful in the eyes of the IRB, they sent Joseph Mary Plunkett, who was the only negotiator to come to Germany directly from Ireland. He was part of the Military Council, a secret circle within the IRB, which planned the Rising. It was in his IRB capacity and not as a member of the Irish Volunteers that Plunkett came to Germany, contrary to Doerries' claim.<sup>48</sup> He and Casement presented the Germans with the so-called "Ireland-Report" on 8 June 1915.<sup>49</sup> The plans were more serious than a lot of scholarship suggests when referring to the Rising as merely an effort at blood sacrifice.<sup>50</sup> From the memorandum it is obvious that for Plunkett and presumably the Military Council a German landing was an integral part of the planned Rising. Plunkett left Germany at the end of June 1915 certain that Germany would provide arms and sufficient troops for their landing, perhaps even for an invasion.<sup>51</sup> There is no evidence for such a promise in the German files, but that does not mean that there was no verbal agreement or at least suggestion towards that end. Either way, with Plunkett's visit, negotiations between the Germans and the Irish accelerated pace.<sup>52</sup> This was also due to the timely coincidence of news about the situation in Ireland, such as in a note by von Papen, "tensions in Ireland are rising increasingly, a solution will probably only be made by use of force".<sup>53</sup> When the planning for the Rising became a serious matter, the Foreign Office and the Political Section were happy to offer weapons to be delivered to Ireland. The battle at Verdun was stagnating by March 1916, and when Clan na Gael asked for weapons, a diversion of British troops to Ireland

47 Werner Rahn, "Strategische Optionen und Erfahrungen der Deutschen Marineführung 1914–1944: Zu den Chancen und Grenzen einer mitteleuropäischen Kontinentalmacht gegen Seemächte," in *Werner Rahn – Dienst und Wissenschaft*, ed. Wilfried Rädisch (Potsdam, 2010), 199.

48 Brian Barton and Michael Foy, *The Easter Rising* (Gloucestershire, 1999), 12. Doerries, "Mission Casements," 607.

49 Plunkett to Foreign Office, 8 June 1915, PA-R 21161.

50 For an example of such scholarship, see Patrick Maume, *The long gestation: Irish nationalist life, 1891–1918* (New York, 1999), 177. Compare the discussion in Barton and Foy, *The Easter Rising*, 14 and Kratz, "Mission Plunketts", 214.

51 Kratz, "Mission Plunketts," 215.

52 Kratz, "Mission Plunketts," 215.

53 Militärattaché von Papen to Stv. Gr. Generalstab, Abt. IIIb, 28 July 1915, PA-R 5869. Message allegedly captured from the governor of Hong Kong [own translation].

became attractive.<sup>54</sup> Sending German soldiers, like John Devoy demanded<sup>55</sup>, was out of the question for the Germans. Ultimately they agreed to send 20,000 rifles and 10 machine guns. Devoy accepted and Casement – when he finally learned about the outcome of negotiations – understood quickly and correctly that this was not sufficient for even a slight chance of a successful Rising. He quoted Rudolf Nadolny, leader of the Political Section, in his diary: “We have no idealistic interest in Ireland and no revolution, no rifles. If it were not that we hope for a military diversion we should give no rifles.”<sup>56</sup> Nadolny was not prepared to give in to Casement, who tried to get the Germans to send him to Ireland to call off the Rising. Instead he wanted to rid himself of the Irish Brigade by sending them over, something Casement managed to avoid. In the end the Germans were prepared to ship him and Monteith. Presumably they did not expect them to be able to call off the rising.<sup>57</sup>

While these negotiations continued, it was already likely that no German aid was to reach Ireland: the British knew about the plans early on and not, as suggested by most scholars, due to the American raid on Wolf von Igel's office or, as Bernstorff claimed, by a leak in Berlin.<sup>58</sup> The idea that the British (precisely Room 40 of the Admiralty) had cracked the German code did not occur to anyone in Berlin or the embassy in Washington.<sup>59</sup>

In the end the German assistance to the Easter Rising amounted to 20,000 captured Russian rifles, 10 machine guns, the *Aud/Libau* to deliver the guns, and the submarine to transport Casement and Monteith. Since the weapon

54 Bernstorff to Bethmann Hollweg, Washington 10 Feb. 1916, PA-R 21163. The cable arrived in the Foreign Office on 7 March. It requested weapons and ammunition, but also stated: “We expect German help immediately after the start of the action.”

55 John Devoy to Bernstorff passed on to Foreign Office, Washington 16 Feb. 1916, PA-R 21163. Arrived in Berlin: 8 March 1916.

56 NYPL, Maloney Collection, Box 2, Casement's diary, 55, quoted in Doerries, *Roger Casement in Imperial Germany*, 37.

57 The submarine bringing Casement to Ireland was supposed to meet with the *Aud*, according to its captain. See Karl Spindler, *The Mystery of the Casement Ship* (Tralee, 1965), 203. As Jeff Dudgeon states that would have left Casement with little time to get to Dublin and call off the Rising: Jeff Dudgeon, “Casement's War, Review of *Field Day Review* 8 (2012),” *Dublin Review of Books* 67 (2015), <<http://www.dr.b.ie/essays/casement-s-war>>.

58 Doerries assumes that the information came from the USA, Doerries, *Die Mission Casements*, 622. A message by Bernstorff counteracts this view: He quoted from the English Blue Book, stating the commanding general in Dublin presented a letter stating a German weapon boat was underway on 17 April. The raid in von Igel's New York office was only on 18 April. Bernstorff to Foreign Office, 9 Oct. 1916, reached Berlin: 19 Dec. 1916, PA-R 21165.

59 Room 40 was able to decrypt material from Washington to Berlin since 1914. Paul McMahon, *British Spies and Irish Rebels: British Intelligence and Ireland, 1916–1945* (Woodbridge, 2008), 20.

delivery failed and the submarine passengers were quickly arrested or on the run, the only help that actually materialized were some small air and sea raids on the east coast of England, which “caused dismay in Britain but emphasised once again that, [German] operations must be limited to tip-and-run”.<sup>60</sup> But German complicity in the Rising had many repercussions, not least since the British knew about the German involvement and hence thought the Rising was called off as soon as they caught the delivery and Casement.<sup>61</sup> But the Council in Dublin decided to go on – fatally without assistance from other parts of the country.<sup>62</sup>

It took quite a while for the Germans to grasp the events of the Easter Rising. Not even the intelligence section of the Admiral Staff was informed properly. They wired on 29 May that the Rising had been provoked by the British<sup>63</sup> – a rumor deliberately spread by the IRB. Still in May 1916 the Admiral Staff was certain that the weapon delivery had succeeded<sup>64</sup>, and only on 4 June were they informed by the father of the interned Captain that the *Aud* had been sunk by him after being discovered by the British.<sup>65</sup>

Despite the lack of knowledge as to what had actually happened in Ireland, now, surprisingly, the Germans – particularly the navy – were prepared to provide further aid to the cause of Irish independence. On 6 May, Bernstorff sent a new request by the Irish-Americans, asking for help.<sup>66</sup> Zimmermann of the Foreign Office passed it on to Nadolny with the note: “for political reasons it seems initially advisable to demonstrate goodwill towards the endeavors of the Irish-American leaders in the America.”<sup>67</sup> The Germans further focused on the Irish community within the US. This is understandable considering the news stating that the Rising was a huge success in terms of anti-British public opinion there. Not noting that this did not consequently lead to pro-German

60 John Keegan, *The First World War* (London, 1999).

61 Adrian Gregory, “Review of *Prelude to the Easter Rising: Sir Roger Casement in Imperial Germany* by Reinhard Doerries”, *The English Historical Review* 115 (2000): 1024. Other scholarship suggests that the British deliberately let the Rising happen: McMahon, *British Spies and Irish Rebels*, 21.

62 Florence O’Donoghue, “Foreword”, Spindler, *The Mystery of the Casement Ship*, 18–19.

63 Report “Die irischen Unruhen” Admiral Staff, Antwerp Office, signed O.v. Görschen, 29 May 1916, in PA-R 5870.

64 Kluge, *Irland in Geschichtswissenschaft*, 156.

65 Kluge, *Irland in Geschichtswissenschaft*, 157.

66 Bernstorff, Washington, 6 May 1916, PA-R 21164. See also: Kluge, *Irland in Geschichtswissenschaft*, 156.

67 Bernstorff, Washington, 6 May 1916, PA-R 21164; note dated, 9 June 1916, (Zimmermann to Nadolny) [own translation].

feelings, it was decided to try to capitalize on it, and the domestic and international propaganda emphasized the hypocrisy of Great Britain advertising itself as the guardian of small nations, while at the same time acting with brutality in its own backyard. The propaganda was particularly meant to counter any coverage of German atrocities in Belgium.<sup>68</sup> In total the Easter Rising was regarded a “decisive gain” by German officials as they observed “ongoing Irish influence in America in an anti-English direction.”<sup>69</sup>

So “Operation P”, a plan for another attempt at gun-running was developed. Since there was little clarity on events in Ireland, it was only on 11 June that the Political Section informed Bernstorff that “in principle” they could help and asked him to specify: “manner, date and extent of desired help.”<sup>70</sup> The speed of communication had slowed down considerably by this time, and the Irish-American demands sent by Bernstorff in September only reached Berlin in November. The Irish asked for enough weapons for 250,000 men and, crucially, “a sufficient military force to cover the landing.”<sup>71</sup> The Political Section and the Admiral Staff agreed to offer 30,000 rifles, 10 machine guns and 6 million cartridges, to be delivered either in February or March 1917—but no landing force.<sup>72</sup> In February they learned that the Irish had changed their minds. They claimed that the 80,000 troops in Ireland could not be beaten without a sufficient German force and explained that considerations of public opinion would not allow for a failed Rising.<sup>73</sup> So, while the Germans had suddenly been ready to send more weapons than for the first Rising, the Irish-Americans now banked on public opinion and the peace negotiations to gain independence. The Germans lacked a deeper understanding of Irish motives. Captain Heydel, of the Admiral Staff, who had worked enthusiastically on the details of “Operation P”, concluded angrily that they were unreliable.<sup>74</sup>

This lack of understanding also had to do with the shift of responsibilities in Germany: The Foreign Office had more or less lost its grip on the “revolutionary program”, much of which had been abandoned after targets in the Middle East had changed. Now, with the actual planning of the first and subsequent arms

68 Kestler, *Deutsche Auslandsaufklärung*, 272.

69 Imperial Embassy in The Hague, Report from Kühlmann, 21 June 1916, PA-R 5870 [own translation].

70 Political Section, Nadolny to the Foreign Office, Berlin 11 June 1916, PA-R 21164 [translation by Doerries].

71 Bernstorff, 8 Sept. 1916, PA-R 21165; Received by Foreign Office: 12 Nov. 1916.

72 Von Hülsen to Foreign Office, Berlin 24 Dec. 1916, PA-R 21165.

73 Attachment to Bernstorff to Foreign Office, Washington 17 Jan. 1917, PA-R 21165, received there: 17 Feb. 1917. Report of the Irish revolutionary Directory in America: 8 Jan. 1917.

74 Kluge, *Irland in Geschichtswissenschaft*, 163.

deliveries, it was the Political Section of the army and the Admiral Staff who called the shots. While the navy was particularly reluctant to cooperate with the Irish before the Easter Rising, it was now happy to do so – even offering submarines to accompany the weapon shipments, when clearly the British navy was watching Irish shores more closely than ever. The German navy possibly saw the first weapon delivery as a test for the collaboration. Moreover, in 1916, they were desperate to prove their own usefulness, by continuously asking for unrestricted submarine warfare<sup>75</sup>, but seemingly also by subversive actions against what the navy saw as the main enemy: the UK.<sup>76</sup> When they learned the *Aud* had actually made it to Irish shores they were willing to try again. Meanwhile they were not well informed about matters in Ireland, offering to ship guns over whenever possible. Ironically all the German-Irish efforts, even if they had been acted upon, would have led to nothing, since the British authorities were well informed about all negotiations. Basil Thomson, Head of the Criminal Investigation Departments, noted in his diary on 18 February 1917 that two boats from Kiel were on their way bringing 60,000 rifles, 6 million cartridges and 10 machine guns.<sup>77</sup>

Knowledge of German involvement with Irish revolutionaries also backfired in two arenas: Firstly, the German public gained knowledge of the secret conspiracies. The Social Democrat Cohn declared in parliament: “Everything surrounding Roger Casement and the Irish Brigade [...] is the most severe psychological manipulation and one of the darkest sides of the history of the war.”<sup>78</sup> He also complained about attempts to get English-speaking priests, dispatched by the pope for the spiritual guidance of the Irish Catholic prisoners, to help those prisoners make excuses for breaking of their oaths of allegiance. He claimed that the priests refused to do so and therefore were treated poorly

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75 Martin Kitchen, *The Silent Dictatorship. The politics of the German High Command under Hindenburg and Ludendorff, 1916–1918* (New York, 1976), 112.

76 Konteradmiral Eberhard Heydel, “Der Seekrieg. Erster Abschnitt: Die Grundlagen für die Führung des Seekrieges“, in: Max Schwarte (ed.), *Der Weltkampf um Ehre und Recht. Die Erforschung des Krieges in seiner wahren Begebenheit, auf amtlichen Urkunden und Akten beruhend*, 1–15.

77 McMahon, *British Spies and Irish Rebels*, 23. McMahon sees the entry as evidence of the irrational spy and invasion scare of the British, but numbers and dates are accurate enough as to assume the telegraphs between Berlin and Washington had been deciphered.

78 Protokoll der 95. Sitzung des Hauptausschusses vom 15.10.1916, in: PA-R 21165. Liebknecht also mentioned the recruitment camps earlier: See: Reichstagsprotokolle 1914/18, 2, 41. Sitzung, 7 April 1916, <[http://www.reichstagsprotokolle.de/Blatt\\_k13\\_bsbo0003403\\_00153.html](http://www.reichstagsprotokolle.de/Blatt_k13_bsbo0003403_00153.html)>.

by the Germans – leading to papal intervention.<sup>79</sup> Clearly this debacle with such an important neutral power was the opposite of the envisioned propaganda outcome when raising the Irish Brigade.

Secondly, the Irish-Americans had reason to be disappointed by the conduct of the Germans. They were assuming – wrongly as shown – that advance knowledge of the Easter Rising was transferred to the British by the American secret service. Still, the raid in Wolf von Igel's office certainly revealed that the Germans were not capable of keeping secrets.

Soon Irish-American opinion would no longer be Germany's problem anyway: At the same time, the global dimension of the war and German domestic changes rendered Ireland less and less important. While the Foreign Office lost importance in German foreign policy, and the navy lay mostly idle, impatiently waiting to partake in the war, the Third High Command, led by Ludendorff and Hindenburg, which replaced Falkenhayn in August 1916 was not keen on the affair. Like their predecessors, they had a certain interest in insurrection in Ireland, but were also not willing to send German troops for the purpose. Furthermore, Ludendorff and Hindenburg were convinced that the decisive front for Germany at that stage lay in the East. So Irish-American nationalists eventually reacted bitterly when Imperial Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg declared support for Polish and Lithuanian independence but left Ireland out on 12 December 1916. Dr. Karl A. Fuehr who, together with the Zentralstelle für Auslandsdienst (Central Office for Foreign Service) had a propaganda office in the US complained: the Irish-Americans nearly became "unfaithful" due to this speech, but the note to the US government of 31 January 1917 had appeased them.<sup>80</sup> Bernstorff sent a similar report, claiming that Irish-Americans were disappointed in Germany and therefore would not form a united opposition against the US declaring war on Germany, stating on 4 January 1917: "An official declaration that Germany recognizes Ireland's right to independence would satisfy the Irish."<sup>81</sup> But when Germany decided to threaten the US with unrestricted submarine warfare and in the same note – finally – declared sympathy with Irish independence, this would obviously backfire, since the US were lost to Germany's propaganda efforts and the Germans lost their last Irish-American allies. The hardliners had been arrested

79 Dr. Cohn, Nordhausen, Reichstagsprotokolle, 72. Sitzung, 2 Nov. 1916, <[http://www.reichstagsprotokolle.de/Blatt\\_k13\\_bsbo0003404\\_00428.html](http://www.reichstagsprotokolle.de/Blatt_k13_bsbo0003404_00428.html)>.

80 A Fuehr, Berlin to Graf Montgelas, 2 April 1917, PA-R 17276, Die Irländer in den Vereinigten Staaten, Jan. 1886-Nov. 1918./Abschrift in PA-R 21165.

81 Bernstorff to Foreign Office, Washington 4 Jan. 1917, received in Foreign Office 13 Jan. 1917, PA-R 21165 [own translation].

after the declaration of war, triggered by the Zimmermann Telegram, which ironically had been deciphered in Room 40 just like the telegrams regarding the Easter Rising. Had the German authorities been a bit more careful, they could have avoided that diplomatic disaster.

So the propaganda efforts of the Foreign Office decreased, leaving a vacuum that was filled by the “Deutsch-Irische Gesellschaft” (DIG, German-Irish Society) from February 1917. The Society, dominated by Pan-Germans and diverse German, Irish and Irish-American personnel, focused on pro-Irish propaganda in Germany and the remaining neutral countries, especially on cultural matters, although it was funded through channels of the Foreign Office.<sup>82</sup>

Meanwhile the British were on guard and, when the Germans tried to make their next move, knew how to counter it. The Admiralty Staff, being deeply disappointed by the Irish, had called off all plans for Operation P. But by 1918 they were ready to try again, at least modestly, and on request of the Political Section shipped Irish Brigade member Joseph Dowling to Ireland, in order to get in touch with Sinn Féin leaders. He was quickly arrested on 12 April and in his interrogation allegedly claimed that the Germans were planning an invasion of Ireland.<sup>83</sup> While historians like Paul McMahon have claimed that the ensuing legend of a “German Plot” was due to the “spy-scare” and lack of reliable information by MI5<sup>84</sup>, it is more likely that at least some people in Britain saw an apt opportunity to weaken Sinn Féin, just when conscription in Ireland was desperately needed, in the midst of the Spring Offensive of 1918—it is only surprising they waited another month to act.<sup>85</sup> During the night of 17–18 May, 150 Sinn Féin leaders were arrested on charges of conspiring with the German enemy, a so-called “German Plot”. The charges could not be proven by the British government and therefore assured the further rise of Sinn Féin.<sup>86</sup>

The German navy in the meantime was still eager to get in touch with the leaders who had not been arrested and in collaboration with the Foreign Office prepared another agent to inform Sinn Féin about the pro-Irish propaganda maintained in Germany.<sup>87</sup> This time Ludendorff prohibited the execution of the plan in June 1918, determining for once and for all “*sending agents for*

82 Lerchenmüller, “Keltischer Sprengstoff”, 66.

83 McMahon, *British Spies and Irish Rebels*, 24.

84 McMahon, *British Spies and Irish Rebels*, 24–25.

85 John Home, “Irland,” in *Enzyklopädie Erster Weltkrieg*, eds. Gerhard Hirschfeld et al, (Paderborn, 2004), 588.

86 McMahon, *British Spies and Irish Rebels*, 24.

87 Lassen to Romberg, 6 June 1918, PA-R 21165.



*sabotage or agents in general* to get in touch with Ireland seems *politically not advisable*. We have to be cautious not to compromise the Irish movement in the eyes of the neutrals, America and most of all England by our actions.”<sup>88</sup> That was the end of all contact and Germany, after the Armistice, was reluctant to speak about any collaboration with Irish separatists anymore.

Ireland as a case study of German attitudes towards small nations at the colonial peripheries during the First World War is as fruitful as it is complex. The status Ireland had as an integral part of an empire differed sharply from the description of an oppressed colony as portrayed by the Irish separatists. Why Germany did not make more efforts towards aiming at the heart of the British Empire – not just its peripheries such as Egypt and India – remains an unsolved riddle.<sup>89</sup> However, it was not completely irrational: Germany could not easily get at Ireland because of the British naval blockade and ultimately Ireland was peripheral to Germany once she focused her attention on Central Europe. So while the Germans claimed an interest in the country, the close study of the documents in the Foreign Office reveals that the target of pro-Irish propaganda was Irish-America. So the real surprise here is that they were not willing to give a full proclamation and even guarantee – in case of German victory – of Irish independence. This, however, seems not to have been in line with the Foreign Office's policies, at least not until it was too late. Earlier scholarship, in particular the groundbreaking works of Reinhard Doerries, followed Casement's arguments and activities closely and therefore overestimated the military dimension of the revolutionary program for Ireland.

Even in the US the expectations of success by propaganda were not all fulfilled. This was partly due to differing goals and strategies pursued by the Irish separatists and their German partners. It stemmed from German ignorance of the variety of Irish nationalist positions and, after all, simply the realities of the war. Germany, lacking a coherent strategy for the war, was trying to fill gaps with risky actions like cooperation with Irish revolutionaries. But a political or small-scale subversive program could, of course, not solve the problems Germany faced – not even when several regions were to be affected. However, Germany made sure that its gambles were not too costly.

While previous research has mostly focused on Germany's intention to distract British troops from other theaters of war, in fact up until the US entered

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88 Telex Berckheim to Foreign Office, 9 June 1918, PA-R 22175, Gr. Hauptquartier, England: Irland, Oktober 1917–Juni 1918 [own translation, underlining in original].

89 A point raised in William Mulligan, “Review of *Prelude to the Easter Rising: Sir Roger Casement in Imperial Germany* by Reinhard R. Doerries,” *Central European History* 38 (2005): 153.

the war, Ireland and its separatists were mostly used as a means to influence public opinion in the United States and other neutral countries, highlighted by the Irish Brigade and the willingness to ship more weapons to Ireland to keep the Irish-Americans content after the Easter Rising. The idea that some British troops could be diverted into a civil conflict might have excited some in the army, or even in the Foreign Office, but if the strategy had ever been formulated, the Germans would have supplied all the weapons available straight away, and not only after the Easter Rising had failed. German encouragement of various independence movements was merely a propaganda tool.<sup>90</sup>

Generally, developments in Ireland worked in Germany's favour: conscription could not be implemented in Ireland throughout the war, and recruitment stagnated after the Easter Rising, although this was a product of the British reaction rather than any German involvement. While Germany never quite managed to issue a proper statement towards Irish independence, it did gain some positive propaganda in the United States and other neutral countries. This was counteracted particularly in the US, however, by the twofold strategy of propaganda and sabotage that the Germans and Irish-Americans pursued. With the declaration of war between the two countries, triggered by unrestricted submarine warfare and the Zimmermann Telegram, the Irish-American connection broke down and so too did Germany's interest in Irish affairs. Ireland had become a bargaining chip in yet another clash of empires, with the Americans being the new factor to take into account.

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90 Kloke, *Aufstände als Instrument*, 40.

## “I Want Citizens’ Clothes”: Irish and German-Americans Respond to War, 1914–1917

Michael S. Neiberg

For too long, scholars of American immigrant communities have reduced the responses of German and Irish-Americans to those of the extremes. In the case of Germany, scholars have relied far too much on the unrepresentative writings of George Sylvester Viereck’s *Fatherland*, a newspaper funded by the German government and one that grew increasingly disconnected from reality as the United States approached entry into the Great War.<sup>1</sup> In the Irish case, scholars have for too long taken Republican newspapers like the *Clan na Gael*’s daily as representing all of Irish-American opinion.<sup>2</sup>

To be sure, some members of the German and Irish-American communities were attracted to the ideas of the *Clan na Gael* and Sylvester Viereck, but we should be wary of assuming that the most extreme positions were representative of majority opinion. As always, it is difficult to assess with any certainty the numbers of people who read any given newspaper or believed any given ideology, but the evidence strongly suggests that a wide variety of opinion existed inside both communities. The communities themselves, moreover, were divided by issues of class, region of origin, and political allegiance.

This paper will analyze the responses of the Irish and German-American communities to the events of 1914–1917. The two groups shared much in common. By 1914 both had completed a largely successful process of assimilation into mainstream American society; no contrast any longer existed between a “German” or “Irish” identity and an American one. Members of both groups, moreover, understood that the assimilation process had resulted in real, tangible gains that made them as “American” as any group; at a time when a genuinely American outlook on the world was forming, the members of these two groups had a strong and important voice to contribute.

They were, however, both out of step with their fellow Americans on one crucial topic in 1914. Both groups generally responded to the outbreak of war in

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1 One book guilty of this overreliance on Viereck is Justus D. Doenecke, *Nothing Less than War: A New History of America’s Entry into World War I* (Lexington, 2011).

2 These newspapers, as well as Viereck’s *Fatherland*, can be seen at: <<http://digital.library.villanova.edu/Item/vudl:145635>>.

Europe with anti-English feelings that their fellow Americans did not share. German-Americans tended to blame the outbreak of the war on either British envy of German success or Russian avarice for land in Poland and the Balkans. The Danzig-born Harvard University Professor Hugo Münsterberg crystalized these arguments in a series of public speeches, newspaper articles, and finally a book entitled *The War and America*, published at the end of 1914. Münsterberg blamed Russia, Britain, and France who together “begrudged this prosperity of the Fatherland which had been weak and poor” but had risen to great power status. In this conceptualization, Russia, a nation of “half-civilized Tartars,” had tricked Germany’s erstwhile friends into an alliance against her.<sup>3</sup>

Münsterberg remained an eloquent advocate for Germany until he went into a self-imposed silence after the sinking of the *Lusitania* in May, 1915. The sinking may either have convinced him that his initial defense of Germany’s actions had been misplaced or he may have been responding to the intense backlash he received from the Harvard University community and the people of Boston. Harvard’s president publicly defended Münsterberg’s right to free speech and rejected out of hand a sizeable financial offer from a wealthy alumnus if Harvard fired him, but privately President A. Lawrence Lowell warned Münsterberg to avoid making public speeches on the war and to keep discussions of the war out of his classroom. By then Münsterberg had stopped coming to Harvard social functions and faculty meetings because his defense of Germany had become too unpopular.<sup>4</sup>

Americans often dismissed Münsterberg, a German born in Germany, but Germans born in the United States shared some of his suspicions, at least in the war’s early years. Edward A. Rumely, the German-American publisher of the New York *Evening Mail*, argued before the *Lusitania* sinking that British money and media influence had distorted American foreign policy. Like most German-Americans, he remained suspicious of English motives, as did the former Secretary of Commerce and Labor, the German-American politician Charles Nagel. Both men’s close friendship with Theodore Roosevelt, and their support for Roosevelt in the 1916 presidential election season, showed that German-American identity need not conflict with a close association with someone as pro-British and anti-German as Roosevelt. For Rumely and Nagel, the key remained ensuring that American entry into war served American interests only. In 1915 and 1916, they opposed war because of their belief that

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3 Hugo Münsterberg, *The War and America* (New York, 1914), 4 and 9.

4 A. Lawrence Lowell to H. Münsterberg, 25 Sept. 1914, Boston Public Library MSS ACC 2499b (304a) and Lowell to Münsterberg, 6 May 1915, 2499b (304e). Münsterberg died while delivering a lecture at Harvard in Dec. 1916.

war served British interests before it served American interests. Their views changed, however, by 1917 as the war increasingly threatened American security. Once it did, their loyalties as Americans were not in doubt.<sup>5</sup>

Irish-American leaders generally followed an anti-English tone as well. Irish-Americans saw rank hypocrisy in Great Britain going to war for the rights of “Poor Little Belgium,” while a similarly little, poor, (and also Catholic) Ireland remained under the English heel. In August, 1914, the *Gaelic American*, for example, blamed the war on “English commercial greed” and called England “the real fomenter and instigator of this war.” The paper openly hoped for German success in the war as a means to accomplish the liberation not only of Ireland, but Poland and Finland as well.<sup>6</sup> Like most Irish-Americans, they were soon to be disappointed with Germany’s commitment to those goals.

The American people made a sharp distinction between the German government, whom they blamed for the outbreak of the war, and the German people, whom they tended to see as victims of their own autocratic government. As one former student, a prominent Boston lawyer, wrote to Münsterberg, “not one (American) has appeared to be unfriendly to the German people as a whole, but everyone has expressed the fervent hope that the present German government will get the full measure of drubbing that it deserves for years of arrogance culminating in the present dubious frame-up.”<sup>7</sup> This distinction allowed the American people to blame a regime rather than a people and also allowed them to avoid casting doubts on the loyalty of the vast majority of Germans living in the United States.<sup>8</sup>

As the war went on, the actions of the German government appeared less and less appealing to members of both Irish and German-Americans. German treatment of Belgium appeared to have little to do with the German government’s stated goal of defending Germany from Russian aggression, nor did

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5 See the letters of Rumely in Rumely MSS, Boxes 6–8, Lilly Library, Indiana University. Rumely did later face intense scrutiny for (unfounded) accusations in 1918 that he was in the pay of German agents. He was briefly arrested and eventually given a presidential pardon by Calvin Coolidge. All this came after US entry into the war. In 1916 Roosevelt introduced Rumely to Charles Evans Hughes, the eventual Republican nominee, as “an American through and through.” Rumely’s newspaper was strongly pro-Hughes in the 1916 election. See Theodore Roosevelt to Charles Evans Hughes, 18 Sept. 1916, Rumely MSS Box 7, 26–30 Sept. 1916 folder [the letter is in the wrong folder according to the dates], Lilly Library, Indiana University.

6 *The Gaelic American*, volume XI, 33, 15 August 1915, 1.

7 Frederick Coburn to Hugo Münsterberg, 5 August 1914, Boston Public Library, MSS AC 2499b (100a).

8 Before the war and even during it, suspicion (justified or not) rarely fell on German-Americans born in the United States.

it seem to offer a positive model for the future of Ireland. The sinking of the *Lusitania* not only drove Münsterberg into silence, but it put supporters of Germany increasingly on the defensive. Not all German and Irish-Americans gave up on Germany or embraced England, but attitudes toward the war and Germany were beginning to change as a result. The events of 1916 would change them even more. By the time America entered the war in April, 1917, the attitudes of all Americans had undergone a radical transformation.

In the cases of both German and Irish-Americans, multiple sources of identity and evolving understandings of American nationalism played a key role in changing their attitudes toward the war from 1914 to 1917. We should be careful to acknowledge, of course, that the members of these groups were never homogenous and that differences of political ideology, ethnicity, religiosity, and class always existed among them. No single "German" or "Irish" view of the war ever existed. Still, by the end of 1916 a rough consensus had emerged within the groups, and they all pointed toward a broader acceptance of, or outright support for, the cause of the Allies.

To the extent that they concerned themselves with affairs in Ireland, most Irish-Americans in 1914 fell into one of two groups. The majority were Nationalists who hoped to see Great Britain extend more rights and autonomy to Ireland in exchange for the military service of the tens of thousands of Irishmen in the British Army on the western front and elsewhere. They put their faith in the Home Rule promises that the British government had made before the war, although the British government suspended those promises upon the outbreak of the war and they seemed to be in serious jeopardy as Great Britain focused its attentions elsewhere.

A smaller, but quite vocal, group of Irish-Americans called the Republicans sought total independence for Ireland and saw the war as a chance for Ireland to strike while Britain was distracted.<sup>9</sup> They followed the old maxim that "England's difficulty is Ireland's opportunity." They had powerful supporters inside the United States and newspapers like the *Gaelic American* to publicize their views. They also had close links to Republican groups in Ireland, for whom they raised money and facilitated the purchase of weapons.

Whatever their attitudes on the future of Ireland, most Irish-American political and religious leaders initially tried to remain neutral on issues regarding the war, although they tended to share American outrage at incidents like the sinking of the *Lusitania* in 1915 and the torpedoing of the *Sussex* a year later. Irish-Americans of all political leanings were loathe to put at risk the progress

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9 Of course, in this context, there is no connection between Irish Republicanism and the American Republican Party.

and assimilation that they had made in the previous decades. America, they knew, was no longer the land of signs reading “No Dogs or Irish Allowed” or the intensely anti-Irish sentiments as expressed by nineteenth-century political cartoonists like Thomas Nast.<sup>10</sup> They also recalled the wave of anti-Irish sentiment that followed the Fenian Raids of 1866–1871 and had no desire to see such sentiments return.<sup>11</sup> Irish-Americans like Massachusetts Governor (and later United States Senator) David Walsh, Montana Senator Thomas Walsh (no relation), New York City alderman (and future governor and presidential candidate) Al Smith, and Wilson’s close aide Joseph Tumulty all symbolized the growing influence of the Irish-American community in American politics. Irish-Americans had indeed come a long way in just a few generations.<sup>12</sup>

Many Irish-Americans also had relatives fighting in the British Army, linking them directly to the cause of the Allies just as Italian-Americans were. War correspondent Frederick Palmer spoke to some of these Irish soldiers during a 1915 visit to the western front. He found that the support of Irish-Americans for the war was crucial to maintaining the men’s morale in the fight against Germany. After the Battle of Neuve Chapelle, Palmer asked Irish soldiers what they would want the American people to know about the war. “Tell them in America that the Irish are still fighting!” replied one man.<sup>13</sup>

The Easter Rising in Dublin from 24 to 29 April 1916 changed the relationship of Irish-Americans to the war, and often in unexpected ways. Those five days featured an attempt by the Irish Republican Brotherhood to seize power in Dublin and inspire sympathetic rebellions all across Ireland.<sup>14</sup> As in Ireland itself, few Irish-Americans outside active Republican circles expressed much initial sympathy for the rebels. The influential Irish-American lawyer John Quinn called the Rising “a horrible fiasco” and “sheer lunacy.” Similarly, the Irish-American editor of the *New Republic* called it “wild and futile” and said that it worked against the interests of the Irish people. Both Irish-American

10 See, for example, the images at <<http://www.printmag.com/illustration/nast-irish>>.

11 Chris McNickle, “When New York Was Irish, and After” in *The New York Irish*, eds., Ronald Bayer and Timothy Meagher (Baltimore, 1996), 350. The Fenian Raids featured five separate raids by Irish Republicans launched from American soil against Canadian possessions. The raiders hoped to use the raids to force Great Britain to give Ireland its independence. Few Americans supported the raids, especially given the increase in tensions between the United States and Great Britain that resulted.

12 Noel Ignatiev takes a more complex view of this process in *How the Irish Became White* (London, 2008).

13 Frederick Palmer, *My Year of the Great War* (New York, 1915), 248–249 and 255.

14 The Easter Rising is too complex to deal with here. See Alvin Jackson, *Ireland, 1978–1998: War, Peace, and Beyond* (Chichester, 2010), chapter five.

cardinals also came out against the Rising, as did the majority of non-Republican Irish newspapers throughout the United States.<sup>15</sup>

Virtually all non-Irish newspapers in the United States condemned the Rising and refuted Republican claims that the rebels were following in the footsteps of America's own revolutionary heroes. Public figures like Walter Lippmann and Herbert Croly both condemned the Rising in no uncertain terms. Newspaper editors like those of the Memphis *Commercial Appeal* were appalled by the violence the rebels caused, and southerners in general saw no link between Ireland's attempt at "secession" and their own attempt in 1861. Most importantly, Americans disliked the idea of an uprising against Britain when the British were fighting what most Americans generally saw as a war of necessity against Germany.<sup>16</sup>

The German context greatly complicated the Rising and made it an international, not strictly an Irish, issue. Unlike the raid of Mexican strongman Pancho Villa into the United States in March, 1916, where Americans only suspected German involvement, the German government had been intimately linked to the rebellion in Ireland.<sup>17</sup> The Germans had provided some of the arms and had landed rebel leader Roger Casement onto Irish soil from Germany in a submarine. But Germany had proven itself no friend to Irish interests and even the leaders of the rebellion themselves came to see that Germany offered no reasonable alternative to Great Britain in the post-war world. Casement had written after his arrest, "Why did I ever trust in a Govt such as this – They have no sense of honour, chivalry, generosity. ... That is why they are hated by the world and [why] England will surely beat them."<sup>18</sup>

Americans also made the connections between the Germans and the Irish rebellion. The New York *Evening Sun* ran a political cartoon featuring Kaiser Wilhelm leading a band consisting of Austro-Hungarian Emperor Franz Joseph and the Ottoman Sultan. They are playing the Republican anthem "The Wearing of the Green," and the caption reads "Irish Patriots." Similarly, the

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15 Thomas Rowland, "The American Catholic Press and the Easter Rebellion," *Catholic Historical Review* 81 (1995): 67–83.

16 David M. Tucker, "Some American Responses to the Easter Rebellion, 1916," *The Historian* 29 (1967), 612 and 617.

17 In March 1916, 100 members of one of Villa's bands raided Columbus, New Mexico, killing 18 Americans and leading Woodrow Wilson to order the so-called punitive expedition into Mexico to find him and bring him to justice.

18 Charles Townshend, *Easter 1916: The Irish Rebellion* (London, 2006), 105–106. Townshend argues that German support for the rebellion was so "ham-fisted" that perhaps Germany had meant for it to fail all along.



Chicago *Evening Post* ran a cartoon showing Wilhelm playing “Deutschland Über Alles” on an Irish harp over the caption “His New Instrument.”<sup>19</sup>

Irish-Americans were sensitive to the rumors (and the reality) that guns and huge sums of money for the rebellion had come from the Irish Republican community in the United States. The rebels’ Declaration of the Irish Republic had specifically referred to the fact that Ireland had the support of “her exiled children in America.” On day five of the rebellion, the rebels had sent out a message to the Irish people that read “we have every confidence that our Allies in Germany and kinsmen in America are straining every nerve to hasten matters on our behalf.”<sup>20</sup> Five of the signatories of the rebels’ Proclamation of the Irish Republic plus the soon to be executed Roger Casement had spent significant time in the United States raising funds. Éamon de Valera, born in New York City, may have escaped execution because of his American citizenship.

Undoubtedly, the rebels had the support of some Irish Republicans in the United States, but most Irish-Americans disliked being tarred alongside them with the brush of rebellion and mayhem. The *New York Herald* reported that a global plot now linked Ireland, Germany, and Mexico to launch attacks against the United States if it got involved in the war. Newspapers used words like “seditious” to describe those living in the United States who might be tempted to help such schemes either in Dublin or on American soil.<sup>21</sup> In such an environment most Irish-Americans rushed to demonstrate their loyalty to the United States while at the same time still expressing their sympathy for those who continued to suffer in Dublin, and urging the United States to press for clemency for the captured rebels.

Britain’s brutal response to the Rising, which resulted in 250 Irish civilians killed and another 2,200 wounded, astonished Americans. The hasty execution of sixteen rebel leaders in Dublin’s Kilmainham Jail barely a week after the Rising particularly angered Americans, including some of the most Anglophile. Even the strongly pro-British Theodore Roosevelt condemned them. A protest meeting against the British reprisals and Britain’s refusal to offer clemency to those condemned to death led to a rally at Carnegie Hall that filled the seats and had as many as 15,000 people protesting outside. A British subject living in the United States told the Foreign Office that before the harsh response to the Rising, 75% of the Irish in America had been pro-Allied, but after it virtually none of them would speak a kind word about Britain.<sup>22</sup> The violence in Dublin

19 *Current Opinion* LX (1916), 391 and 393.

20 “Message of Cheer Sent Out By the Rebels,” *Irish Times*, 20 May 1916.

21 Reprinted in “German Plot for Armed Rising in America,” *Irish Times*, 24 May 1916.

22 Townshend, *Easter 1916*, 312.

led to the virtual collapse of Irish-American support for the Nationalist plan of working with the British government on some version of Home Rule after the war was over.<sup>23</sup> Republican organizations rose in membership and influence, as Irish-Americans increasingly gave their support to the idea of an independent Ireland.

At the same time, however, Irish-Americans recoiled from the idea that either support for Ireland or opposition to Britain meant that they had become in any way pro-German. An Irish-American newspaper that bragged about starting publication on 4 July 1898 to honor the United States praised Roger Casement's statement at his trial that "I never asked an Irishman to fight for Germany. I have always claimed that he has no right to fight for any land but Ireland." The same paper showed the Kaiser offering a figure representing Ireland a new suit of German clothes. The figure replies, "Take them away. I want citizens' clothes." In other words, Ireland would not tolerate being any more subservient to Germany than it had been to England. As Casement himself did, most Irish-Americans saw the Germans as an ally based on a narrow shared interest of reducing English power over Ireland itself; they did not, however, see their interests as overlapping much beyond that.<sup>24</sup>

Even those Irish-Americans who had no problem with the rebels working with the Germans rushed to pledge their loyalty to the United States. The Republican *Irish World*, which took a firm anti-English line, urged its readers to show their fellow Americans that however much they sympathized with the Irish Republican cause, the Irish-American community would never rise in arms against the United States. The paper pledged that it was committed to "America and to America alone."<sup>25</sup> From the far more conservative end of the political spectrum, Cardinal James Gibbons, only the second Irish-American to attain that status, said after the Rising that all American Catholics had "to take an active, personal and vital interest" in the welfare of the United States and that loyalty to America must take priority over any other national identity, including loyalty to Ireland itself.<sup>26</sup>

That the Easter Rising coincided with an American presidential campaign only raised the stakes. Both the Republican challenger Charles Evans Hughes and the Democratic incumbent Woodrow Wilson drew distinctions between

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23 David Brundage, "In Time of Peace, Prepare for War: Key Themes in the Social Thought of Irish Nationalists," in *The New York Irish*, eds., Bayor and Meagher, 333.

24 *Kentucky Irish-American*, 1 July 1916, and 17 March 1916.

25 Malcolm Campbell, *Ireland's New Worlds* (Madison, 2008), 171 and 172–173.

26 Andrew Preston, *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of the Faith: Religion in American War and Diplomacy* (New York, 2012), 245. Gibbons's parents were born in County Mayo, Ireland.

the majority of German and Irish-Americans, whose votes they coveted, and those “hyphenated” Americans they saw as potentially disloyal. For example, when the American-born anti-English activist Jeremiah O’Leary sent Wilson a sneering “congratulatory” telegram after a Democrat lost a primary in Wilson’s home state of New Jersey, the president had a sharp retort. He told O’Leary that he would be “deeply mortified” to have the votes of “disloyal Americans” like him. “Since you have access to many disloyal Americans and I have not, I will ask you to convey this message to them.”<sup>27</sup> Trying to draw a line between “good” and “bad” German and Irish-Americans proved to be a tightrope that both Hughes and Wilson tried to walk, largely without any great success.

In this election year, Irish newspapers and Irish leaders insisted that there was no monolithic “Irish vote,” trying to put to rest lingering fears of a shadowy Catholic political influence reaching back to Rome. Voting patterns for Irish-Americans were indeed in flux. The Irish, who had voted heavily for Wilson and the Democrats in 1912, split their vote in 1916, with working-class Irish voters largely staying loyal to the Democrats and middle-class Irish voters largely switching to the Republicans. Cardinal James Gibbons himself disavowed any public discussion of politics, saying “The Catholic Church is not in politics and I am not in politics.”<sup>28</sup>

Demographics may also have played a role. The large waves of Irish immigration to the United States having slowed by the turn of the century, the vast majority of Irish-Americans were, unlike most Americans of Italian or Eastern European ancestry, born in the United States. They included men like Gibbons, who used the fiftieth anniversary celebrations of his ordination in 1916 to praise his devotion to the United States, and California Senator James Phelps who said in the same year that “In a contest of loyalties between the Old Land and the New Land,” Irish-Americans would always “espouse the cause of the New.” They also included the film and stage star Wilton Lackaye who said “I should be the last person in the world to be in favor of hyphenated movements. ... As far as I am concerned I would just as soon shoot an Irishman as a German if they came menacing New York.”<sup>29</sup>

27 David Laskin, *The Long Way Home: An American Journey from Ellis Island to the Great War* (New York, 2011), 113. See also Arthur S. Link, *Wilson, Volume 5: Campaigns for Progressivism and Peace, 1916–1917* (Princeton, 1965), 104–105. Irish-Americans tended to ridicule Wilson for speaking out against “hyphenated Americans” while at the same time boasting of his Scotch-Irish roots.

28 Edward Cuddy, “Irish-Americans and the 1916 Election: An Episode in Immigrant Adjustment,” *American Quarterly* 21 (1969), 240.

29 Thomas J. Rowland, “Irish-American Catholics and the quest for respectability in the coming of the Great War, 1900–1917,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 15 (1996), 30.

Irish-American and American interests more generally converged by the end of 1916. Wilson's march toward the concept of national self-determination seemed to hold out the best hope for the future of Ireland, but only if the Allies won the war. An Allied victory, with America as a member of the winning coalition, could put pressure on Great Britain to accept the idea of self-determination and apply it to Ireland. That pressure might not solve all of the problems of the troubled island, but it seemed to offer many Irish-Americans the best hope of gaining autonomy, if not outright independence, with a minimum of bloodshed. As William McKearney wrote in Cleveland, Ohio's *Catholic Universe*, "There can be no such thing as hoping the United States wins but that England loses. ... We are fighting the same fight and must win."<sup>30</sup> For Ireland to benefit at all, the Allies had to win the war and the United States had to be a position to help dictate peace terms. In contrast to the situation in 1914, by the end of 1916 a German victory did hold out much hope for Ireland.<sup>31</sup> More importantly, England's difficulty no longer seemed to be Ireland's opportunity.

Like Irish-Americans, German-Americans faced constant pressure from many mainstream Americans to demonstrate that no contrast existed between their dual identities. The anti-hyphen and "100% Americanism" campaigns that were such a feature of the 1916 election season were aimed at both groups, but in the wake of the events of the previous two years, German-Americans felt their weight more than any other single group. They were a large, diverse, and highly assimilated population representing more than 8,000,000 people. In 1910 German was the second-most spoken language in the United States and the nation had more than 500 German-language newspapers. St. Louis alone had five.<sup>32</sup>

Nevertheless, the German-American community was divided, largely along religious and generational lines. What Hugo Münsterberg had bemoaned in 1914, a visiting British journalist also noted in 1916: those Germans born in Germany were likely to be more sympathetic to the German cause, but "the second generation is pro-American." The former (along with most Protestants) were more likely to vote for Hughes, the latter (along with most Catholics) for Wilson, although, as with the Irish-American community, neither candidate held great appeal.<sup>33</sup> More fundamentally, as Charles Nagel argued, Germans

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30 Rowland, "The American Catholic Press," n.p.

31 McNickle, "When New York Was Irish," 350.

32 Tammy Proctor, "Patriotic Enemies: Germans in the Americas, 1914–1920" in *Germans as Minorities during the First World War: A Global Comparative Perspective*, ed. Panikos Panayi (Burlington, 2014), 214–215.

33 Gilbert Seldes, *The United States and the War* (London, 1917), 132.

had had 150 years to blend into America and see the world as their fellow Americans did. That process had resulted in “the perfect amalgamation” of Germans into American society. There could, therefore, be no question of where their loyalties sat.<sup>34</sup>

Exact data on the voting preferences of German-Americans in 1916 is hard to assess, but qualitative data shows that no “German vote” existed. German newspapers did not endorse either candidate in great numbers, and what endorsements they did give were rarely enthusiastic. One quantitative analysis found that in the heavily-German districts of Milwaukee, which Wilson won in 1912, the vote split in 1916. Wilson won just 26.8% of the vote in those districts (down from 45.2% four years earlier), while Hughes won 39.4% and the Socialist Allen Benson won 33.5%. Much of Benson’s support may have been a protest vote against the two mainstream candidates, neither of whom had much to recommend them to a German-American electorate. Wilson had angered many of them with his anti-hyphen messages and Hughes suffered badly from his association with the vociferously anti-German Theodore Roosevelt.<sup>35</sup>

If they did not agree on electoral preferences at home, neither did German-Americans agree about the actions of their homeland across the Atlantic. Non-Prussian Germans, which constituted the majority of German immigration to the United States in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, could be quite critical of the behavior of the Prussian-dominated German government. Otto Kahn, a banker born in Mannheim in the western state of Baden and a former soldier in the Kaiser’s Hussars, complained that the Germany into which he had been born had disappeared under decades of Prussian domination. “From each successive visit to Germany for twenty-five years,” he told a group in Pennsylvania, “I came away more appalled by the sinister transmutation Prussianism had wrought amongst the people and by the pretentious menace I recognized in it for the entire world.” The Prussians, he argued, had worked to “pervert the mentality – indeed the very fiber and moral substance – of the German people, a people which until misled, corrupted and systematically poisoned by the Prussian ruling caste, was and deserved to be an honored, valued, and welcome member of the family of nations.” While Kahn had hoped until the last minute that a war between the United States and Germany could be avoided, he saw the war as worth the sacrifices it would entail if it destroyed

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34 Charles Nagel to Edward Rumely, March 9, 1917, Rumely MSS, Box 8, march 8–12 Folder, Lilly Library, Indiana University.

35 Frederick C. Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty: German-Americans and World War I* (DeKalb, 1974), 191.

the Kaiser's autocracy and gave the German people a chance to determine their own future.<sup>36</sup>

Kahn had rooted his thinking in the Two Germanys thesis, which posited a contrast between a militarist Prussia and a humanistic Germany. He and many other Germans saw the war in Europe not only as a contest between the Central Powers and the Allies, but a contest between Prussia and a democratic Germany as well. With America leading the world and Wilson setting the peace terms, that latter Germany had a chance to return to a prominent place among the great European powers if the Allies won and offered Germany a magnanimous peace based on American friendship and democracy instead of French, Russian, or British vengeance. In another public address given at about the same time, Kahn argued that the values he had once admired in Germany now found their greatest expression in the United States. Only American ideals, he argued, could form the basis of a post-war world because they are:

the things of humanity, liberty, justice, and mercy, for which the best men among all the nations – including the German nation – have fought and bled these many generations past, which were the ideals of Luther, Goethe, Schiller, Kant, and a host of others who had made the name of Germany great and beloved until fanatical Prussianism, run amok, came to make its deeds a byword and a hissing.<sup>37</sup>

Paradoxical though it might seem, Kahn argued that an American-led victory could therefore set not just the victors, but also a defeated Germany, on the path of a future of peace and progress.

Another German-American saw the situation in the same way that Kahn did, although perhaps with a greater sense of tragedy. He wrote, in an article first published by the *Chicago Tribune* but soon republished in newspapers nationwide that:

It sickens my soul to think of this Nation going forth to help destroy people many of whom are bound to me by ties of blood and friendship. But it must be so. It is like a dreadful surgical operation. The militaristic, undemocratic demon which rules Germany must be cast out. It is for us to do

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36 Otto H. Kahn, "Prussianized Germany: Americans of Foreign Descent and America's Cause," lecture given at Harrisburg Chamber of Commerce, 26 Sept. 1917. National Library of Ireland, Dublin, P1001, 3, 4 and 9.

37 Otto Kahn, "Americans of German Origin and the War," n.d. (but most likely May or June, 1917), National Library of Ireland, Dublin, P1003, 22, 7.

it – now. If Prussianism triumphs in this war the fist will continue to shake. We shall be in real peril, and those ideas for which so much of the world's best blood has been spilled through the centuries will be in danger of extinction.

There is much talk of what people like me will do, and fear of the hyphen. No such thing exists. The German-American is as staunch as the American of adoption of any other land and perhaps more so. Let us make war upon Germany, not from revenge, not to uphold hairsplitting quibbles of international law, but let us make war with our whole heart and with all our strength, because Germany worships one god and we another and because the lion and the lamb can not lie down together. One or the other must perish.<sup>38</sup>

To be sure, not all German-Americans took their case that far, but these and the statements of other German-Americans showed that they saw no conflict between their German ancestry and their American citizenship.

Imperial Germany's defenders continued to make arguments in its defense, but they became less and less convincing. When George Sylvester Viereck bet most of his remaining credibility on his argument that the Zimmermann Telegram was a British hoax, only to have the Germans themselves confirm its authenticity, he largely faded from influence. He had already come under fire for his increasingly inchoate and inconsistent ramblings. The *New York Herald* tired of Viereck's constant accusations of hidden plots and secret treaties between the British and American elites. The newspaper called him a false prophet and his newspaper a false book of faith.

In the summer of 1916, Viereck published one of his strangest stories. In it, Woodrow Wilson awakens from a dream and speaks to George Washington, who makes a case for Germany, telling Wilson that America's old nemesis, the British, are to blame for the war, and that the Germans had acted legally in sinking the *Lusitania*. Only after Wilson is convinced by his interlocutor's speech to forgive Germany does the figure reveal himself not as George Washington, but George Viereck. The implication that George Washington himself would have supported the German cause drew anger from American readers, as did Viereck's statement that only the Germans and Irish had

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38 C. Kotzenabe, "Americans of German Origin and the War," I have thus far found the letter reprinted in newspapers in a dozen states. All of them offered strong praise. The *Aberdeen (Washington) Herald* ran the letter under a headline reading "True German-Americanism," 8 May 1917. The paper also noted that the letter was written before the American declaration of war.

America's true interests at heart. The rest of the American people, he implied, were dupes of Wilson and "the very devil" himself, Theodore Roosevelt.<sup>39</sup>

The more mainstream German-language press had long given up the extreme positions of Viereck. As 1916 came to a close, it continued to urge that, whatever their feelings about the war in Europe, Americans should urge that their nation remain neutral. They also continued to blame the English media for its negative portrayals of Germany, criticize the behavior of the British in Ireland, and excoriate Russia for a host of alleged atrocities.<sup>40</sup> Together these events seemed to many German-Americans to prove that neither side had a monopoly on either justice or wickedness in wartime. The problem, they argued, lay less with Germany than with (in the eyes of socialists) the nature of capitalism or (in the eyes of middle-class Germans) the threat that Russia posed to Germany and all of civilized Europe.

Americans in 1916 still proved anxious to differentiate between Germany and German-Americans. The Chicago *Day Book* told its readers not to pay much attention to the extreme positions of German newspapers like *Fatherland*. Readers of those papers, the *Day Book* noted, were older people anxious to read the news in their native language and more susceptible to the propaganda that the German embassy gave Viereck to print under the guise of "news." The younger generation of Germans "was educated in public schools and read newspapers printed in the English language." They therefore saw the world in much the same way that their fellow Americans did.<sup>41</sup>

Nor did most Americans see any conflict between German ancestry and American citizenship. A Minnesota newspaper in a heavily German community turned the tables on the hyphen controversy by defining "German-Americans" as "American citizens of German blood, who are first for their country, America."<sup>42</sup> Their fellow Americans could therefore count on them to defend the United States no matter what foreign crises came their way. The war bore out this argument in the military service of German-Americans such as John Pershing and one of America's biggest wartime heroes, aviation ace Eddie Rickenbacker.<sup>43</sup>

39 "T. R. a Very Devil, Viereck Thinks," *New York Tribune*, 29 April 1916.

40 Alexander Waldenrath, "The German Language Newspress in Pennsylvania During World War I," *Pennsylvania History* XLII (1975), 34–35.

41 "German-Americans," *Chicago Day Book*, 3 May 1916.

42 *New Ulm (Minnesota) Review*, 1 Nov. 1916, 4. New Ulm was founded by German immigrants from Bavaria.

43 Rickenbacker's parents were in fact Swiss, but spoke German.



As was true with the Irish, several German-American religious leaders pleaded with their communities to pledge their loyalty to the United States first and foremost. They included the influential German theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, who changed his congregation's language of worship from German to English in 1916 as a statement of patriotism.<sup>44</sup> German Catholics often called on the warring parties to use German overtures to the Vatican at the end of 1916 as a means of making peace. They also argued that the overture itself showed Germany's willingness to come to a compromise peace.<sup>45</sup>

German-Americans in 1916 probably became the group most skeptical of going to war and also of American foreign policy. They saw themselves trapped between Wilson, whose pro-British stance they mistrusted, and Hughes, who, while not personally objectionable, certainly had objectionable men supporting him. One German-American supporter of Wilson gave a speech to a heavily German audience urging them to reelect the president. A Hughes victory, he warned, would mean that Theodore Roosevelt would have the dominant voice on foreign affairs in the new administration and J.P. Morgan, "the practical financial agent of the Allies in this country," would control American economic policy. "Are there any German-Americans in this country who wish to see this state of affairs? An answer to this question is unnecessary."<sup>46</sup>

When they did discuss the war, most German-Americans hoped to hold on to neutrality for as long as possible, although they increasingly saw war as a looming possibility. On a trip through Missouri, Wisconsin, and Minnesota during the election campaign, Ray Stannard Baker found German-Americans "unconvinced" by the arguments of Roosevelt, Elihu Root, and others that war was imminent but not hostile to the notion of a war of national defense should German-American relations take a turn for the worse.<sup>47</sup> For now, however, they would show their loyalty to the United States and hope that German-American relations would take a turn for the better somehow, someday. Should war come, however, they had made their choice clear: they would stand with their fellow Americans and hope that the United States could, through war, establish a just peace for Germany, Europe, and the world.

Like their fellow Americans, neither Irish nor German-Americans actively sought war by the end of 1916. For the most part, they still hoped that the nation

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44 Preston, *Sword of the Spirit*, 244.

45 "Pope Asked to Try for Peace," *Tulsa World*, 13 Dec. 1916. The Allies dismissed German efforts as insincere and cynical, though they did lead to a Papal Peace Note from Benedict xv in August, 1917. See <<http://www.firstworldwar.com/source/papalpeacenote.htm>>.

46 *New Ulm (Minnesota) Review*, 1 Nov. 1916.

47 Ray Stannard Baker, *American Chronicle* (NY, 1945), 303.

would find a way to project its positive values and protect its interests short of belligerence. Still, as 1916 turned into 1917 their views had come into sharper focus and had, for reasons dealing with both their “ethnic” and their “American” identities, come to conform to those of the nation more generally. As 1917 began, it had become ever harder to find sharp divisions on the war among groups of Americans.

Thus, for reasons having little to do with coercion or propaganda, the goals of most members of these two groups came to overlap with those of Americans more generally. This process sparked the development of what Kevin Schultz has called a “tri-faith America,” although Schultz locates this process in the Second World War, not the First. The evidence shows, however, that the events of 1914–1917 played an enormous, and heretofore largely unrecognized and underappreciated, role in forging this new America not just for Catholics and Protestants, but for Jews as well. It also helped to produce the rough American consensus on foreign policy that broadly held until the 1960s.<sup>48</sup> The former had enormous implications for American society more generally; the latter did not erase disagreements on foreign policy, but it did mean that those disagreements would no longer be primarily based in ethnicity or religion.

Even before American entry, therefore, the war played an enormous role in American history. It helped to catalyze a decades-long process of assimilation, especially in regards to American views on the nation's relationship to the rest of the world. As 1917 began, few Americans knew the direction that American foreign policy might take. War with Mexico, war with Germany, or a continued shaky neutrality were all possibilities. But whatever was to come, Americans were prepared to face an uncertain future together.

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48 Kevin M. Schultz, *Tri-Faith America: How Catholics and Jews Held Postwar America to its Protestant Promise* (New York, 2011). My thanks to Andrew Preston for his discussion with me about this book.

**PART 2**

*Small Nations*





## Protestant Nationalists and the Irish Conscription Crisis, 1918<sup>1</sup>

*Conor Morrissey*

The Great War had an enormous effect on Irish politics and society. At least 210,000 Irishmen fought in the war.<sup>2</sup> There were an estimated 35,000 casualties.<sup>3</sup> The outbreak of war in Europe deferred the implementation of the Third Home Rule Bill, which ultimately ruined hopes of a parliamentary solution to the prolonged Irish constitutional crisis. It provoked a split in the Irish Volunteers, which resulted in the smaller faction launching the Easter Rising of 1916. The experiences of the men who fought in the 36th (Ulster) Division became a source of Ulster unionist pride and contributed to a sense of distinctiveness in the northern province. Perhaps most importantly, the war led to the eclipse of the constitutional nationalist movement, the Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP), by Sinn Féin, the principal advanced nationalist group, which would precipitate the Irish War of Independence of 1919 to 1921, and the Irish Civil War, of 1922 to 1923.

A chief cause of this eclipse was the Irish conscription crisis of 1918. Between April and June of that year moderate and advanced nationalists, the trade unions, local government, and the Catholic Church combined forces in an unprecedented display of unity in opposition to the measure. Despite the cross-party nature of anti-conscription resistance, Sinn Féin took the electoral credit for the successful campaign, which led to the destruction of the once-mighty IPP in the 1918 general election. Another significant aspect of the conscription crisis was the highly-public identification of the Catholic Church, including its hierarchy, in the campaign. As will be seen, the anti-conscription protest initially took on an avowedly confessional nature, which seemed to demonstrate the correlation between Catholicism and nationalism in Ireland. However, one neglected aspect of Irish Great War studies has been the involvement of Irish

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1 I would like to thank the Irish Research Council for funding this research. I would also like to thank Dr Tomás Irish and Fionnuala Walsh for providing material.

2 David Fitzpatrick, "Militarism in Ireland, 1900–1922", in *A military history of Ireland*, eds. Thomas Bartlett and Keith Jeffery (Cambridge, 1996), 388; Keith Jeffery, *Ireland and the Great War* (Cambridge, 2000), 6.

3 Patrick J. Casey, "Irish casualties in the First World War," *The Irish Sword* 20 (1997): 197.

Protestant nationalists in anti-conscription agitation. There is a tendency to view Irish politics as following a binary Catholic/nationalist, Protestant/unionist pattern. The experience of Protestants in the anti-conscription campaign contributes to complicating this narrative.

In 1901 there were a total of 1,150,114 Protestants in Ireland, amounting to almost 26% of the total population.<sup>4</sup> In Ulster, the northern-most province, Protestants formed a majority: 883,624 individuals amounted to almost 56% of total, with the highest proportion concentrated in the six north-eastern counties.<sup>5</sup> In the southern three provinces, Protestants formed a small, scattered minority, chiefly comprised of Episcopalians (members of the Church of Ireland), and was disproportionately represented in the landed, professional and commercial classes. In Ulster, where the Protestant community included 424,526 Presbyterians, the group was more diverse, and included a substantial urban working class, centred on the industrial city of Belfast.

The lines of demarcation between religious confession and political affiliation were closely drawn. The vast majority of Irish Protestants were unionists, who supported the retention of the Act of Union of 1800, which abolished the Irish parliament, and instituted rule from London. In April 1912 the Third Home Rule Bill was introduced in the House of Commons, which would create a subordinate Irish legislature in Dublin. The bill was expected to become law two years later. Ulster unionists sought to prevent the imposition of the bill on their province, insisting that the country be partitioned, with Ulster remaining under Westminster control.

Ulster resistance to Home Rule culminated in the creation of the Ulster Volunteers in 1912, a militia which numbered as many as 110,000 members by mid-1914.<sup>6</sup> On 28 September 1912 a total of 237,368 men signed the Ulster Covenant, which stated that

Being convinced in our consciences that Home Rule would be disastrous to the material well-being of Ulster as well as of the whole of Ireland, subversive of our civil and religious freedom, destructive of our citizenship, and perilous to the unity of the Empire, we ... do hereby pledge ourselves in solemn Covenant ... to stand by one another in defending ... our cherished position of equal citizenship in the United Kingdom, and

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4 W.E. Vaughan and A.J. Fitzpatrick, eds., *Irish historical statistics: population, 1821–1971* (Dublin, 1978), 49. Vaughan and Williams' figure includes tiny numbers of atheists, Jews (amounting to 3,771), and those who refused to answer the religious question on the census return.

5 Vaughan and Fitzpatrick, *Irish historical statistics*, 65.

6 Timothy Bowman, *Carson's Army: the Ulster Volunteer Force, 1910–22* (Manchester, 2007), 1.

in using all means which may be found necessary to defeat the present conspiracy to set up a Home Rule Parliament in Ireland.<sup>7</sup>

There was a strong degree of political unanimity among Catholics, the vast majority of whom were nationalists and supported the IPP. The IPP was a moderate nationalist party, which sought the establishment of a subordinate, or Home Rule, legislature in Dublin. The IPP's main rivals were the radical, or advanced nationalist organisations, which included Sinn Féin, the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) and the Irish Citizen Army. After 1916, Sinn Féin, which from 1917 demanded a republic, became the dominant advanced nationalist vehicle, and began to threaten IPP dominance.

The attitude of Catholic nationalists to Irish Protestants was complex. Many rank-and-file Catholics viewed the Protestant community as part of an English political and cultural garrison. However, nationalist rhetoric, as elucidated by the IPP's leadership, and later, to a lesser extent, Sinn Féin's leadership, was different. Nationalist leaders constantly invoked an inclusionist rhetoric which claimed 'Catholic, Protestant and dissenter' were equally part of the Irish nation, and denied any connection between religion and political identity.<sup>8</sup> These declarations were given some substance due to the existence of a tradition of nationalism within Irish Protestantism. Unlike the unionist movement, whose leadership was almost exclusively Protestant, the various nationalist organisations were not as religiously homogeneous, and included a sizable number of Protestants, both in prominent positions, and among the rank and file.<sup>9</sup>

During periods of high tension, such as following the enactment of Home Rule bills in 1886, 1893 and 1912, the tendency for the nationalist leadership to make overtures to Protestants intensified. During the former and latter of these crises, an explicitly Protestant Home Rule association was formed, with the approval of the broader nationalist organisation. Between 1912 and 1914, the threat of civil war or the partition of the country induced a mania for public display of Protestant nationalists. During this period at least 20 Protestant Home Rulers addressed nationalist demonstrations, where these generally

7 Copy of Ulster's Solemn League and Covenant available at NLI Flickr photostream: <<http://www.flickr.com/photos/youmlireland/5721715125>>.

8 For studies of two contemporary newspaper editors whose journals adopted a rhetoric that excluded Protestants from their conception of the Irish nation, see Patrick Maume, *D.P. Moran* (Dundalk, 1995); Brian P. Murphy, *The Catholic Bulletin and Republican Ireland with special reference to J.J. O'Kelly (Sceilg)* (Belfast, 2005).

9 For an examination of Protestant involvement in nationalist organisations, see Conor Morrissey, *Protestant nationalists in Ireland, 1900–1923* PhD thesis, Trinity College Dublin, 2015.

obscure figures, with little or no previous political involvement, made strikingly similar statements testifying to the toleration of their Catholic neighbours and spoke of the disastrous consequences of partition.

In November 1913, the Irish Volunteers (IV), a nationalist response to unionist militancy, was formed, committed to defending Home Rule by force. The IV executive was dominated by members of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, prominent among them Bulmer Hobson, a Belfast-born Quaker. The militia found a ready constituency principally among Catholics outraged at Ulster unionist threats, and the organisation showed strong growth, numbering some 130,000 men by the end of May 1914.<sup>10</sup> In June 1914, John Redmond, the IPP leader, gave an ultimatum to the leadership of the IV and took nominal control of the organisation. In late July 1914 unionist and nationalist leaders as well as British politicians met for a conference in Buckingham Palace. Although Redmond had by then accepted that some form of partition was inevitable, the participants were unable to reach agreement on the area of Ulster to be excluded from Home Rule. On 24 July the conference broke up without success. Civil war between Ireland's two rival militias seemed imminent. However, fate intervened, and four days later Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia, precipitating war in Europe.

Irish unionists viewed the outbreak of hostilities as providential, allowing them to demonstrate loyalty to the British connection, in the hope that the government would drop Home Rule, or permanently exclude the majority Protestant north-east from its provisions. Redmond aspired to use support for the war effort to bolster his statesmanlike credentials among British opinion, and also hoped immersion in a common objective would help reconcile Irish factions. In a speech in the Commons on 3 August, he offered unconditional support for Britain in the European war.<sup>11</sup> Redmond's declaration prompted a split in the IV. By late October an estimated 158,360 formed the Redmondite National Volunteers, and 12,306 the advanced nationalist Irish Volunteers.<sup>12</sup> This latter faction, under IRB influence, launched the Easter Rising in 1916, which, although militarily unsuccessful, increased republican sentiment in Ireland.

Early in the morning of 21 March 1918 the German army launched its greatest offensive of the war. The spring offensive saw German forces menace Paris, and come close to breaking the entente's resolve.<sup>13</sup> The enormous British army

10 Charles Townshend, *Easter 1916: the Irish rebellion* (London, 2005), 52.

11 *Irish Times*, 4 August 1914.

12 Dermot Meleady, *John Redmond: the national leader* (Dublin, 2014), 307–308.

13 See Randal Gray, *Kaiserschlacht: the final German offensive of World War One* (Oxford, 1991).



death-toll ensured that the extension of conscription to Ireland was forced onto the government's agenda. Irish recruitment to the British army had originally been vigorous: an estimated 44,000 enlisted in 1914, 45,000 in 1915, but this fell to 19,000 in 1916 and only 14,000 in 1917.<sup>14</sup> Britain had experienced a broadly similar decline until the Military Service Act was passed in 1916, which introduced conscription in the larger island.<sup>15</sup>

Previously it had been argued that the cost of implementing the policy, in terms of potentially bloody disturbances and the possible supplanting of the IPP by Sinn Féin, the advanced nationalist organisation, was too high. On 9 April, against a background of conflicting cabinet and civil service advice, Prime Minister Lloyd George introduced the Military Service Bill, which would allow for its application to Ireland by order in council.<sup>16</sup> The government hoped to conscript 150,000 Irishmen. Lloyd George's vague assurance that he intended to 'invite Parliament to pass a measure of self-government for Ireland' was not enough to convince the IPP to support the policy: John Dillon, Redmond's replacement as IPP leader, led his supporters out of the Commons after the vote.<sup>17</sup> William O'Brien also led his All-For-Ireland-League MPs out of the house, declaring the measure to be a "declaration of war against Ireland."<sup>18</sup>

The announcement provoked fury among Irish nationalists, who temporarily joined forces to prevent the measure being implemented. An Irish anti-conscription committee was established, with representation by the IPP, Sinn Féin, the All-For-Ireland-League and Labour and the unions. Between April and June 1918 numerous rallies were held throughout the country, where people pledged to resist the imposition of conscription. Labour held a one-day general strike in protest at the measure. The Catholic Church was deeply associated with this agitation. On 18 April, having received a deputation from the anti-conscription committee, the hierarchy pronounced the measure 'an oppressive and inhuman law which the Irish people have a right to resist by all

14 Fitzpatrick, "Militarism in Ireland," 388.

15 David Fitzpatrick, "The Logic of Collective Sacrifice: Ireland and the British Army, 1914–1918" *The Historical Journal* 38 (1995): 1018–1021.

16 *Military service. A bill to make further provision with respect to military service during the present war.* (16) 1918.

17 Alan J. Ward, "Lloyd George and the 1918 Irish conscription crisis," *The Historical Journal* 17 (1974): 109–114; Thomas Hennessey, *Dividing Ireland: World War One and partition* (London, 1998), 220–221. For a detailed treatment of the British government's policy, see Adrian Gregory, "You might as well recruit Germans': British public opinion and the decision to conscript the Irish in 1918" in Adrian Gregory and Senia Pašeta, eds. *Ireland and the Great War: 'a war to unite us all'?* (Manchester, 2002), 113–133.

18 House of Commons, Vol. 104, cc. 1362–1363.

means which are consonant with the law of God'.<sup>19</sup> The bishops decreed that solemn Mass of Intercession be held in every Catholic church and chapel in the country the following Sunday, "to avert the threatened scourge of conscription from Ireland". After Mass, a public meeting was held in every parish, where hundreds of thousands signed a pledge, modelled on the Ulster Covenant of 1912, to "resist conscription by the most effective means at our disposal".<sup>20</sup> Despite this explicit coupling of Catholicism with anti-conscription agitation, nationalist leaders claimed that the campaign was non-partisan and non-sectarian. The nationalist press highlighted Protestant participation at meetings and rallies.<sup>21</sup> One correspondent claimed that by late April, "Hundreds of Protestants throughout the country have attended anti-Conscription meetings".<sup>22</sup>

Attempts to emphasise the non-sectarian nature of the protest were aided by the decision of small numbers of Orangemen – likely Independent Orangemen – to join in the agitation. The Orange Order is a Protestant fraternal organisation that is strongly unionist in nature, and is most active in Ulster. In 1903 the Orange Order faced a serious challenge when a breakaway group, the Independent Orange Order, emerged. This working class and populist splinter, while retaining the official order's pungent anti-Catholic rhetoric, included some elements whose hostility to the government led them to espouse Irish nationalism.<sup>23</sup>

Kevin O'Shiel, a Sinn Féin activist, addressing a meeting in a hall near Omagh, County Tyrone, was surprised to see three Orangemen – young farmers – in attendance. They wished to join the Irish Volunteers to resist conscription. O'Shiel recalled that he "heard of numbers of similar happenings in other parts of Ulster at the time".<sup>24</sup> He recorded that the men remained with the Volunteers for a time, before "withdrawing into their own Orange background".

19 *The Irish Rosary* 22 (1918), 387.

20 *Irish Catholic*, 27 April 1918; NLI, William O'Brien papers, LO P 114 [Item 98], Ireland's Solemn League and Covenant: [Anti-conscription protest form].

21 *Freeman's Journal*, 25 April 1918 (rally in Athy, Co. Kildare); *Kildare Observer*, 27 April 1918 (rally in Stradbally, Queen's Co.); *Anglo-Celt*, 27 April 1918 (meeting in Ballymoney, Co. Antrim attended by "many Protestant farmers"); *Freeman's Journal*, 20 April 1918 (rally in Enniskillen, Co. Fermanagh). At the latter rally "Unionists" were also described as attending.

22 Elizabeth Bloxham, letter to *Anglo-Celt*, 27 April 1918.

23 See Henry Patterson, "Independent Orangeism and class conflict in Edwardian Belfast: a reinterpretation," *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy: Section C: Archaeology, Celtic Studies, History, Linguistics, Literature* 80C (1980): 1–27.

24 National Archives of Ireland, Dublin (NAI), Bureau of Military History, Witness Statements (BMH, WS) Kevin O'Shiel, 775–776.

The most striking example of Orange participation in the anti-conscription campaign occurred at a large rally in Ballycastle, County Antrim. Described as “in every sense unique”, the rally was preceded by a procession headed by the Moyarget Independent Orange pipe band, with Sinn Féin and Ancient Order of Hibernian pipers following, marching alternately to such tunes as ‘The Boyne water’ and ‘A nation once again’. The Master of Moyarget Lodge was prominent on the platform.<sup>25</sup> There had long been a strand of Irish nationalist thinking that while deploring the politics of the Orange Order, admired the virility of their resistance, and dreamed of an eventual realignment in Irish politics that would see Orangemen and nationalists combine on an anti-government programme.<sup>26</sup> Those present at Ballycastle may have believed they were witnessing just such a realignment. One Catholic nationalist who addressed the crowd stated:

it was the first time he had ever taken part in a procession, headed by an Orange Band playing ‘The Boyne water’, but he hoped it would not be the last. ... He trusted that [this] wonderful meeting was going to be the beginning of a new era for [Orangemen] and for Ireland.<sup>27</sup>

There were also reports from other parts of the province of those described as Ulster Volunteers switching sides due to opposition to conscription. One former Irish Volunteer recalled:

One very unusual feature of the conscription campaign in our part of Co. Tyrone [Dromore] was the fact that a number of young Ulster Volunteers came along to us and offered to join the Irish Volunteers in their determination to fight conscription. To my own knowledge, at least four or five came along with others to join us. The conscription menace lasted such a short time that this attitude didn’t have time to develop amongst the rank and file of the Ulster Volunteers. The delight caused to us by the great rush of recruits into the Volunteers during the anti-conscription campaign turned to disappointment later on when the crisis passed, because

25 *Irish Independent*, 18 April 1918. For a further account of this event, see NAI, BMH WS, Liam McMullen, 5.

26 See, for example, Riobard Ua Fhloinn, *The Orangemen and the nation* (Belfast, 1907); Lindsay Crawford, *Irish Grievances and their remedy*, (Dublin, 1905).

27 *Ballymoney Free Press*, 25 April 1918.

great numbers of the men who had joined during the heat of the campaign left us.<sup>28</sup>

Although traces remained of the anti-government sentiment that characterised the Independent Orange Order in its early years the anti-conscription movement seems to have gained the support of only a tiny number of Independent brethren. It is likely that the short duration of the crisis ensured those members who came to associate with nationalism slowly drifted back into the unionist movement.

The fleeting, uncoordinated participation by Orangemen and Ulster Volunteers did little to alter the perception that opposition to conscription was a largely Catholic affair. Even the most unlikely groups of Catholics declared against conscription. The Dublin Metropolitan Police Catholic Society resolved to resist the measure.<sup>29</sup> In an unprecedented protest, sixteen Catholic King's Counsel, or senior barristers, signed the pledge as a group, which inspired outrage in the House of Commons.<sup>30</sup> One individual who grew uneasy with the religious complexion of the protest was Ernest Reginald McClintock Dix (1857–1936). Dix was an Episcopalian solicitor and Irish language enthusiast, who was prominent in Protestant nationalist circles in Dublin. In late April, he stated: "Fullest provision for signing the pledge against conscription has been made for Catholics, but ought there not to be ... an opportunity for others to sign? This is a National matter, and not merely a religious one."<sup>31</sup>

In Dublin, a small committee, led by the artist Nelly O'Brien (1864–1925), organised a 'Protestant protest against conscription'.<sup>32</sup> O'Brien was an Episcopalian, from a prominent landed gentry family, with a venerable nationalist pedigree. Her paternal grandfather, William Smith O'Brien (1803–1864) had associated with the Young Ireland romantic nationalist group in the 1840s, before leading the disastrous Confederate rebellion in 1848. O'Brien inherited her grandfather's belief that Protestants should be reconciled to nationalism, and devoted much of her adult life to the slow process of winning converts to the nationalist cause from among her co-religionists.

Analysis of the organising committee membership indicates that the protest had its genesis in the Cumann Gaelach na hEaglaise, or the Irish Guild of

28 NAI, BMH WS, Nicholas Smyth, 3–4.

29 National Library of Ireland, Dublin (NLI), LOP 114 [96], Dublin Metropolitan Police Catholic Society, anti-conscription poster.

30 *Nationality*, 18 May 1918; *Ulster Guardian*, 27 April 1918; *Cork Evening Echo*, 6 May 1918.

31 *Ulster Guardian*, 27 April 1918.

32 *New Ireland*, 27 April 1918.

the Church. The Guild had its origins in the Committee of Protestant Gaelic Leaguers, founded in Dublin in 1907. This was the initiative of a quartet of Dublin-based Church of Ireland IRB men, Seán O'Casey, later a celebrated playwright, Ernest Blythe, later minister for finance in the Irish Free State, Séamus Deakin and George Irvine. Their plan was to convert Protestants to political nationalism by stimulating their interest in the Gaelic Revival, through membership of the Gaelic League, a body which sought to restore the Irish language to everyday use. Nonconformist Gaelic Leaguers – always in short supply – drifted away and the almost entirely Church of Ireland body eventually became known as the Irish Guild of the Church. It agitated for Irish-language Episcopalian services, with a certain amount of success.

The Easter Rising was significant for the Irish Guild of the Church. The group included a diverse mixture of unionists, republicans, and apolitical language activists, with many of the latter group moved to sympathise with the rebels. At first the executive committee were concerned simply to keep the organisation together, with members being informed, “in the event of their alluding to the recent Rising nothing should be said likely to offend anyone”.<sup>33</sup> The Bishop of Tuam, the president of the Guild, sought to impose his authority on the group, threatening resignation unless a strong statement deploring the revolt was passed. Although a loyalist resolution was passed,<sup>34</sup> many of those who voted in favour did so tactically. Over the next two years, republican sentiment within the Guild increased.

At the Guild's annual meeting in 1918, George Irvine moved a resolution which rescinded the post-Rising declaration of loyalty and replaced it with a declaration that “the [Guild] expresses no opinion whatever in regard to the relations at present existing between the two nations of Ireland and England”.<sup>35</sup> The apolitical nature of this motion was rather undermined by his proud display of a republican badge while addressing the meeting.<sup>36</sup> The bishop of Killaloe, who chaired the gathering, reminded members of their Christian obligation of loyalty to civil power. Responding to this, the Rev. Oswald Fisher (1889–1920), drew a contemporary parallel, asking, “Were the clergy of Belgium disloyal to their Church because they did not recognise the Kaiser?”<sup>37</sup> The reso-

33 Representative Church Body Library, Dublin (RCBL), Irish Guild of the Church minutes, 23 April 1916.

34 RCBL, Irish Guild of the Church minutes, 20 June 1916, stated that this was passed only after “considerable discussion”. See also *Irish Times*, 22 June 1916.

35 RCBL, Irish Guild of the Church minutes, 14 May 1918.

36 *Dublin Daily Express*, 15 May 1918.

37 *Young Ireland*, 25 May 1918.

lution was passed after a stormy session, and as a result the bishops, as well as many other officeholders and members resigned from the Guild.<sup>38</sup> The ultra-unionist Dublin *Daily Express* was scandalised that so many Protestants were willing to be “exploited” by Sinn Féin.<sup>39</sup> One observer described the scene:

The ultra-loyal element present at the meeting were absolutely dumb-founded at the course which events had taken. It would be impossible to give an adequate idea of the appearance of the Bishop [of Killaloe], but the poor man seemed to think he had strayed into a Sinn Féin club.<sup>40</sup>

By mid-1918 the original, purely language activist Guild had become an organisation of about 90 mainly Dublin-based Episcopalians, who supported independence.

A declaration in favour of conscription by the Church of Ireland archbishops of Armagh and Dublin seems to have spurred the members of the Guild to organise the protest.<sup>41</sup> One anonymous member of the Church wrote:

The Primate and Archbishop of Dublin, in issuing their manifesto with regard to conscription, speak as though they represent the voice of the Church. Such is not the case. Sinn Féin members of the Church of Ireland, through a sense of loyalty to the Church, have for long submitted to their church being exploited for political ends. This loyalty has proved to be mistaken by our betrayal by the Primate and Archbishop, who have now placed the Church of Ireland in a position as is calculated may be used as a political weapon to separate us from our Roman Catholic fellow-countrymen, in whose national aspirations we are one.<sup>42</sup>

All six members of the organising committee, O'Brien, Ernest Reginald Dix, Isabella Tuckey, a kindergarten headmistress, the Rev. Oswald Fisher, George Ruth, George Irvine, and the artist Lily Williams were members of the Guild. At least four of these – O'Brien, Ruth, Irvine, and Williams – can be identified as

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38 Irish Times, 15 May 1918; RCBL, Irish Guild of the Church minutes, 14 May 1918.

39 Dublin *Daily Express*, 15 May 1918.

40 *Donegal News*, 26 October 1918. For a reaction to Irvine's resolution from one of the dumb-founded, see Miss S.E.E. West, letter to the editor, in *Church of Ireland Gazette*, 31 May 1918.

41 See “Ireland and the war: urgent appeal by the archbishops of Armagh and Dublin,” in *Irish Times*, 18 April 1918.

42 *Nationality*, 27 April 1918.

Sinn Féiners, with Irvine, a 1916 Rising veteran, also serving in the Irish Volunteers.

The protest adopted a pledge whose language was, again, based on the Ulster Covenant of 1912:

We, the undersigned, wish to join our Roman Catholic fellow-countrymen in protesting in the strongest possible manner against the application of Conscription to Ireland.

We believe that to force our people to act contrary to their will and conscience is a violation of the law of God, and cannot but be productive of the gravest and most disastrous moral, religious and material consequences.<sup>43</sup>

The campaign operated from Dublin, where, under O'Brien's direction, a large general committee was formed to publicise the protest across the country. By May, the protest was available for signature in twenty-seven counties, including several places in Dublin, the main area of activity. Organisers has some success in Ulster: the pledge could be taken in Cavan, Fermanagh, Armagh, two places in Derry and four places in Antrim.<sup>44</sup> There were reports of significant degrees of success in certain areas. In Foxford, County Mayo, organisers claimed to have garnered the signatures of "almost all" members of the Church of Ireland, including two Justices of the Peace and a synodsmen.<sup>45</sup> In Dugort, Achill Island, County Mayo, the organiser sent O'Brien a list of signatories which included the names of ten select vestrymen, and two churchwardens, one of whom was a synodsmen.<sup>46</sup>

The publicising of the protest was aided by the decision of nineteen prominent Protestants, including Douglas Hyde, 'Æ' George Russell and Robert Barton to sign the pledge. All these signatories held nationalist views.<sup>47</sup> In the absence of more detailed lists of signatures, these can be taken as evidence of the political views of most signatories of the protest.

43 NLI LO P114 [95], Protestant protest against conscription circular.

44 Military Archives, Dublin (MAD), Contemporary Records (CD) 258/8/ Protestant protest against conscription, May 1918 file, letter from organising committee to Lord Mayor of Dublin, 16 May 1918; *Irish Independent*, 22 April 1918; *Irish Independent*, 6 May 1918.

45 *Connaught Telegraph*, 4 May 1918.

46 *Cork Evening Echo*, 3 May 1918.

47 List of names included in MAD CD 258/8/ Protestant protest against conscription, May 1918 file, letter from organising committee to Lord Mayor of Dublin, 16 May 1918.

‘Æ’ George Russell made a noteworthy intervention in the conscription debate. Russell (1867–1935), a prominent artist and writer, was a former Methodist from County Armagh. Though a Theosophist, a mystic and a dreamer, he was also a well-known political moderate, who had recently published a pamphlet calling for Ireland to be granted dominion status, similar to Australia or Canada, within the British Empire.<sup>48</sup> *Conscription for Ireland: a warning to England* was a furious denunciation of the government:

The people of England should realise the danger, not merely to Ireland but to the Empire, of the policy of those they maintain in power. ... Our people look on this last act of British power with that dilating sense of horror a child might feel thinking of one who had committed some sin which was awful and unbelievable, as the sin against the Holy Ghost. ... If [the government] insist on breaking the Irish will, there will not be a parish here where blood will not be shed.<sup>49</sup>

Outwardly, the Protestant protest committee maintained that the protest was proceeding satisfactorily: O’Brien informed an *Irish Citizen* representative that she was getting a “magnificent response” to the appeal.<sup>50</sup> Although the nationalist press maintained that the pledge had been signed by “thousands”, the organising committee concealed frustration at the small numbers of people taking the pledge.<sup>51</sup> In a letter to the Lord Mayor of Dublin, the organising committee outlined three factors that, they believed, were impeding the success of the protest: opposition of the Church of Ireland hierarchy and the heads of the other Protestant churches; opposition from employers who pressured their employees not to sign; and a boycott by the unionist press.<sup>52</sup>

O’Brien was correct about hierarchical opposition. John Bernard, archbishop of Dublin, (whose son Robert had been killed at Gallipoli in 1915), told the *Church of Ireland Gazette* that he hoped no Episcopalians would sign the “mischievous and misleading manifesto”.<sup>53</sup> Bernard sought to dissuade individual Church of Ireland clergymen from taking part in the protest. He wrote

48 George Russell, *Thoughts for a convention* (Dublin, 1917), 29.

49 George Russell, *Conscription for Ireland: a warning to England* (Dublin, 1918).

50 *Irish Citizen*, May–June 1918.

51 *Donegal News*, 18 May 1918.

52 MAD CD 258/8/ Protestant protest against conscription, May 1918 file, letter from organising committee to Lord Mayor of Dublin, 16 May 1918.

53 *Church of Ireland Gazette*, 3 May 1918. For correspondence critical of the archbishop’s stance see *Church of Ireland Gazette*, 10 May 1918, letters from W.J. Lindsay, Abbeylara, Granard, and ‘Pro Patria’. See also *Cork Evening Echo*, 6 May 1918.



to Rev. Henry Barbor, a well-known nationalist sympathiser, vice-president of the Irish Guild of the Church and rector of Castledermot, saying:

I do not question your right to “protest” against the introduction of compulsory service in Ireland, any more than I would question the right of an Orangeman to “protest” against the introduction of Home Rule. But the meeting with the objects of which you expressed your sympathy “declared for the Covenant to resist Conscription”. That is a very different matter. If you associate yourself with those who resist the law, you are going beyond what is, in my judgment, legitimate for a Christian clergyman. You will certainly forfeit the respect and the confidence of your people, and you will bring dishonour on the Church of Ireland in this province, which has always upheld the tradition of obedience in the law, as a Christian duty, recommended in the New Testament.<sup>54</sup>

There is some evidence that the unionist press did mount a boycott. The Dublin *Daily Express* stated in mid-May that they had been requested to advertise the protest but they “declined to lend our columns to any such disloyal publication”.<sup>55</sup> However, both the *Church of Ireland Gazette* and the *Irish Times* printed the Protestant anti-conscription protest circular.

Despite lack of support from the unionist press, the organising committee maintained that the protest was supported through the co-operation of Catholics, a friendly nationalist press (the *Irish Independent* and *Freeman's Journal* gave very favourable coverage), and through the alleged assistance of a “not inconsiderable number of the younger clergy of the Church of Ireland”, despite episcopal disapproval of their actions.<sup>56</sup>

Not every nationalist newspaper was as enamoured of the Protestant anti-conscriptionists as were the *Irish Independent* and the *Freeman's Journal*. D.P. Moran's *The Leader* offered a furious denunciation, not only of O'Brien's protest, but of Protestant nationalists in general. Moran was a prominent publicist for a strand of Irish nationalism that viewed Catholicism and Irish nationality as entwined. He stated:

54 British Library, Bernard Papers, Add MS52783/14, John Bernard to Henry Barbor, 23 April 1918.

55 Dublin *Daily Express*, 15 May 1918.

56 MAD CD 258/8/ Protestant protest against conscription, May 1918 file, letter from organising committee to Lord Mayor of Dublin, 16 May 1918.

We think the day has gone by for people self-labelling [sic] themselves Protestant Home Rulers, Protestant Nationalists, Protestant Anti-Conscriptionists. What has their being Protestants got to do with it? There was a time when Mr [William Mills] Forsyth, the Pembroke Bumble, or Mr [Stephen] Gwynn, need only say that though he a Home Ruler was a Protestant, to evoke loud applause from a green and half-slave mob. We hope we are getting out of this sort of spirit. There is a gratuitous 'superiority' in people labelling themselves as, say, 'Protestant Home Rulers', as if it were a condescension for a Protestant to be a Home Ruler or anything else in common with an ordinary mere Irish Catholic. The plain fact that stares everyone in the place is that the non-Catholics of Ireland are apart from the Irish nation – no odd exceptions make any appreciable difference to the main fact.<sup>57</sup>

Moran's attack on Protestant nationalists and anti-conscriptionists, although breaching one of the nationalist movement's oldest taboos, may have reflected the submerged thinking of many "ordinary mere Irish Catholics" in the movement.

*New Ireland*, an advanced nationalist organ, while praising the Protestant anti-conscriptionists, offered a stern warning to their unionist co-religionists:

Irish Protestantism has been accused in the past of being a sort of Mahomedanism [sic]. It is regrettable that any religion should be so closely knit to the interests of a militant ascendancy as to render it well-nigh impossible for the outsider to distinguish between the church and the ascendancy class [i.e. Episcopalian landowners]. ... Until Irish Protestants adopt a democratic attitude ... sharing not only the benefits and amenities of our common national life, but also its responsibilities and burdens, they must remain outsiders – outlanders – aliens if you will.<sup>58</sup>

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57 *The Leader*, 15 June 1918. William Mills Forsyth, (b. 1865/6), a Methodist Belfast-born life insurance manager, was a member of Pembroke Urban District Council, and frequent victim of Moran's mockery. Forsyth was a prominent Protestant Home Ruler. Stephen Gwynn (1864–1950), an Episcopalian writer and politician, served as IPP member for Galway Borough, 1906–1918.

58 *New Ireland*, 27 April 1918. For similar sentiments, put forward by a Protestant anti-conscriptionist, see *Cork Evening Echo*, 25 May 1918.

The launch of the Protestant protest gave rise to claims that Protestant unionists were being boycotted or intimidated for refusing to sign the pledge. Major John Pretyman Newman, the Conservative member for Enfield in Middlesex, who came from a County Cork landed family, was an active critic of the Protestant protest. In late April he enquired in the House of Commons whether the government was “aware that threats were being used to compel the scattered loyalist population in the three [southern] provinces” to sign.<sup>59</sup> Newman’s accusation provoked the government to investigate O’Brien’s committee.<sup>60</sup> There may have been some truth in Newman’s accusation. The *Daily Express* claimed that “in several small country towns individuals have been threatened with all the horrors of the boycotting if they dare refuse to sign”.<sup>61</sup> Some members of Naas Urban District Council publicised the refusal of one member to take the Protestant pledge. Six members of Wicklow Urban Council who refused to sign an anti-conscription resolution were boycotted. Two of them were forced to leave Wicklow town; of the others, the *Irish Times* claimed that “it is sought to drive [them] out of trade and ruin their successful business”.<sup>62</sup> The Rev. Bertram C. Wells, the incumbent of St Thomas’s, Dugort, cast serious doubt on the claims of Episcopalian support for the Protestant protest on Achill Island. Wells alleged that his parishioners had been threatened with boycotting if they did not sign the Protestant protest, and that eight families had refused to submit to these threats. For Wells, the incident “casts a lurid light on the sort of tolerance that would be extended to supporters of the cause of the Allies and humanity in the event of Home Rule”.<sup>63</sup> Such allegations do not seem to have impressed the government. In mid-May Newman again claimed that “Protestants are being visited and compelled to sign the pledge under threats of being immediately boycotted if they refuse”, and enquired what action would be taken on the matter. Newman enquired why “a license is being accorded to the activities of this League which was refused to a League founded with similar objects in England?” (Members of the British-based Anti-Conscription League faced arrest and imprisonment for distributing anti-conscription material).<sup>64</sup> The government speaker replied that having

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59 *Ballymoney Free Press*, 2 May 1918.

60 House of Commons, Volume 106 cc. 200.

61 *Dublin Daily Express*, 15 May 1918.

62 *Irish Times*, 15 June 1918.

63 *Irish Times*, 9 May 1918.

64 See *Manchester Guardian*, 26 February 1916; *The Observer*, 27 February 1916; *The Times*, 28 February 1916; *Irish Times*, 25 October 1915.

investigated O'Brien's committee, "I cannot find that any intimidation has been used to force persons to sign it".<sup>65</sup>

9 June was designated 'Women's Day' as part of the national anti-conscription campaign. Throughout the country, women pledged not to replace conscripted men in the workforce. The most impressive scenes were in Dublin, where, despite heavy rain, some 40,000 took the pledge.<sup>66</sup> Among the women's organisations whose members took part were the Irish Women Workers Union (which was the largest contingent, with 2,400 signing), the Irish Women's Franchise League and the women of the Irish Citizens' Army. A group of munitions workers from Rathmines organised themselves and signed as a body. 700 members of Cumann na mBan, the women's auxiliary of the Irish Volunteers, marshalled the event.<sup>67</sup>

O'Brien organised a separate Protestant women's protest. On the morning of 9 June, the Protestant anti-conscription women, who included the historian Alice Stopford Green, Susan Mitchell the poet, Sarah Cecilia Harrison, the first woman to be elected to Dublin Corporation, and Alice Milligan, the writer, sought to meet at Christ Church Cathedral for prayer prior to attending the protest. Receiving no reply from the Dean as to their request for the cathedral to be opened early to accommodate this, they assembled at the appointed time, but found the doors shut. They were forced to hold their prayer service outside, kneeling down in the rain. Before the group departed, the doors were opened and two of the women were met by an official. It was alleged that he snapped a copy of the women's pledge from them, tore it into pieces, and stated that he would not allow "rubbish" like that in the cathedral.<sup>68</sup> For D.P. Moran the incident substantiated his long-held view that the vast majority of Irish Protestants were entirely opposed to Irish nationalism, and that Protestant nationalists were a tiny, unrepresentative minority.<sup>69</sup>

In all about 75 signatures were appended to the Protestant women's pledge. Although this may seem a derisory percentage – 0.19% – of the total estimated number of women's signatories, it must be noted that many Protestant women preferred to take the mainstream pledge. The Irish Women Workers Union

65 *Cork Evening Echo*, 15 May 1918.

66 According to the *Irish Independent*, 10 June 1918.

67 *Irish Independent*, 10 June 1918; *Irish Independent*, 8 June 1918.

68 *Irish Independent*, 10 June 1918. The *Nenagh Guardian* was more circumspect, stating only that 'they were discourteously treated by an official connected with the place': *Nenagh Guardian*, 15 June 1918.

69 *The Leader*, 15 June 1918.

group, led by Louie Bennett an Episcopalian trade unionist, was described as including “a large contingent of Protestant Labour women”.<sup>70</sup>

Although no statistics survive, it appears that hundreds of thousands of people signed the anti-conscription pledge throughout the country. Eventually, the extent of Irish resistance, alongside the immensely favourable impact of American involvement in the war, convinced Lloyd George to postpone the measure. Believing that party to have been the instigator of the anti-conscription agitation, on the night of 17–18 May the authorities arrested 73 prominent Sinn Féiners, including Éamon de Valera, the party leader, on the spurious grounds of a treasonous plot between them and Germany. The ‘German plot’ arrests provoked a furious response from John Dillon, who believed – correctly – that further moves against advanced nationalists would destroy his own movement.<sup>71</sup> The IPP had won three by-election victories prior to the conscription crisis, which gave the impression the party had reversed the trend towards Sinn Féin.<sup>72</sup> However, the impact of the anti-conscription agitation, which saw the latter party greatly enlarge its membership and public popularity, coupled with the folly of the German plot arrests, ensured that a greatly-weakened IPP entered the 1918 general election. In the election, which was held a month after the cessation of hostilities, the IPP, which had taken 74 seats in the previous election, returned only six members to Sinn Féin’s 73. After the conscription crisis, Sinn Féin would not have its position as primary nationalist movement seriously threatened.

The nationalist press claimed the Protestant protest against conscription was signed by several thousand people. However, this very vague figure must be treated with some scepticism: the organisers did not release figures, nor have lists survived. Perhaps the importance of the protest is in alerting us to the existence of a small but active network of Protestant nationalists, who, although generally avoiding explicit identification with Sinn Féin, worked independently to a separatist agenda, and acted collectively to undermine the appearance of Protestant political unanimity. In 1920, the Government of Ireland Act established the state of Northern Ireland in the six Protestant-majority counties of the north-east. In December 1921 the Anglo-Irish Treaty created the Irish Free State in the southern 26 counties. The Protestant nationalist dream of a non-sectarian, independent, united Ireland was lost. Writing

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70 *Irish Independent*, 10 June 1918.

71 Michael Laffan, *The resurrection of Ireland: the Sinn Féin party, 1916–1923* (Cambridge, 1999), 142–144; Ward, “Lloyd George and the 1918 Irish conscription crisis,” 118–120.

72 Hennessey, *Dividing Ireland*, p. 230.

only three years after the anti-conscription protest, Nelly O'Brien struck a mournful but defiant note:

It looked at first as if the Protestants of Ireland were going to stand aloof altogether from the struggle, and ignominiously allow themselves to be classed with the political and religious bigots who were trying to make capital out of the situation. A little band of us then ... issued a manifesto calling on the Protestants to 'join with their Roman Catholic fellow countrymen', and stating that it was wrong to force a nation against its will and conscience. Our difficulties were enormous owing to the opposition of the ecclesiastical authorities, the economic pressure brought to bear on many who were secretly in sympathy, and the fact that we could not get a hearing in the Unionist press. In spite of everything ... we made ourselves felt and received most touching tributes ... from Protestants who had no opportunity otherwise of registering themselves publically on the national side.<sup>73</sup>

The protest also serves to remind us, however, of the resolve of southern Protestant church leaders and the vast majority of laity to continue to affirm orthodox unionism. It was only several years after the Great War, following the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921, that substantial numbers of mainstream southern Episcopalians came to terms with the new dispensation.

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73 *Gaelic Churchman*, February 1921.

## Pows and Civilian Internees in Ireland During World War I

*William Buck*

Ireland has always been seen as a country of emigration rather than immigration. The 1911 census reported only 18,905 foreign-born (non-United Kingdom) residents in Ireland, with two-thirds of this number having been born in America. The largest number of non-UK residents consisted of 1,985 Russian-born residents (nearly all of whom were of Jewish ethnicity), 1,104 French residents, 963 immigrants were from the territories of the German Empire, 417 Italians, 283 from the Low Countries and 312 from Scandinavia. Of the total population of England, Scotland and Wales at the outbreak of the First World War in August 1914, only 0.69% was of non-British nationality; for Ireland the figure was even less at 0.37%. Even though these figures were miniscule for the overall population of both islands, the government's actions and policies concerning these minorities proved influential in moulding British wartime legislation.

At the outbreak of the war the government and public reactions to the 'enemy' was much the same in Ireland as it was in Britain. In *A Kingdom United. Popular responses to the Outbreak of the First World War in Britain and Ireland*, Catriona Pennell states: "The people of Britain and Ireland ... sought domestic scapegoats in order to purge their fears of the external German enemy, notably in the form of enemy spies and aliens, responded to myth and rumour, [and] imagined and then actually encountered violence and loss."<sup>1</sup> Hundreds of German, Austrian and Hungarian residents and visitors in Ireland were quickly rounded up and imprisoned without trial at the outbreak of the war. They were given the collective label of 'enemy aliens', although many of the individuals had lived for most of their lives in the United Kingdom, had married Irish or British spouses, and had children who were British- or Irish-born and possibly ended up fighting and dying for Britain at the front. A number of individuals, who had been born with enemy alien nationality but had become naturalised British citizens, were also treated with the utmost suspicion by the authorities and the public alike.

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<sup>1</sup> Catriona Pennell, *A Kingdom United. Popular responses to the Outbreak of the First World War in Britain and Ireland* (Oxford, 2012), 2.

From the very outbreak of war, legislation was introduced by the British Government to restrict the areas of residence and movement of all non-British residents within the UK. Within four days of war being declared, Asquith's Liberal Government introduced one of the first pieces of legislation, the Defence of the Realm Act (DORA) on 8 August 1914. This piece of legislation was to give the Government a series of wide-ranging emergency powers and it had the primary intention of 'securing public safety and the defence of the realm'.<sup>2</sup> To accompany the Defence of the Realm Act (1914), the Aliens Restriction Order was passed by Parliament on 5 August and implemented on 24 August 1914. The act directly affected alien subjects residing in Great Britain and Ireland, often through residence or travel restrictions. Various areas around the UK were labelled as 'prohibited', especially to civilians of foreign origin, as they were often in very close proximity to Britain's naval, military and intelligence organisations. The areas in Ireland labelled 'prohibited' included ports such as Dublin, Belfast and Cork and military bases, such as the Curragh camp.

Civilians of German or Austro-Hungarian nationality had to register themselves as enemy aliens with the local police office. If an enemy alien also wished to travel outside the five-mile radius of his/her home address, the individual had to apply for a travel permit. Foreign nationals were often caught up in precarious situations when many Irish ports and much of the coastline were labelled 'prohibited areas' by the British Government. One such example was that of Christian Hellwege, a German sailor, who arrived in Cork on 9 August 1914 on board the S.S. *Remembrance*, along with other sailors of non-British nationalities. They were all arrested and appeared in court by 15 August for not being registered with the police authorities when entering Cork.<sup>3</sup> The *Southern Star* reported on 26 September that once Hellwege was registered with the local police he was then forced to move inland to the town of Macroom, when Cork was named a prohibited area. Unfortunately for Hellwege, Macroom was not a very attractive place for a sailor as it was far from the coast and by 20 September, Hellwege returned to Cork city and was arrested again the following day and subsequently charged 'under the Aliens Act with having entered a prohibited area without having a permit from the Registration Office'. Hellwege was sentenced to two months hard labour for this offence.<sup>4</sup>

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2 'Defence of the Realm Consolidation Act, 27 Nov. 1914', TNA, MUN 5/19/221/8 (Nov 1914), online edition, <[http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways/firstworldwar/first\\_world\\_war/p\\_defence.htm](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways/firstworldwar/first_world_war/p_defence.htm)>.

3 *Southern Star*, 18 Aug. 1914.

4 *Southern Star*, 26 Sept. 1914



Alongside the legislation introduced, the British Government and press propaganda focused their attention on the Zeppelin raids inflicted on Britain's eastern coastal towns during the first five months of the war, the German U-boat attacks on neutral vessels and finally the German atrocities on innocent civilians following Germany's invasion of Belgium. This "demonisation of the enemy" created the mass hysteria that the propaganda was intended for.<sup>5</sup> Due to the success of the propaganda campaign in creating animosity towards enemy aliens the decision was made by the British Government to initiate a series of mass arrests during the first week of the war on German and Austrian nationals who were residing in Britain and Ireland. Up to 100 Germans were arrested in Dublin, as the *Irish Independent* reported under the headline "GERMANS IN IRELAND. LOOKING FOR THE SPIES. WHOLESALe ARRESTS IN DUBLIN."<sup>6</sup>

The article stated there were only 230 Germans residing in the capital and 160 Germans residing in Co. Dublin. German (and Austrian) waiters working in various Dublin hotels were particularly targeted during the arrests. Several Germans were charged with espionage and more arrests took place around other counties of Ireland and the rest of Britain.

In the first five months of the war, the official and public reactions to the enemy was much the same in Ireland as it was in the rest of Britain. This hysteria would permeate into Irish society, culminating in differing forms of anti-German sentiment. One such incident was Dublin's anti-German riot of 15th August 1914, when a mob looted a number of German-owned shops. The lootings caused damage and disruption to three Dublin pork butchers on the south side of the city – Frederick Lang, George Retz and Charles Seezer. Members of the large mob were subsequently arrested and charged, but the *Irish Independent* reported on 20 November 1914 that only '3 fellows and 3 girls' were found guilty of rioting and were given lenient sentences for their crimes.<sup>7</sup> During the court hearing to claim for damage done to Lang's property,

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5 John Horne and Alan Kramer, *German Atrocities, 1914: A History of Denial* (New Haven, 2001), 291. As Pennell states, "Germans were seen as immoral, unlawful and barbaric and under the 1907 Hague Convention on Land Warfare British academics mobilised around the themes of law-breaking and immorality." Pennell, *A Kingdom United*, 94. See also Stuart Wallace, *War and the Image of Germany: British Academics 1914–1918* (Edinburgh, 1988), 60–66.

6 *Irish Independent*, 13 Aug. 1914.

7 Manus O'Riordan's "Justification of James Connolly" lecture (May 2006) can be found at <<http://www.indymedia.ie/article/76009>>. The incident is also mentioned in Catriona Pennell, "Going to War", in John Horne, ed., *Our War? Ireland and the Great War. The 2008 Thomas Davis Lecture Series* (Dublin, 2008), 42; Horne & Kramer, *German Atrocities, 1914*; Clare O'Neill, "The Irish Home Front 1914–18 with particular reference to the treatment of Belgian

the respondents – the Corporation and the Rathmines and Pembroke Urban Councils – clearly stated that because Lang was an ‘alien enemy’ he was not entitled to sue during wartime (another regulation of the Aliens Restriction Order of 1914).<sup>8</sup>

The Dublin anti-German riot was an isolated incident. Ireland did not experience any other rioting against German residents or any other enemy aliens during the entirety of the war. This was different to the xenophobic attitudes of the rest of the UK, where Germans experienced riots in August and October 1914, May 1915, June 1916 and July 1917. Therefore, it may be concluded that active xenophobia was not really an issue for enemy aliens in Ireland, as was the case in Britain. However, there were many other cases of discrimination against German, Austrian and Hungarian residents in Ireland due to the wartime legislation and the hysteria created by the British government and the press, which permeated into the mentalities of many Irish people throughout 1914 and 1915. The War Office in London demanded figures for the number of enemy aliens in all locations in the UK. The following figures were collated and transmitted to the Home Office in London on 8 September, in time for a Parliamentary question the following day:

TABLE 5.1 *Numbers of Enemy Aliens in Ireland, Sept. 1915*<sup>9</sup>

Nationality	Males	Females	Children	Total
Germans	405	333	428	1,166
Austrians	132	66	96	294
Hungarians	10	3	2	15
Totals	547	402	526	1,475

From August to December 1914, 41% of all registered correspondence to and from the Chief Secretary’s Office (Dublin Castle) was concerning enemy alien activity and their incarceration. In comparison, only 10% of correspondence

refugees, prisoners-of-war, enemy aliens and war casualties”, (PhD thesis, NUI Maynooth, 2006), 88–9; and the *Meat Traders Journal*, 20 Aug. 1914, cited in Sue Gibbons, *German Pork Butchers in Britain* (Maidenhead, 2002), 40–43.

<sup>8</sup> *Irish Independent*, 1 Sept. 1914, 2 Oct. 1914.

<sup>9</sup> Note that these figures were quickly collated by the Dublin Metropolitan Police (DMP) and Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC), referring only to ‘registered’ enemy aliens and, therefore, cannot be deemed as definitive figures for the total amount of enemy aliens residing in Ireland at this time. See ‘Files of enemy and friendly aliens’, NAI, CSORP/1915/13931.

discussed activities of the Irish Volunteers and 8% was concerned with dissent amongst advanced nationalists.<sup>10</sup>

Many of the German and Austrian civilians arrested for spying allegations, registration irregularities, or not registering at all in the first five months of the war were often detained in local police stations, tried swiftly in the courts, before being transferred to either a local civilian prison or wartime detention camp. However, the lack of suitable internment accommodation was proving a serious problem for the British Government by the end of 1914, with over 12,400 enemy aliens interned throughout Britain and Ireland. However, in December 1914 the British Government had to make the decision to release 1,100 internees due to lack of accommodation, adding to the 25,500 enemy alien males who remained at liberty throughout the UK. One solution was the establishment of enemy alien internment camps, such as the Douglas and Knockaloe camps on the Isle of Man. For Ireland, Templemore Barracks was commandeered firstly as an internment camp for civilians, until it became a prisoner-of-war (POW) camp for captured German and Austrian soldiers and sailors from September 1914. A photograph of the arrival of civilian internees in Templemore appeared in the *Irish Independent* in September 1914.<sup>11</sup> These prisoners were some of the last remaining civilian prisoners to be sent to Templemore camp, before the 300 civilian enemy aliens were all moved on to the Isle of Man internment camps on 25 September. The transfer of the civilian prisoners was done to make way for the first batch of German and Austrian POWs – a total of 115 soldiers and sailors arriving at the camp between 10 and 14 September 1914.

The first batch of prisoners were quickly joined by 345 more POWs by 23 September (at which point there were about 800 people at Templemore, inclusive of the 300 civilians who were sent to the Isle of Man on 25 September). The *Southern Star* newspaper reported on 26 September that 400 more prisoners had arrived in Dublin en-route to Templemore Barracks and the *Irish Independent* reported the same day that 100 reservists had been brought to Queenstown by the Dutch-American liner *Noordham*. By the end of September, a further 200 POWs had arrived in the camp. On 14 and 18 October two detachments of 400 soldiers, respectively, were brought to Dublin by the *Duke of Cornwall* steamer, en-route to Templemore, bringing the population of the camp to 1,531 prisoners.<sup>12</sup> The *Irish Independent* reported the final 500 soldiers

10 Catriona Pennell, 'Going to War', 47.

11 *Irish Independent*, 14 Sept. 1914.

12 *Irish Independent*, 14, 23, 25, 26 & 30 Sept. 1914, 14, 18 & 19 Oct. 1914, 9 Nov. 1914; *Southern Star*, 26 Sept. 1914. The Inspector General's Monthly Police Report for Sept. 1914 stated that there were 700 German POWs residing at Templemore. (This information was taken from

arrived in Dublin on 8 November, to be housed at the Barracks. These soldiers had fought in the Battle of the Aisne.<sup>13</sup>

Considering the hysteria created by the August spy-fever propaganda and the arrests of German, Austrian and Hungarian civilians in the UK in the first month of the war, the idea of a POW detention camp being set up in Templemore should have caused further resentment and hostility towards these temporary visitors from the town's residents. However, as John Reynolds states:

The arrival of the POWs in Templemore generated much interest both locally and nationally. The magazine of the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) commented that the POWs were received "with much cordiality by the townspeople", who had long been campaigning to have the barracks reoccupied for the economic benefit of the town.<sup>14</sup>

The arrival of the POWs actually brought new life into the town and surrounding region. The native population clearly saw the economic benefits that 2,000 extra inhabitants could bring to the locality. Reynolds states that "one enterprising local shopkeeper, Mr Percy, set up a store in the barrack yard to supply the prisoners".<sup>15</sup> There were no attempted escapes by any of the POWs throughout their time at the camp and the prisoners and guards quickly settled into a routine, which involved exercise marches to the nearby village of Barnane, and music recitals both in the camp and at the respective churches, which the soldiers attended every Sunday (about half the soldiers were Catholic). As some of the soldiers were skilled tradesmen, they helped the locals to lay parquet flooring in the local convent.

The prisoners did still live in a detention camp environment. The two square courtyards were divided into four compounds with armed observation towers, searchlights, and barbed wire. The 3rd Leinster Regiment patrolled the prisoners constantly. However, conditions were comfortable and Reynolds even reports that some POWs were known to say, 'it would take a good many bayonets to get us out of Templemore barracks!'<sup>16</sup> By 'Christmas 1914 it was reported

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'The British in Ireland Series 1: Colonial Office Class CO 904 (Dublin Castle Records), Holding 1812-1926', Part 4 - Police Reports, Jan 1914-Sept 1921 (Microfilm Series - Reel 58, CO 904/94 & CO 904/95).

13 *Irish Independent*, 9 Nov. 1914.

14 John Reynolds, "'It's a Long Way to Tipperary' German POWs in Templemore," *History Ireland* 16 (2008) <<http://www.historyireland.com/volumes/volume16/issue3/features/?id=114232>>.

15 Reynolds, 'It's A Long Way'.

16 Reynolds, 'It's A Long Way'.

that ... local people came to the barracks to listen to the POWs singing Christmas carols in their native tongue. Despite the on-going war, a warm and friendly relationship had developed between the prisoners and the local townspeople.<sup>17</sup> The atmosphere created at Templemore was in stark contrast to what had transpired at the detention camp in the Isle of Man, where there were reports of a mutiny developing among the prisoners by the end of November 1914.<sup>18</sup>

For the civilian enemy aliens of Ireland who were arrested and detained temporarily in prisons, or at Templemore Barracks, or even shipped to the Isle of Man camps, it was necessary to set up a civilian detention camp in Ireland. Oldcastle Workhouse and infirmary was finally set up as a civilian detention camp by the British military in November 1914 under the command of Captain Robert Johnson V.C., late Imperial Light Horse Infantry. The camp's first batch of civilian inmates arrived on 8 December 1914 (68 in total); 26 more on 10 December and 30 more between 16–18 December. In total 760 inmates eventually passed through the gates of Oldcastle detention camp between 1914 and 1918. Oldcastle Workhouse had opened in 1842 to provide accommodation and work for 600 of Co. Meath's poor, eventually housing over 1,300 people by the end of the Great Famine. The workhouse was built south of the town centre and had more than adequate facilities to work as a civilian detention camp, including a fever hospital, a farm, a chapel, a working water system that provided hot running water and washrooms, a laundry, a bakery, dorms, an exercise yard and it was in close vicinity to Oldcastle rail station with links to Dublin and Belfast. Even though the civilian enemy aliens at Oldcastle were incarcerated away from their family home and businesses, they tried to add structure to their daily lives and were given occasional allowances by the commandant of the camp, such as celebrating the arrival of the New Year. Patriotic songs and religious hymns could be heard reverberating from the confines of the camp. *The Meath Chronicle* reported that "the music loving folk in Oldcastle speak enthusiastically of the harmonised singing of the Germans and especially of one who possesses a tenor voice of extraordinary power and sweetness".<sup>19</sup>

By early February 1915, Oldcastle camp housed 304 civilian enemy alien inmates. Interaction between the internees and the local inhabitants of Oldcastle was occasioned by the hobbies and skills of many of the civilian prisoners, leading to the manufacture of furniture, jewellery, shoes, toys, also

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17 Reynolds, 'It's A Long Way'.

18 Reynolds, 'It's A Long Way'. Newspaper reports on the Douglas camp riot can be found in the *Leitrim Observer*, 5 Dec. 1914; *Freeman's Journal*, 23 Nov. 1914, 16 & 30 Dec. 1914; *Irish Independent*, 3 & 18 Dec. 1914

19 *Meath Chronicle*, 9 Jan. 1915

tailoring, carpentry and painting, resulting in items being sold to Oldcastle locals. Commendably the military authorities allowed many of these enemy alien civilians to continue a business-like normality, even though they found themselves in an atmosphere of barbed-wire confinement through no fault of their own.

As more arrests of enemy aliens were made throughout the first few months of 1915, due to an increasing suspicion of Ireland's foreign inhabitants, the number of enemy aliens arriving at Oldcastle's internment camp naturally increased. On 27 March 1915 it was reported that an additional two hundred prisoners arrived through the gates of Oldcastle's internment camp, brought from all over Ireland as the mass arrest and internment of the country's enemy alien population gathered pace.<sup>20</sup> All of the camp's enemy alien internees were civilian, barring one naval officer.<sup>21</sup> So, it is reasonably safe to assume that any enemy alien civilians arrested in Ireland from 1915 onwards were sent to Oldcastle.

The numbers of enemy aliens arriving in the Oldcastle camp increased as a result of the closure of Templemore Barracks in the first two months of 1915, which involved the transfer of over 2,300 strong military prisoners. The reasons for the closure of the Templemore camp are unclear. John Reynolds states that the "official reason for the move – as reported in the RIC magazine – was that sanitary facilities in Templemore were not up to standard, and also that the barracks was now required as a training depot for Irish soldiers preparing for the front." Reynolds goes on to state that the unofficial reason had more to do with a secret report compiled by the RIC Special Branch. They believed there was an escape attempt being planned by Pierce McCann, a senior member of the Irish Volunteers in Tipperary. The plan was to attack the barracks at Templemore and liberate all the military prisoners, possibly in the hope that they would return the favour by helping out in an Irish insurrection against the British sometime in the near future. McCann was known to have links with Irish Volunteer leaders, such as P.H. Pearse, The O'Rahilly and Thomas McDonagh and it was suggested that he was involved in "the distribution of anti-recruiting and pro-German leaflets" within the camp. Reynolds believes this was the real reason German and Austrian POWs were moved from Ireland altogether.<sup>22</sup>

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20 *Meath Chronicle*, 27 March 1915.

21 John Smith, "The Oldcastle Prisoner of War Camp, 1914–1918," *Ríocht na Mídhe: Journal of the County Meath Historical Society*, Vol. 21 (2010), 224.

22 Reynolds, 'It's A Long Way'.

The POWs were transferred to England and the experiences in the new POW camp at the old Lilford weaving shed at Leigh, Lancashire was much worse than their five months stay in Templemore.<sup>23</sup> The Germans and Austrians had done very little wrong. The prisoners had not attempted to escape or riot. The POWs had even offered assistance to the locals of Templemore and had built up a strong rapport with their Irish neighbours. The prison camp had brought profit to many of the local businesses. The various county police reports throughout the country for January 1915 had reported an increase in anti-German feeling, partly due to government invasion instructions given under the Defence of the Realm Act after the November bombing raid on the east coast of England, as well as public reaction to the Catholic Church's recital of Cardinal Mercier's pastoral after his imprisonment by the German military in Belgium. However, there are no reports of animosity towards the prisoners up to their departure in early 1915.<sup>24</sup>

The POWs were certainly not happy to leave Templemore. The *RIC Magazine* reported that "many were the regrets uttered at the thoughts of being taken away from the comfortable quarters and the 'Gudde nicey people' of Templemore". As preparations for the departure of the prisoners gathered pace, journalists and commentators described Templemore as "the quietest place on earth".<sup>25</sup>

In the case of the civilian detention camp at Oldcastle, opposition to the housing of enemy aliens appeared in the local press. As early as November 1914 the *Meath Chronicle* reported the dismay and alarm shown by some of Oldcastle's local inhabitants at the injustice shown by Meath's local Board of Guardians, who had been given the task of maintaining the workhouse and caring for its inhabitants. A letter, simply signed 'TARA', was printed in 7 November edition of the *Meath Chronicle* questioning:

What are the Guardians of the poor elected for? ... Are not the lives of the poor ... just as valuable as those of the stalwart male refugees who are coming from Belgium ... what about the Irish refugees who are being

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23 Local Leigh historian Leslie Smith has documented the time POWs spent in the Leigh camp in her book, *The German Prisoners of War Camp at Leigh 1914–1919* (Manchester, 1986).

24 Monthly Police Reports of the DMP and the RIC (Jan. 1915), in the 'British in Ireland' microfilm series, Reel 59.

25 Reynolds, 'It's A Long Way'.

turned out of the Workhouses to make room for soldiers and German prisoners?<sup>26</sup>

However, throughout the first four months of 1915 the Irish public and press attention was diverted away from the enemy alien situation and towards the arrival of hundreds of Belgians every month and efforts to financially support and accommodate the throng of refugees onto Ireland's shores. This was to change with the sinking of the passenger liner *Lusitania* by a German U-boat off the Old Head of Kinsale on 7 May 1915, with the loss of 1,198 lives. The spotlight quickly fell back on the potential menace that was Britain and Ireland's enemy alien contingent. The sinking sparked huge hysteria in England, Scotland and Wales, with severe recriminations brought upon the enemy alien population in the form of street riots, looting of alien businesses, and mass arrests.<sup>27</sup> It was expected that Irish people would mimic public opinion across the Irish Sea. Even though Ireland experienced the same pressures of war as Britain, the press and authorities reported no form of disorder or rioting against aliens in Ireland throughout the second half of 1915 and Dublin's August 1914 incident remained the only anti-German riot that occurred on Irish soil throughout the war.<sup>28</sup>

After May 1915 the British Government increased the internment and repatriation policies, resulting in an increase in the number of arrests and the internment of more enemy alien civilians at Oldcastle detention camp. A camp visit took place in June 1915 by a 'Mullingar correspondent' who subsequently reported in both *The Midland Reporter* and *The Meath Chronicle* that there was very little out of the ordinary about prison life. The internees were often found "passing their time idly", others exercising; generally all prisoners seemed in good health and well fed and clothed. There appeared to be strong security around the camp: "the whole building looks exceedingly clean and has a mod-

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26 *Meath Chronicle*, 7 Nov. 1914.

27 For more on the May 1915 rioting in England, Scotland and Wales see Panikos Panayi, *The Enemy in our Midst. Germans in Britain during the First World War* (Oxford, 1991) and Panayi, "The Lancashire Anti-German Riots of May 1915," *Manchester Regional History Review* 2, (1988–89), online version, <[http://www.mcrh.mmu.ac.uk/pubs/pdf/mrhr\\_02ii\\_panayi.pdf](http://www.mcrh.mmu.ac.uk/pubs/pdf/mrhr_02ii_panayi.pdf)>.

28 Further analysis of the reasons behind the lack of rioting in Ireland after the sinking of the *Lusitania* can be found in my PhD thesis, "Aliens in Wartime: Reactions and Responses to Foreign Nationalities and Minorities in Ireland during the First World War" (PhD Thesis, Mary Immaculate College, Limerick, 2013).



ern appearance, much of the characteristics of the Union ‘workhouse’ have been deleted. The grounds in front are nicely decorated with flowerbeds.”<sup>29</sup>

The military authorities also catered for the inmates’ religious requirements. A travel permit application found in the Chief Secretary’s Office Registered Papers, dated 15–25 February 1915 was granted to Pastor Rozenkranz to travel from Liverpool to Oldcastle’s detention camp to deliver the service there.<sup>30</sup> The inmates continued to break up the daily monotony of camp life with various activities, hobbies and sports, while music also played a significant part.<sup>31</sup>

However well-cared and catered for the prisoners of Oldcastle appeared to be from these reports, it did not prevent the civilian prisoners attempting to escape the monotonous confinement of prison life. It is clear that the rate of escape attempts from Oldcastle camp significantly increased from the second half of 1915 onwards, due to a stricter approach taken by Major Luscombe (who had temporarily replaced Major Johnson as the commandant of the camp in July and August 1915) and the soldiers who guarded the camp. The civilian prisoners were so clearly distressed that they chose to risk their own lives to try and escape from the camp.<sup>32</sup>

The first of the post-*Lusitania* escape attempts was made in August 1915. On 11 August, Carl Morlang, aged 25, and Alphonsus Grein, aged 24, who had previously worked as ship’s officers before the outbreak of the war, successfully escaped the camp by cutting through the barbed wire entanglement and evading the six heavily guarded lookout posts surrounding the camp. The *Meath Chronicle* stated on 14 August that the escapees had not been recaptured, but it was reported that the prisoners had received a visit by two ladies arriving from Dublin the day before their escape. There were suggestions that a prepared escape plan had been organised, involving a motor car, to help explain how they evaded recapture. A week later the *Meath Chronicle* reported their recapture and details of the route the prisoners had taken. They had made their way “across the country, passing through Ballyjamesduff and Kilnaleck” and onto the village of Denn, en route to Cavan. At Denn, Grein called into a public

29 Smith, “The Oldcastle Camp,” 224–7; *Meath Chronicle*, 19 June 1915.

30 “Files of enemy and friendly aliens”, NAI, CSORP/1915/13931; Kenneth Steuer, *Pursuit of an “Unparalleled Opportunity”: The American YMCA and Prisoner-of-War Diplomacy among the Central Power Nations During World War I, 1914–1923* (Columbia, 2009) offers further details on Pastor Rozenkranz’s role as secretary of the National Committee of the German YMCA and his involvement in POW relief operations in Germany and Great Britain.

31 A photograph showing one of the choirs in the Oldcastle camp has been displayed on the Moylagh Historical Society Facebook page, <<https://www.facebook.com/moylaghhistory>> (accessed on 10 June 2014).

32 Sometimes spelt ‘Luxome’ or ‘Lushcombe’

house, where he treated the guests to free drinks, before both prisoners moved on to Cavan and the Farnham Arms Hotel. On Friday night a constable, responding to reports of “suspicious looking pedestrians”, made his way to Cavan where he arrested Morlang – dressed “in clerical attire” and calling himself Mr. Rev. White from Templemore – and Grein at the hotel. The next port of call for the prisoners was the local train station to board a train for Belfast. Both had plenty of money and had road maps in their possession.<sup>33</sup>

The *Meath Chronicle* also reported the arrest of Charles (Charlie) Fox, a well-known auctioneer, merchant and local Sinn Féin activist. Fox was charged with “aiding and abetting two German prisoners to escape”.<sup>34</sup> He was released due to no evidence being found against him. However, the second arrest by the RIC led to Fox being handed over to the military authorities and detained at Arbour Hill Detention Barracks in Dublin. Fox was defended by two prominent members of parliament, Timothy M. Healy (North East Cork) and J.C.R. Lardner (North Monaghan). Fox also boasted of his contacts in high places, including his friendship with Arthur Griffith, the founder of Sinn Féin. Something (or someone) worked in his favour, as Fox’s case never reached the courts and he was released without trial.<sup>35</sup> Fox returned to a fanfare and “rejoicings in Oldcastle”, with “the Workingmen’s Club Brass and Reed Band ... playing in the town square ... [supported by] torch bearers. Many people came in from the country to participate in the rejoicings.” John Smith argues that the military contacts afforded by Fox’s wife helped her husband escape trial and sentence: “His wife had previously been married to a British officer, who had been killed in India ... [and] used military contacts to get her husband acquitted.”<sup>36</sup>

The second escape attempt was made on 15 September, involving Christian Deichman, a twenty-eight year old German sailor.<sup>37</sup> Deichman was finally apprehended at Limerick Docks by the local constabulary, on board the Norwegian steamer *Ladas*. He had evaded arrest for two whole weeks.<sup>38</sup> There

33 *Meath Chronicle*, 21 Aug. 1915; Smith, “The Oldcastle Camp”, 230–31.

34 *Meath Chronicle*, 21 Aug. 1915; *Irish Times*, 20 Aug. 1915; Smith, “The Oldcastle Camp”, 231–32.

35 *Irish Times*, 21 Aug. 1915; *Meath Chronicle*, 21 Aug. 1915; Smith, “The Oldcastle Camp”, 231–32.

36 *Meath Chronicle*, 28 Aug. 1915; Smith, “The Oldcastle Camp”, 233; John Smith, *The Oldcastle Centenary Book* (Navan, 2004), 36 & 217.

37 Smith, “The Oldcastle Camp”, 234. An article from the *Meath Chronicle*, 18 Sept. 1915, has the prisoner’s name as Hans Christian Deschman and his age at twenty-five years. The *Irish Independent*, 7 Oct. 1915, when reporting on the prisoner’s capture, gave his name as Christian Hans Dockmann.

38 Smith, “The Oldcastle Camp”, 234; *Irish Independent*, 7 Oct. 1915.

were perhaps some reasons for the internees' frustrations and escape attempts. It is clear by the success of two separate escape attempts in such a short period of time that the security and organisation of the camp and its guards could certainly be questioned. Major Luscombe had temporarily replaced Major Johnson as the commandant of the camp during July 1915 and a report on 14 August by the *Meath Chronicle* stated that there had been some "grumblings" about the withdrawal of some privileges by Major Luscombe. John Smith has questioned whether camp life under Major Luscombe had become stricter and thus internees more keen to escape or the camp security by the guards had become more lax. The change of attitude that Major Luscombe's arrival brought to the running of the camp may have also been due to a backlash from the *Lusitania* sinking in May. This is supported by a report in the *Anglo-Celt* on 22 May, which mentioned strong suggestions by the Oldcastle Union and Castlerahan Rural District Council (RDC) to put the internees to work "instead of going around the roads singing [referring to the prisoners weekly marches] ... these Germans are able to cut turf ... should not the fellows down in the workhouse be brought out to work in the bogs? ... They should be made to do something for the country."<sup>39</sup> Even though some of the Guardians and councillors of the region voiced resentment towards the enemy alien prisoners, no action was taken on these suggestions.

During the summer of 1915 a number of changes took place at Oldcastle's detention camp. The *Meath Chronicle* reported on 2 October that there was to be a change of guard at Oldcastle. A new division was to take over security of the camp. A new telephone line had been established between the detention camp and the Oldcastle post office to "considerably facilitate the work of locating escaped prisoners".<sup>40</sup> But escape attempts did not stop, even with the return of Major Johnson as commandant by the end of the year. There would be three more escape attempts throughout 1916.

January 1916 saw the next escape attempt made by two Germans, Karl Graurnam, (alias John Haalm) and August Bockmeyer, who managed to fool the camp sentries and escape the enclosure "on Friday night or early Saturday morning".<sup>41</sup> It remained a mystery how the two prisoners escaped the compound but the *Meath Chronicle* remained suspicious of a lack of vigilance about the camp. The two prisoners were recaptured a few days later, near

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39 *Meath Chronicle*, 22 May 1915.

40 *Meath Chronicle*, 2 Oct. 1915.

41 Smith, "The Oldcastle Camp", 234; *Meath Chronicle*, 22 Jan. 1916; *Anglo-Celt*, 22 Jan. 1916; *Westmeath Examiner*, 22 Jan. 1916.

Rathowen, Co. Westmeath, twelve miles outside Mullingar.<sup>42</sup> They were forced to serve one-year imprisonment in Arbour Hill Military Prison, Dublin.<sup>43</sup>

Following the third escape attempt in the camp's existence, "it was rumoured that the guards 'will be reinforced by 100 men during the coming week'".<sup>44</sup> The incident was an embarrassing episode for the Commandant of the camp, as the British authorities needed the camp to be secure with the ever-growing menace of the Irish Volunteers and other radical nationalist groups in Ireland. The escapades of Charlie Fox had already offered a warning in 1915 to the possibility of radical nationalists infiltrating the camp.

The events of the Easter Rising in April 1916 certainly led to fears surrounding the security of Oldcastle camp. The *Meath Chronicle* reported on 6 May that during Easter week, "the camp was strongly fortified and machine guns placed in position. On Sunday last a naval detachment travelled in an armoured train to Oldcastle on some business connected with the security of the camp".<sup>45</sup> The increased security of Oldcastle camp may have been due to the increasing rumours that the insurgents were planning to organise an escape plan for the enemy alien prisoners of Oldcastle in the hope that they would assist the nationalists in attacking the British. This theory is given credibility by Seán MacEntee's account of the preparations for the Easter Rising. MacEntee claimed that Donal O'Hannigan, a member of the IRB, met with P.H. Pearse two weeks prior to the Rising to receive instructions concerning the West Dublin and Co. Meath Volunteers. O'Hannigan was to lead certain branches of Volunteers in a mission to release the German prisoners at Oldcastle.<sup>46</sup>

Life for the enemy alien internees was probably made more uncomfortable with the increased anti-German hysteria that followed the death of Lord Kitchener, on board the *HMS Hampshire*, which was sunk by a German mine of the Orkney Islands on 5 June 1916 on its voyage to Russia. Anti-German riots erupted around England, Scotland and Wales again. While no riots were reported in Ireland, Ulster experienced heightened anti-German hysteria, resulting in further anxiety for many enemy alien individuals.

On 10 June 1916, Oldcastle was visited by a member of the US Embassy, in London, who had been given the job of writing a full report on the condition of the camp and its inmates. The report confirmed that "the camp contained 579

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42 Smith, "The Oldcastle Camp", 234.

43 *Meath Chronicle*, 12 February 1916.

44 Smith, "The Oldcastle Camp", 235.

45 *Meath Chronicle*, 6 May 1916; Smith, "The Oldcastle Camp", 242.

46 Thomas Hennessey, *Dividing Ireland: World War 1 and Partition* (London, 1998), 130–1; Clare O'Neill, "The Irish Home Front", 106–7.

prisoners, all civilians, with the exception of one naval officer. Of these 468 were German, 110 were Austrian, and one was ‘of other nationality’. The conditions were described as good. The bleak condition of the former workhouse was brightened up by the internees placing flowers in their rooms, as well as “singing birds in a cage hanging on the windows [and] ... pictures and portraits of the German Emperor, German Generals, the king of Saxony and many photographs” in rooms that were “fresh and spotlessly clean”.<sup>47</sup> With facilities like adequate sanitary conditions, bath tubs with hot and cold running water, a washroom, drying room and special taps with filtered drinking water, it can be argued that the enemy alien internees were better catered for than many Irish people living in the slums of Dublin, Limerick, Cork and other towns and cities in Ireland. Even though the US Embassy report concluded that “they, [the prisoners] appear to be, on the whole, content”, this visit just involved one day’s assessment and was only “a snapshot of camp life [and] belied the fact that many of the internees wanted to get out”.<sup>48</sup>

The fourth escape of the year came in July 1916, which took place in broad daylight during one of the prisoners’ football matches. An inmate managed to clear the perimeter wall and “started across the countryside”. Several warning shots failed to frighten the escapee, although he was recaptured after a short while. The prisoner was declared insane for his opportunistic escape attempt and was removed to a lunatic asylum.<sup>49</sup> Oldcastle’s final escape attempt ended with the fatal wounding of a prisoner. August Bockmeyer and Frederick Johann Henric Kreutz attempted to escape on 17 September.<sup>50</sup> On scaling the outer wall at 9.30pm, the prisoners attempted to escape across the fields, only for one of the sentries on duty, Private Robert Tiernan, to fire at the escapees. Bockmeyer was severely wounded and was conveyed to the camp hospital where the camp chaplain (and fellow internee) Rev. Knowles remained with Bockmeyer until his death a few hours later. At the coroner’s inquest it was decided by the jury that the sentry was “quite justified” in shooting the prisoner, in the “discharge” of his duty, even though Bockmeyer’s dying words were quoted as: “I crawled along and a voice said: ‘Halt, who goes there’ and I jumped up and said ‘I am a prisoner: don’t shoot.’—he shot me. I send my

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47 Smith, “The Oldcastle Camp”, 228–29.

48 Smith, “The Oldcastle Camp”, 229–30.

49 Smith, “The Oldcastle Camp”, 235.

50 Bockmeyer was possibly the same prisoner who tried to escape in Jan. (‘Boykmeyer’), along with Karl Graurnam, even though it is difficult to fully confirm this fact, as ‘Boykmeyer’ was supposed to be serving one year’s imprisonment in Arbour Hill Military Detention Camp, in Dublin.

regards to my mother unless I do not see her anymore. I have nothing more to say.”<sup>51</sup>

The hunt for Kreutz began at 10pm, after a roll call revealed that he was missing. It took until Monday for the military and the police to eventually arrest Kreutz near Castlepollard, about ten miles from Oldcastle. There was also a rumour reported by the *Meath Chronicle* that the military authorities had discovered “a stealthy tunnelling operation ... burrowing under the boundary wall and were on the point of making an exit well outside the wall when they were detected.” A letter carried by an Austrian prisoner who had been transferred from Oldcastle to London revealed the existence of the tunnel. Security became much tighter in the camp after September.<sup>52</sup>

By 1917 the British authorities were more concerned with how to deal with the radical nationalists of the country after the Rising. Sinn Féin proved to be a real threat to British rule in Ireland and many of the confidential County Police Reports of 1917 were more preoccupied with the growing strength and tensions of the Sinn Féin clubs than they were of enemy alien threats and enemy subversion. February had already seen the first of four parliamentary seats to be taken by Sinn Féin in by-elections during 1917. With all the attention on the progress of Sinn Féin as a political force, newspapers reported very few instances of anti-German hostility or enemy alien arrests during 1917.

In February 1917, the use of enemy aliens in agriculture and other national industries was being considered by the British government and discussed in newspapers and periodicals. 200 of the German POWs who had previously spent time at Templemore, but were now located at Leigh’s detention camp in Lancashire, were sent to work at Partington Steel Works in Irlam from March onwards. Thirty POWs were also sent to work down the coalmines at Atherton’s Chanter’s Colliery.<sup>53</sup> However, compulsory employment could only be applied to combatant POWs and did not apply to the thousands of civilian prisoners interned throughout the UK. The question of using civilian enemy aliens in agriculture was raised at the County Dublin Food Production Advisory Committee on 13 February, but no clear outcome came from the debate, as civilian enemy aliens could not be used as forced labour during wartime.<sup>54</sup> However, some interned enemy aliens tried to work the new agricultural scheme and manpower shortage in Britain and Ireland to their advantage.

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51 Smith, “The Oldcastle Camp”, 235–36; *Meath Chronicle*, 23 Sept. 1916.

52 Smith, “The Oldcastle Camp”, 235–36,

53 *Leigh Chronicle*, 16 March 1917; Smith, *German Prisoner of War Camp*, 65–71.

54 *Irish Independent*, 14 February 1917.

In March, Herman Saloshinsky (also known as Greentree) sought release from internment to take up agricultural work in Britain. Saloshinsky was born in Lodz and interned in 1914 for being a Hungarian enemy alien. His appeals to the American Consul in Dublin had him reinstated as a Russian, before being interned once again for changing his name to Greentree in 1915. The issue of a person's nationality and their recognition as enemy or friendly alien was an ongoing complication for the British and Irish authorities. Was Saloshinsky a subject of the Russian Empire that occupied his city at the time of his birth and the nationality that he registered as at the start of the war? His city being occupied by the German Empire since the outbreak of the war, was he not now an enemy alien? As he had declared himself Hungarian at the time of Ireland's 1911 census was this the nationality that the authorities should recognize? The confusion meant that there was reluctance to categorise him as a Russian "friend" instead of a German (or Hungarian) "enemy". His British wife's pleas for his release during 1916 in order to help support his family also fell on deaf ears. Saloshinsky's file never recorded his release and departure from Ireland, but the final correspondence intimated that there was no reason (other than physical fitness and a heart condition that had been reported when he first arrived at Oldcastle camp) why the alien should not travel to work as an agricultural labourer in Britain.<sup>55</sup>

Another tactic employed by enemy aliens to achieve release from internment was the promise and commitment to join the British Army. This option was only open to enemy aliens who were subjects of the German or Austro-Hungarian Empires, but claimed their individual nationality. One example was Oldcastle internee Alphonso Palcic, officially Hungarian, but claiming Serbian nationality. Palcic had received an invitation from the Home Office to join the British Army and confirm his friendly status, in September 1917, after the Serbian Legation had written to support his Serbian nationality in July.<sup>56</sup>

The Census of Aliens was taken throughout the United Kingdom on 1 July 1917 and collated by the Department of Aliens. This gave comprehensive figures for all nationalities still residing in Ireland. Of the enemy alien population only 171 males and 131 females remained un-interned in Ireland in July 1917. A further 179 British-born females married to enemy aliens were residing in the country.<sup>57</sup> Over the next eighteen months these figures decreased further as the British government increased their policy of repatriation due to pressure

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55 NAI, CSORP/1919/3681.

56 NAI, CSORP/1919/3681.

57 "The Census of Aliens, 1 July 1917", NAI, CSORP/1917/446. The 1917 Census of Aliens was the only completed report found in the NAI. Such a census was taken every year of the war

being placed on the British Government from right-wing politicians (such as Pemberton Billing and Lord Charles Beresford) and the British press.

The increasing political strength and presence of Sinn Féin in Ireland also led to the closure of Oldcastle detention camp in 1918. A total of 450 enemy alien civilians interned at Oldcastle were deported from Dublin to the detention camps on the Isle of Man in June 1918, allowing the Oldcastle detention camp to be closed. John Smith believes it was “most likely that the changing political climate in Ireland by the summer of 1918 had some bearing on the military’s decision to remove the German and Austrian internees from Oldcastle”.<sup>58</sup> Smith goes on to highlight that “support for Irish independence gathered momentum in Oldcastle at the time of the ‘conscription crises’ ... The board [of Guardians] decided to attend ... an anti-conscription meeting ... on 13 April 1918 ... clearly reflecting [their] broader anti-British sentiments.”<sup>59</sup> A note from the Under-Secretary of Ireland, dated 24 April, also stated: “I think those alien enemies constitute a danger & to be moved out of Ireland.”<sup>60</sup>

All enemy alien internees from Oldcastle’s internment camp were deported from Dublin’s North Wall port to the Isle of Man detention camps in June 1918. The *Irish Times*, *Leitrim Observer* and *Anglo-Celt* all detailed the deportation of Oldcastle’s enemy alien civilian internees. The *Leitrim Observer* report stated that:

Extraordinary scenes were witnessed at the [North Wall] port of Dublin ... From an early hour wives, daughters and children of these aliens assembled outside the gates of the ... railway station at the North Wall ... A very strong military force was present ... the train ... was vociferously cheered by the crowds ... Handkerchiefs were frantically waved by women ... Sinn Féin colours and green scarves were worn by many of the female relatives ... on the South Wall – across the river – crowds numbering hundreds ... congregated. They sang the Sinn Féin “Soldier’s Song” and cheered themselves hoarse ... Suddenly the strains of a brass band floated out on to the water. It was the aliens.<sup>61</sup>

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from July 1915 to 1919 to report on the numbers and locations of various nationalities throughout the UK.

58 Smith, “The Oldcastle Camp”, 240–41.

59 Smith, “The Oldcastle Camp”, 241–44; Poor Law Minute Books (Oldcastle), 13 April 1918; *Meath Chronicle*, 20 April 1918.

60 “Closure of Oldcastle Camp, 1918–1919”, NAI, CSORP/1918/11769.

61 *Leitrim Observer*, 1 June 1918.



At the end of the war, many internees (and their families back in Ireland) expected a swift return. However, this was not the case. Many of Britain's enemy alien internment camps remained in operation, as the government used the manpower after the war to rebuild the country until the country's soldiers returned. Some internees were used in agricultural labour forces or deported to mainland Europe to assist in the rebuilding process of France and Belgium.<sup>62</sup> Meanwhile, the wives and families left in Ireland remained without a husband, father and most importantly a wage earner.

The alien question took up hours of parliamentary debates and the passing of anti-alien legislation to safeguard the country against the often imaginary threat that these groups were alleged to represent. Many of Ireland's enemy aliens were put off returning to the country by the political turmoil that existed in Ireland after 1918. Although the pre-war numbers of Ireland's enemy alien population was considerably smaller than that of the rest of Britain, the government's anti-alien emergency legislation had the same devastating effects upon the population figures of German, Austrian and other enemy alien communities in Ireland. Public animosity also played a less significant role than the British government's actions and legislation in affecting the daily lives of enemy aliens and their families.

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62 Reinhard Nachtigal examines the issues and problems encountered by each of the belligerent countries regarding the repatriation of POWs. See Nachtigal, "The Repatriation & Reception of Returning POWs, 1918–22", *Immigrants & Minorities* 26 (2008): 157–184.

# Neutral Allies or Immoral Pariahs? Scandinavian Neutrality, International Law and Great Power Politics in World War I

*Michael Jonas*

At the end of June 1918 a lowly ranked official with the British legation in Stockholm, vice consul Robert Marshall, composed a five-page memorandum seemingly on the “Public Opinion in Sweden with Regard to the War”. Already the opening sentences betray the author’s intention and psychological state:

The Swede is by nature psychologically fitted to take the same point of view on things in general as the German. There is a very common impression in England that the Swede is the most honest and straight-forward person on earth. This is not so. I have been resident in this country for over eight years, most of the time under circumstances which have given me a very good opportunity to form a reliable opinion with regard to the average Swede and I have found that the Swedes as a whole have no regard whatever for the truth as such. They will tell a most bare-faced lie on the slightest provocation if they think that they will not be found out. In business, one should always insist on a written contract. I have had a large experience of cases which would in England be called sharp practices or dishonesty. In Sweden they are accounted “good business”.<sup>1</sup>

A tangibly frustrated Marshall goes on to portray Swedish politics and foreign policy, society and the military against the backdrop of the country’s increasingly intimate association with Britain’s main adversary in the war, the German Empire. While at the same time rich in substance, but analytically crude and highly opinionated, Marshall’s memorandum provides a fine entrée into the attitudes of British diplomats and politicians towards Sweden and the Scandinavian neutrals in general.

British impressions and opinions on Sweden’s position in the war are mirrored by German diplomatic reporting and media opinion. Marshall’s

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1 National Archives, Kew (NA): Foreign Office (FO) 748/4: Memorandum by Vice Consul Robert Marshall on Public Opinion in Sweden with Regard to the War, 28 Jun 1918.

counterpart, one of the more extreme voices in relation to Germany's policy towards Sweden, was the German minister to Stockholm in 1914, Franz von Reichenau, a national-conservative Wilhelmine monarchist with strong reservations vis-à-vis parliamentary government.<sup>2</sup> Reichenau hailed the Swedish position during the July Crisis, which he misconstrued as almost unconditionally pro-German, and repeatedly encouraged Berlin to think of Sweden as a likely ally in an increasingly probable war. For the minister, Sweden's future unequivocally rested with the German Empire. All Sweden needed was a push towards its allegedly natural political preference, to bring about the desired Swedish involvement in the war. Ultimately, the minister even imagined the country as a federal province under Germany's imperial umbrella, just like the kingdoms of Baden and Württemberg.<sup>3</sup> Obviously, none of his projections ever materialised. When it became clear by the autumn of 1914 that Stockholm was settling for neutrality and abstention from the conflict, Reichenau found himself at a dead end and resorted to rather undiplomatic forms of bullying, not least in his dealings with government ministers. This eventually forced the otherwise vehemently pro-German king of Sweden, Gustav v, to request the minister's removal from Stockholm. At the turn of the year 1914/15, the tactless diplomat was replaced with a much more astute observer of Swedish realities, the liberal and upper-bourgeois career diplomat Hellmuth Lucius von Stodten.<sup>4</sup>

With Marshall and Reichenau as admittedly peculiar figures to begin with, this study explores central perceptions and expectations in British and German policy-making and diplomacy vis-à-vis Scandinavian neutrality during the First World War from a comparative historical angle. For reasons of brevity, the geostrategic, diplomatic and military preoccupations of Britain and Germany towards Sweden, Norway and Denmark are only touched upon. At heart, the subsequent comparison is focused instead on the great powers' conflicting perceptions of Scandinavian neutrality during the First World War. The highly complex Swedish case is at the centre of the analysis, whilst Denmark and Norway are – for reasons of space – dealt with less systematically. The study is

2 On Reichenau cf. Sönke Neitzel, "Diplomatie der Generationen? Kollektivbiographische Perspektiven auf die Internationalen Beziehungen 1871–1914," *Historische Zeitschrift* 296 (2013), 84–113, here 98–101.

3 Wilhelm M. Carlgen, *Neutralität oder Allianz: Deutschlands Beziehungen zu Schweden in den Anfangsjahren des ersten Weltkrieges* (Stockholm, 1962), 22, 36–38; Inger Schuberth, *Schweden und das Deutsche Reich im Ersten Weltkrieg: Die Aktivistebewegung 1914–1918* (Bonn, 1981), 21–27.

4 Carlgen, *Neutralität oder Allianz*, 72–75; Schuberth, *Schweden und das Deutsche Reich*, 24–30.

premised on the observation that much in the same way as the conflict forced the Scandinavian countries to negotiate neutrality in a generally hostile environment, major belligerent powers like Germany and Britain were themselves compelled to deal with neutrality and its often sharply differing practices in Northern Europe. Against that backdrop, international law, whose interpretation and implementation remained controversial throughout, was continually tested to its limits and often perverted. At no time, however, did it become irrelevant, as research on the First World War suggested until quite recently.<sup>5</sup> This is particularly evident in the relations of large belligerent powers to the smaller states in their immediate geographic vicinity and the wider environs of their geostrategic and military reach.

Scandinavia and its relations to the great powers during the First World War provide a suitable background against which the complexity and practice of neutrality and international law can be explored. This is largely due to the strongly differing approaches and orientations adopted by the Scandinavian states. In this context, Sweden is the most difficult case to fathom. The dominant retrospective view, informed by the country's protracted "age of social democracy", tends to present it as a small-state harbinger of peace and internationalism largely unaffected by the wars of the last century.<sup>6</sup> This interpretation tends to disregard the fact that Sweden in and about 1914 was a country in transition and, especially in terms of domestic politics and its conception of itself, not necessarily at peace. Symptomatic of this is the fact that the most controversial question in the domestic arena in 1914 was the liberal government's attempt to reduce defence spending, which triggered the mass mobilisation of the country's Right – as evident in the so-called Farmers' March in February – and led to a crisis that left Swedish society and politics divided (*borggårdskrisen*).<sup>7</sup>

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5 The centrality of international law to the conflict has been recently demonstrated by a number of studies, among them Isabel V. Hull, *A Scrap of Paper: Breaking and Making International Law in the First World War* (Ithaca, NY, 2014); Johan den Hertog/Samuël Kruizinga (eds.), *Caught in the Middle. Neutrals, Neutrality and the First World War* (Amsterdam, 2011), especially Johan den Hertog, "Dutch Neutrality and the Value of Legal Argument," 15–34.

6 Francis Sejersted, *The Age of Social Democracy. Norway and Sweden in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, 2011); Magnus Jerneck, "Modernitet och småstatsidentitet – mönsterlandet Sverige som fredlighetens land [Modernity and small-state identity – Sweden as a model nation for peacefulness]," in idem (ed.), *Fred i realpolitikens skugga* (Lund, 2009), 77–93.

7 The crisis is referred to as Courtyard Crisis (Swed. *borggårdskrisen*) after the courtyard of the Royal Palace in Stockholm, where King Gustav V made a speech to the amassed participants in the pro-armaments march of the Swedish Right. The speech had been co-

On pragmatic grounds, the outbreak of the war mended these divisions for a time, forcing a caretaker cabinet, headed by conservative Prime Minister Hjalmar Hammarskjöld, to remain in office. In the domestic arena and in its foreign policy, Sweden appeared ill-prepared for a general war in Europe. Declaring its neutrality, as Sweden did on 3 August and affirming it jointly with Norway again five days later, was therefore not only a matter of choice and tradition, but also one of necessity.<sup>8</sup>

In the international arena of the war, however, Swedish neutrality appeared curious, to say the least. It was primarily Sweden's unusually intense orientation towards Berlin that set the country apart from the majority of the neutrals, not least in northern Europe. Germany's case for war and conduct in war was, after all, not necessarily popular among the neutral powers and especially the neutral publics.<sup>9</sup> To begin with, Berlin's disregard for Belgian neutrality and

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drafted by the famed Swedish explorer and fervent right-wing "activist" Sven Hedin and caused a constitutional crisis that eventually led to the downfall of the liberal government of prime minister Karl Staaff. Cf. Olle Nyman, *Högern och kungamakten 1911–1914: ur borggårdskrisens förhistoria* [The Right and monarchical power 1911–1914: on the prehistory of the Courtyard Crisis] (Stockholm, 1957); Wilhelm M. Carlgren, *Ministären Hammarskjöld: Tillkomst – Söndring – Fall. Studier i svensk politik 1914–1917* [The ministry Hammarskjöld: rise – disruption – downfall] (Stockholm, 1967), 9–42; Jarl Torbacke, "Försvaret främst": *Tre studier till belysning av borggårdskrisens problematik* ["Defence first": three studies on problems of the Courtyard Crisis] (Stockholm, 1983); Kent Zetterberg, "Borggårdskrisen i ny belysning: en studie i försvarsberedningarna 1911–1914 [The Courtyard Crisis in a new light: a study of armaments preparations 1911–1914]," in Mats Bergquist, Alf W. Johansson and Krister Wahlbäck (eds.), *Utrikespolitik och historia [Foreign policy and history]* (Stockholm, 1987), 347–359.

8 The best overviews for the three Scandinavian states are Rolf Hobson, Tom Kristiansen, Nils Arne Sørensen and Gunnar Åselius: "Introduction. Scandinavia in the First World War," in Claes Ahlund (ed.): *Scandinavia in the First World War. Studies in the War Experiences of the Northern Neutrals* (Lund, 2012), 9–56, and Patrick Salmon, *Scandinavia and the Great Powers, 1890–1914* (Cambridge, 1997), 118–168; see as well Sofi Qvarnström, "Sweden," in: *1914–1918 online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, ed. by Ute Daniel et al. [acc. 19 Feb 2015].

9 Sverker Oredsson, *Svensk rädsla: Offentlig fruktan i Sverige under 1900-talets första hälft* [Swedish angst: public fear in Sweden in the first half of the 20th century] (Lund, 2001), 88; see also Lina Sturfelt, "From Parasite to Angel: Narratives of Neutrality in the Swedish Popular Press during the First World War," in Hertog/Kruizinga, *Caught in the Middle*, 105–120, here 108; Salmon, *Scandinavia and the Great Powers*, 118–168; Samuel Kruizinga, "Neutrality," in: *The Cambridge History of the First World War*, Vol. 2: *The State*, ed. Jay Winter (Cambridge, 2013), 542–575.

territorial sovereignty had already severely damaged its credibility.<sup>10</sup> The increasingly propagandistic moralisation of the conflict, added to by the, at times, blatant German violations of international law left the German cause deeply discredited. In Sweden, however, a significant and vocal segment of society sympathised with the German war effort and agitated in favour of a Swedish entry into the war on the side of the Central Powers. “Activism”, as this political movement was known, was liable to compromise the government’s neutrality and therefore expose the country to considerable foreign policy risks, none more so than during the crucial years, 1914 and 1915. In a nutshell, the movement could be described as a potent rearguard battle of the old elites, were it not for the appeal it had on the Left, especially within an influential group of younger social democrats.<sup>11</sup> Besides that, activism characterised quite a large chunk of the culturally Germanophile, ideologically monarchist and national-conservative forces in Swedish politics, culture, especially in academia and – most forcefully – in the military as well as the wider environment of the Swedish court. The activists’ political views and aims, indeed their belief system as a whole, harked back to the heyday of Swedish imperial might in Northern Europe, with the ultimately existential struggle against a projected “Russian menace” at its heart.<sup>12</sup> Theirs was a residual imperialist agenda of a small and increasingly insignificant state that had lost an empire, but had not yet found a role.<sup>13</sup> In the eyes of the activists, an alliance with Germany was

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- 10 John Horne and Alan Kramer, *German Atrocities, 1914: A History of Denial*, New Haven/London, 2001; Isabel V. Hull: “‘Military Necessity’ and the Laws of War in Imperial Germany,” in Stathis Kalyvas, Ian Shapiro and Tarek Masoud (eds.), *Order, Conflict, Violence* (Cambridge, 2008), 352–377.
- 11 Nils-Olof Franzén, *Undan stormen: Sverige under första världskriget* [Aside the storm: Sweden during the First World War] (Stockholm, 1986), 138–152; Michael Jonas, “‘Activism’, Diplomacy and Swedish-German Relations during the First World War,” *New Global Studies* 8 (2014), 31–48; Mart Kuldkepp, “Sweden’s Historical Mission and World War I: A regionalist theory of Swedish ‘activism,’” *Scandinavian Journal of History* 39 (2014), 126–146.
- 12 Gunnar Åselius, *The “Russian Menace” to Sweden: The Belief System of a Small Power Security Elite in the Age of Imperialism* (Stockholm, 1994), 398–405; idem, “Hotbilden: svenska militära bedömningar av Ryssland 1880–1914 [The threat scenario: Swedish military assessments of Russia 1880–1914],” in Johan Engström/Lars Ericson (eds.), *Mellan björnen och örnen. Sverige och Östersjöområdet under det första världskriget, 1914–1918* [Between the bear and the eagle: Sweden and the Baltic Sea area during the First World War] (Visby, 1994), 197–208.
- 13 Dean Ascheson’s description of Britain’s disorientation in the post-war period, delivered in a speech at West Point, 5 December 1962, captures the sentiments among the Swedish elites rather aptly.

first and foremost intended to eliminate what was, in reality, a greatly exaggerated danger from the East, probably return the Åland Islands to Sweden and – if at all possible – liberate what they saw as a subjugated Finland from the clutches of Russia. As such, Sweden would be restored as a dominant power in northern Europe, albeit at Germany's benevolent mercy.<sup>14</sup> Whilst historiography tends to agree that the influence of the activist movement on Swedish government policy remained relatively weak, during its heyday in 1914–15 and then again in the wake of the Russian collapse in 1917–18 activism's semi-official counter-diplomacy certainly threatened the overall stability of Swedish policy-making. This, as well as the centrality of Sweden to the German war effort, exposed the country time and again to forceful political interventions by both Germany and Britain.

In contrast to Sweden and its effectively pro-German leanings, Norway was assumed to be – in Olav Riste's classic phrase – Britain's "neutral ally".<sup>15</sup> Here, aggressively enforced British interests, derived from the geostrategically sensitive situation of Norway in relation to the British naval blockade, were opposed by incessant German political manoeuvring in order to preserve at least a semblance of Norwegian neutrality. Norway's structural trade dependence on Britain, especially on British imports of coal and oil, left the country virtually no choice but to effectively forego its neutrality and become an element of the Western Powers' war effort and not least of the British naval blockade. Norway's situation was further complicated by Berlin's controversial decision to resume its campaign of unrestricted submarine warfare from early 1917 onwards. The country possessed the fourth largest merchant fleet on earth and suffered dramatically increasing losses due to German submarine activity, eventually losing half of its pre-war tonnage and up to 2,000 sailors.<sup>16</sup> As a consequence, relations with Germany were repeatedly strained and at times – in particular towards the end of the war – at the point of collapse. In the summer of 1917, it seems to have been only due to the intervention of the extremely gifted German diplomat Paul von Hintze, who had just been appointed as minister to

14 Besides Carlgren, *Neutralität oder Allianz*, the definite account of the "activist" movement is Schubert, *Schweden und das Deutsche Reich*, here 31–39. On the persistence of Swedish great power delusions see Sverker Oredsson, "Stormaktsdrömmar och stridsiver: Ett tema i svensk opinionsbildning och politik 1910–1942 [Great power dreams and conflict anxiety: A subject in Swedish opinion-making and politics 1910–1942]," *Scandia* 59 (1993), 257–296, 335–336.

15 Olav Riste, *The Neutral Ally: Norway's Relations with Belligerent Powers in the First World War* (Oslo, 1965).

16 Hobson et al., *Introduction*, 38–39; Riste, *Neutral Ally*, 170–190; Salmon, *Scandinavia and the Great Powers*, 129–145.

Kristiania, that Norway did not – despite its de facto involvement in the British war effort – declare war on Germany. Hintze’s constant advocacy of a policy of “magnanimity and reconciliation” in Kristiania and Berlin de-escalated the bilateral climate to an extent that allowed both countries to return to a “modus vivendi in war” and preserve their relations.<sup>17</sup>

Denmark’s position appeared even more complex. The country was subject to an overarching influence from Germany, while hanging on to its “natural” political preference for Britain and the Entente, following the Second Schleswig War of 1864 and its deeply humiliating results for the small country.<sup>18</sup> Just as Norway ultimately compromised its neutrality in giving in to Britain’s various demands, Denmark saw itself incapable of resisting German diplomatic pressure for long. In response to increasingly vehement German interventions, Copenhagen took to mining the Danish straits, i.e. the areas between Jutland and the island of Funen, the strait between Funen and the island of Sealand, and the sound between Sealand and Sweden, which had been international waterways since the Copenhagen Convention of 1857.<sup>19</sup> Denmark’s enforced concessions towards Berlin were symptomatic of the country’s neutrality policy as a whole, which Einar Cohn once described justifiably as “an act of balancing on a knife’s edge”. Denmark in many ways inverted the Norwegian case. Copenhagen’s neutrality, however, appears to have been generally more stable than Kristiania’s, which was largely due to the geopolitically exposed situation of Norway, but was also related to Denmark’s frantic and often rather success-

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17 Hintze’s approach to Norway is best captured in a report to Reich chancellor Hertling of 19 February 1918, in which he states that Germany should “adopt the gesture of leniency and magnanimity, the conduct of the big in dealing with the small, even when the latter is naughty.” Cf. Johannes Hürter (ed.), *Paul von Hintze. Marineoffizier, Diplomat, Staatssekretär. Dokumente einer Karriere zwischen Militär und Politik, 1903–1918* (München, 1998), 68–69, 392–396, 419–423.

18 Cf. recently Stehn Bo Frandsen, “Klein und national: Dänemark und der Wiener Frieden 1864,” in: Ulrich Lappenküper/Oliver Auge (eds.), *Der Wiener Frieden als deutsches, europäisches und globales Ereignis*, Paderborn, 2015 [forthcoming].

19 This had been reinforced by Denmark’s proclamation of neutrality in 1912; cf. Hobson et al., *Introduction*, 23–24, 27; Salmon, *Scandinavia*, 126–127; Nils Arne Sørensen, “Denmark,” in: *1914–1918 online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, ed. by Ute Daniel et al. [acc. 19 Feb 2015]; Michael Epkenhans/Gerhard P. Groß (eds.), *The Danish Straits and German Naval Power 1905–1915*, Potsdam, 2010, especially the contributions by Alexander Rindfleisch and Hans Branner; Bent Bludnikow, “Denmark during the First World War,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 24 (1989), 683–703.



ful diplomatic efforts led by the country's foreign minister Erik Scavenius and supported by Berlin's chief envoy, Ulrich von Brockdorff-Rantzau.<sup>20</sup>

As diverging as their neutralities appear, their different policies vis-à-vis the great powers "did not leave them at odds with one another in any real sense."<sup>21</sup> On the contrary, it was their common, partly-coordinated neutrality policy in the face of a global conflict that tended to bring the three Scandinavian kingdoms together. The – albeit limited – degree to which the war effected the coordination of Scandinavian foreign policy and diplomacy is probably best reflected in the so-called Three Kings' Meeting in Malmoe on 18–19 December 1914, followed by a second meeting in November 1917 in Kristiania. The conference brought together the summit's host and initiator Gustav v of Sweden with his counterparts Haakon VII of Norway and Christian X of Denmark, accompanied by political talks among the foreign ministers Knut Wallenberg, Nils Claus Ihlen and Erik Scavenius. It could build upon previous efforts at collaborating on neutrality policy, like the negotiations prior to releasing neutrality regulations in late 1912. In any case, considering the almost violent break-away of Norway from its previous union with Sweden just nine years earlier, the momentous symbolic effect the conference had upon both the Scandinavian and international public is evident. The British weekly *The Spectator*, for instance, celebrated the gathering as "an event of more than momentary importance" and the beginnings of a Scandinavian League, while subtly hinting at the obvious differences between Britain's position on the war and neutral opinions.<sup>22</sup> In essence, Gustav's invitation of his royal opposites would have to be seen as a remnant of 19th century monarchical politics, reinforced by the symbolic choice of Malmoe as venue. It was certainly more than mere "posturing" and much rather hinted at the tentative emergence of a common Nordic space – a space based on nationally integrated constitutional monarchies, not on the pan-national premises of Scandinavianism prior to about 1864.<sup>23</sup>

20 Einar D. Cohn, *Danmark under den store krig: en økonomisk oversigt* [Denmark during the Great War: an economic survey] (Copenhagen, 1928), 49 (cit.); Gerhard P. Groß, "German Plans to Occupy Denmark: 'Case J', 1916–1918," in: Epkenhans and Groß, *Danish Straits*, 155–166, here 156.

21 "Diverging neutralities" as cit. in Hobson et al., *Introduction*, 37.

22 *The Spectator*, 19 December 1914, 7; on the context cf. recently Peter Stadius, "Trekungamötet i Malmö 1914. Mot en ny nordisk retorik i skuggan av världskriget [The Three Kings' Meeting in Malmö 1914: Towards a new Nordic rhetoric in the shadow of the world war]," *Historisk tidsskrift för Finland* 99 (2014), 369–394.

23 Hobson et al., *Introduction*, 29 (cit. "posturing"); for a convincing cultural historical approach to monarchical summits cf. Johannes Paulmann, "Searching for a 'Royal

Royal diplomacy within Scandinavia apart, Stockholm's overall sympathy with the German cause swiftly attracted acute responses both on the side of Entente and the Central Powers. In diplomatic reporting, Marshall's lengthy and aggressively worded memorandum and Reichenau's early private policy in favour of the activist movement would have to be seen as extreme examples, only surpassed by reactions in press and propaganda, particularly in Britain.<sup>24</sup> These extremes should, however, be balanced against the measured reporting of the two most influential diplomats in Stockholm: Britain's chief envoy in Stockholm, the seasoned Foreign Office diplomat Esme Howard, and Reichenau's successor as German minister, Lucius von Stoedten. As unusually gifted exponents of their respective diplomatic services both Howard and Lucius became constant fixtures of Stockholm's relations to the great powers throughout World War I. While Howard moved on to the Paris Peace Conference and then later was ambassador to Madrid and Washington, Lucius was – albeit briefly – considered as a potential foreign minister in the early years of Weimar, eventually ending up as minister to the Netherlands.<sup>25</sup> Howard did everything within his power to mediate between the delicate pro-German orientation of most of Stockholm's ruling circles and the often too robust reaction of his superiors in London. The premise of British policy towards Sweden had to be a pragmatically negative one: “to prevent the Scandinavian neutral states becoming a regular channel of supply for Germany and Austria, and, at the same time, not to create a feeling of serious hostility or irritation to ourselves.”<sup>26</sup> Considering Sweden's pro-German leanings and the country's ambivalent behaviour during the war, this was one of the more sensitive diplomatic tasks the conflict had to offer, certainly no “child's

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International': the mechanics of monarchical relations in nineteenth-century Europe,” in Martin H. Geyer and Johannes Paulmann (eds.), *The Mechanics of Internationalism: Culture, Society and Politics from the 1840s to the First World War* (Oxford, 2001), 145–176; idem, *Pomp und Politik. Monarchenbegegnungen in Europa zwischen Ancien Régime und Erstem Weltkrieg* (Paderborn, 2000), 164–170, 308–324, 363–400.

- 24 Culminating in a number of pamphlets published in the initial stages of the war, i.a. Edwin Bjorkman, *Scandinavia and the War*, Oxford, 1914 (=Oxford Pamphlets XI11, 1914, No. 56), 21 pp.; cf. as well *ibid.*, No. 57, *The War through Danish Eyes: by a Dane* [i.e. Edvard J.C. Rambusch], 19 pp., and the pamphlet by the Oxford classicist Gilbert Murray, *Impressions of Scandinavia in War Time* (reprinted from the Westminster Gazette), London, 1916, 32 pp.
- 25 On Lucius see, in detail, Schubert, *Schweden und das Deutsche Reich*, 27–30; on Howard's Swedish period cf. B.J.C. McKercher, *Esme Howard: A Diplomatic Biography* (Cambridge, 1989, repr. 2006), 132–196, more generally 197–351.
- 26 As cited in McKercher, *Esme Howard*, 147.

play”, as the Foreign Office observed.<sup>27</sup> To the Foreign Office, Howard’s work in Stockholm appeared much more demanding and valuable than the task of the British minister to Kristiania, Howard’s “old schoolfellow and colleague” Mansfeldt Findlay.<sup>28</sup> Rooted in the conditions of their deployment, Findlay and Howard had differing, almost incompatible ideas about British relations with Northern Europe, repeatedly, if cordially, clashing over London’s policy-making towards Norway, Sweden and the region as a whole. Whilst Howard promoted the further integration of Scandinavia, envisioning a neutral bloc as the most likely and beneficial outcome for Britain, Findlay attempted to prevent the emergence of an entente among the Scandinavian states. Howard assumed that the emergence of an alliance of self-reliant Nordic neutrals would inevitably extract Sweden from its close ties to imperial Germany. Contrary to that, Findlay’s assessment viewed a neutral Scandinavian bloc as opposed to British core interests. Such a construction, Findlay insisted, would lead to nothing but Sweden’s increased meddling in Norwegian affairs, which could only undermine the generally advantageous British position in Western Scandinavia.<sup>29</sup>

Even a seasoned diplomat like Esme Howard, however, was not able to swallow his disdain in the face of the Swedish government’s pro-German position and a society swayed by activist lobbying for Germany and its war effort. Stockholm’s conduct was only likely to reinforce his underlying prejudice towards what he regarded as unabashed neutral profiteering in war, with Sweden as the prime example of that species of *tertius gaudens*, a rejoicing third party.<sup>30</sup> The government’s blatant hypocrisy and not least the prime minister Hammarskjöld’s disingenuousness, as Howard perceived it, left him increasingly bewildered. Hammarskjöld was one of Sweden’s most prominent legal scholars, a renowned expert in international law, who had earlier been a member of the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague.<sup>31</sup> For Howard, though, the conservative and habitually condescending Swedish

27 As cited in McKercher, *Esme Howard*, 153.

28 Esme Howard, *Theatre of Life, 1905–1936* (London, 1936), 239.

29 Cf. NA, FO 371/2097: Howard to FO, 10 Dec 2014; FO 371/2458: Howard to FO, 31 Dec 2014; FO 371/2459: Findlay to FO, 18, 22, 21 Oct 1915 (including private letter of Findlay to foreign minister Edward Grey), 4 and 5 Nov 1915; *ibid.*, Howard to FO, 20 Oct and 1 Nov 1915 (including a confidential letter of Howard to Grey); FO 371/2753: Findlay to FO, 31 Dec 1915; FO 371/2755: Findlay to FO, 13 Nov 1915; McKercher, *Howard*, 148; Salmon, *Scandinavia*, 129.

30 Howard, *Theatre of Life*, 229–230.

31 Mats Svegfors, *Sveriges statsministrar under 100 år* [Swedish prime ministers over one hundred years], Vol. 3: *Hjalmar Hammarskjöld* (Stockholm, 2010).

prime minister was an almost ideal representative of that “true blue legalism”.<sup>32</sup> In his perception, pro-German Swedes among the country’s elites – like Hammarskjöld – concealed their true political outlook behind spurious legal arguments and a deeply hypocritical application of international law. They, on the one hand, dishonestly raged against the British naval blockade of the North Sea, whilst, on the other hand, willingly excusing far greater abuses of international law when committed by Germany. Against that backdrop, Howard gleefully observed the emergence of a vocal liberal and social democratic opposition in parliament against the prime minister and his government. “The campaign against Hammarskjöld”, he reported in autumn 1916, “has developed greatly.”<sup>33</sup> About half a year later, amidst a food crisis and mounting hostility between Hammarskjöld and his liberal and more pragmatic foreign minister Wallenberg, the prime minister and his discredited government eventually resigned.

What alienated Howard and the Foreign Office from the chief policy-makers in Stockholm had far less been the generally legitimate Swedish abstention from the conflict, but much rather the country’s endemic refusal to condemn what the British viewed as the excesses of an allegedly German way of war.<sup>34</sup> To the hardliners among British policy-makers and propagandists – and even to a highly nuanced observer like Howard – Sweden’s purely legalistic interpretation of its neutrality discredited the country morally. In this view, a mature Scandinavian polity built on western liberal principles, or so it was assumed, and the alleged Teutonic propensity to atavistic barbarity and militarism were simply irreconcilable. The consequence of Sweden’s “unnatural” affinity with the German Empire was that the country was held morally accountable for a war it did not fight.<sup>35</sup> It was therefore not only in purely economic terms that neutrals were portrayed as war profiteers and hence morally discredited. In the politics and propaganda of moral recrimination, the self-reliant, probably slightly overconfident neutral state had effectively become an immoral pariah.<sup>36</sup>

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32 Howard, *Theatre of Life*, 239.

33 FO 371/2754: Howard to FO, 3 and 4 Oct 1916. On Hammarskjöld’s resignation in the spring of 1917 cf. Carlgren, *Ministären Hammarskjöld*, 194–253.

34 Robert M. Citino, *The German Way of War. From the Thirty Years War to the Third Reich* (Lawrence, KS, 2005), emphasises different strains of continuity. The argument has nonetheless not lost its appeal, cf. Horne/Kramer, *German Atrocities*, 161–174; Isabel V. Hull, *Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany* (Ithaca, 2005).

35 Most pointed the episode recounted in Howard, *Theatre of Life*, 240–241.

36 This pattern has recently been discussed by Maartje Abbenhuis, *An Age of Neutrals: Great Power Politics 1815–1914* (Cambridge, 2014), 10–12.

On the German side, perceptions were significantly broader and less fixed, which obviously relates to the fact that Sweden and Swedish neutrality worked by and large in Berlin's favour. Reichenau's activist sympathies and lobbying for a Swedish entry into the war echoed the line of the military leadership around Ludendorff and the Supreme Army Command (OHL). To Ludendorff, the OHL and the more radical diplomats both in Berlin and Stockholm, it was obvious that Sweden had to be gradually pulled out of its neutral corner. To that overall strategic end, one needed to create objectives of military engagement that eased the Swedish path to war. The most suitable and easily communicable of these aims seemed a Swedish or preferably joint German-Swedish occupation of the Russian-held Åland Islands – an operation that became increasingly likely in the face of Russia's unlawful fortification of the archipelago.<sup>37</sup> The second, more ambitious objective consisted of a possible joint military campaign in order to “liberate”, as they termed it, Finland from Tsarist rule. This remained a possibility throughout the war, especially as Germany systematically trained nationalist activists from Finland, the so-called *Jäger* troops (i.e. light infantry) which became the core of the Finnish army after 1917.<sup>38</sup> Both short-term objectives did eventually come about, albeit rather late in the war, and therefore under profoundly changed circumstances. Even if Stockholm's neutrality was perpetually pushed to its limits, an all-out involve-

37 Salmon, *Scandinavia and the Great Powers*, 162–168; James Barros, *The Aaland Islands Question: Its Settlement by the League of Nations* (New Haven, CN, 1968); Göran Rystad, “Die deutsche Monroedoktrin der Ostsee: die Alandsfrage und die Entstehung des deutsch-schwedischen Geheimabkommens vom Mai 1918,” in idem et al. (eds.), *Probleme deutscher Zeitgeschichte* (Lund, 1971), 1–75; Schubert, *Schweden und das Deutsche Reich*, 144–171.

38 The literature on what Rudolf Nadolny, one of German foreign ministry's foremost Eastern specialists, has labelled the German “Patenschaft” (Ger. godparenthood resp. sponsorship) of Finnish independence is vast: see, for an overview, Osmo Apunen, “Deutschland und die finnische Freiheitsbewegung 1914 – 1915,” in: Ernst Schulin (ed.), *Gedenkschrift für Martin Göhring: Studien zur europäischen Geschichte* (Wiesbaden, 1968), 301–316; idem, *Suomi keisarillisen Saksan politikassa 1914–1915* [Finland in the politics of imperial Germany 1914–1915] (Helsinki, 1968); Manfred Menger, *Die Finnlandpolitik des deutschen Imperialismus 1917–1918* (Berlin/East, 1974), 17–63; Agilolf Kesselring, *Des Kaisers “finnische Legion”. Die finnische Jägerbewegung im Ersten Weltkrieg im Kontext der deutschen Finnlandpolitik* (Berlin, 2005); Ludwig Biewer, “Rudolf Nadolny und Ernst von Hülsen und die deutsche Patenschaft bei der Geburt des souveränen Finnland 1917/18,” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 42 (1994), 562–572; Markku Kuisma, *Sodasta syntynyt. Itsenäisen Suomen synty Sarajevon laukauksista Tarton rauhaan 1914–1920* [Born out of war: the birth of an independent Finland from the Sarajevo assassination to the Tartu Peace 1914–1920] (Helsinki, 2010), 83–144.

ment in the war or the projected military alliance between Sweden and the Central Powers remained a figment of activist imagination.

This also related to the profound power shift within Swedish politics and society, which had left the once influential right-wing forces of activism marginalised. By 1917, their position was occupied by the country's social democratic movement, thereby foreshadowing the socialist hegemony of the decades to come.<sup>39</sup> Few foreign observers saw this more clearly than Lucius, the German minister to Stockholm, whose liberal convictions and realistic assessments of the Swedish political landscape often countered the impression that proponents of activism communicated to Berlin.<sup>40</sup> Contrary to the activist self-portrayal as an increasingly popular government-in-waiting, Lucius's perceptive reporting pointed to the most significant phenomenon in Swedish society and politics, which activism and its German sponsors tended to neglect: the increasing popular support for the government's neutrality policy, corresponding with the general strategic weakness of the pro-German right-wing forces in Swedish politics: "I do certainly not ignore," Lucius reports, for example, on 9 October 1915, "the strong German sympathies here in Sweden, but they will never define the politics and political decision-making of this country. That is because Sweden has more and more evolved as a commercial people at ease with its wealth. Everyone wants to 'live well', and people like Mr. Sven Hedin and some temperamental professors and members of parliament, who moan about that profane mercantilism and simultaneously think of Charles XII and other heroes [of the Swedish past], are exceptions to the rule and are considered by the overwhelming mass of people as dreamers and cranks."<sup>41</sup>

This sceptical assessment of activist prospects of bringing Sweden into the war was intended to encourage the stabilisation of the status quo, both in Berlin and Stockholm. Lucius's incessant reporting and his frequent travels to Berlin had the ambitious goal of exerting influence on two levels. As much as wanting to influence policy-making within the German foreign ministry and the government as a whole, the minister's interventions also aimed at consolidating the Swedish political situation and not least Stockholm's neutrality

39 Steven Koblik, "Sweden, 1917: Between Reform and Revolution," in Hans A. Schmitt (ed.), *Neutral Europe between War and Revolution, 1917–1923* (Charlottesville, 1988), 111–132; idem, *Sweden: the Neutral Victor. Sweden and the Western Powers, 1917–1918: A study of Anglo-American-Swedish Relations* (Stockholm, 1972).

40 Schuberth, *Schweden und das Deutsche Reich*, 49–58, 92–106, who describes multiple "activist" campaigns against both Lucius and foreign minister Wallenberg in depth.

41 As cited in Schuberth, *Schweden und das Deutsche Reich*, 62, on the context see 172–174.

policy. His motives were, suffice it to say, by no means altruistic. The German war economy depended heavily upon the importation of Swedish raw materials and, once the food situation had worsened, of food deliveries too. Preserving Stockholm's neutrality made sense from a diplomatic angle as well, especially if one considered a possible separate peace with the Entente or with Russia, with a view to seeking the disintegration and collapse of Tsarist Russia. Both strategic views were held by Lucius at different stages of the war, mostly in line with the more savvy members of the German diplomatic corps.<sup>42</sup>

With the advent of social democratic and liberal politics in Sweden in the last years of the war a new conception of neutrality emerged both in the country's public discourse and – at about the same time – among the neutral states in general. This change was linked to both the moral pressure neutrals had been exposed to and the horrors of war, as they had been vividly reported in the Swedish press.<sup>43</sup> Against that backdrop, the traditional framework of neutrality, as established during the heyday of legal internationalism in the 19th century and codified in the Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907, gradually fell apart. It was not necessarily the supposed “decline of neutrality” that Nils Ørvik identified in his classic study of 1953, but rather a replacement of an older legal umbrella with something more dynamic.<sup>44</sup> At the onset of the war, notions of neutrality were based on an existing and internationally accepted legal code, last enshrined in the “Rights and Duties of a Neutral Power” of the Hague Convention of 1907; by the end of the war, neutrality as a purely legal conception had fallen into disrepute and was being reinvented along explicitly ideological, anti-legalist and distinctly internationalist lines within the much larger umbrella of international and partly supranational cooperation and collective security.<sup>45</sup> In effect, neutrality had been reframed not in terms of legal privilege and obligation, but as a virtue in itself. From a position of neces-

42 Cf. i.a. Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes (PA, AA): R 11298: Lucius to AA, 8 Mar 1915, 9 Apr 1915; *ibid.*, R 2172: Lucius to AA, 5 Oct 1917; *ibid.*, Gesandtschaftsakten Stockholm: Ges. Stockholm S 11 14: Ålandinseln (Geheim), Vol. 1 (Box 132): Lucius to AA, 19 Feb 1918. See as well Schubert, *Schweden und das Deutsche Reich*, 59–69, 91, 109–118; Kurt Riezler, *Tagebücher – Aufsätze – Dokumente*, ed. Karl Dietrich Erdmann (Göttingen, 1972), 14 Jan 1918, 454–455, as well 93; Gerd Koenen, *Der Russland-Komplex. Die Deutschen und der Osten 1900–1945* (München, 2005), 80–81, 98–110.

43 Sturfelt, “Parasite,” 105–120; *idem*, *Eldens återsken: första världskriget i svensk föreställningsvärld* [Reflections of fire: images of the First World War in Sweden] (Lund, 2008).

44 Nils Ørvik, *The Decline of Neutrality 1914–1941: With Special Reference to the United States and the Northern Neutrals* (London, 1953, repr. 1971).

45 Similar in argument, though with differing assessments of the neutrals' discourse: Rebecka Lettevall, Geert Somsen and Sven Widmalm (eds.): *Neutrality in Twentieth-Cen-*

sity born out of weakness, associated with lack of principle and opportunism, the neutral was transformed into a moral superior, nowhere more so than in the case of post-war Sweden.

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*tury Europe: Intersections of Science, Culture, and Politics after the First World War* (London, 2012); cf. as well Abbenhuis, *Age of Neutrals*, 10–11.



## Civil and Military Relations in Spain in the Context of World War I<sup>1</sup>

*Richard Gow*

In 1920 the Count of Romanones, three-time Prime Minister of Spain between 1912 and 1919, published a largely forgotten essay entitled *The army and Politics*.<sup>2</sup> Now relegated to the periphery of the Liberal Party he had once dominated, Romanones, a wily political operator, sought to re-establish himself in a new light as a military reformer in the stagnating, dynastic politics of Spain's Restoration order (1874–1931). Written in a frank style that was highly critical of the military, Romanones' work seemed to appeal directly to a civilian audience. He asks the reader: "If royalty [as a political system] is becoming democratized, how will it be possible for an institution like the military to avoid the evolution imposed by the advancement of democratic principles?"<sup>3</sup> Although the author's intentions were certainly not disinterested – indeed, he was ultimately unsuccessful in his attempts to regain the office of Prime Minister – his work is nevertheless significant as it demonstrates a growing concern with military reform across Spanish society in the immediate aftermath of World War One. While Spain had remained neutral in the War, the conflict had served both to highlight and accentuate a military and political reality that had been taking hold there since Spain's defeat by the United States of America in the Spanish-American War of 1898: at the centre of this was the progressive loosening of civilian authority over the military. By 1920, as commentaries by Romanones and other figures as diverse as the philosophers José Ortega y Gasset and Miguel de Unamuno, make clear, worry over the "military question" had become so acute that the future of the entire regime came to be pinned on it. Just three years later the period of constitutional rule in Spain's Restoration regime would be brought to an end by the coup d'état by General

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2 Conde de Romanones, *El Ejército y la política: Apuntes sobre la organización militar y el presupuesto de Guerra* (Madrid, 1920)

3 Romanones, *El Ejército*, 25.

Primo de Rivera. How then did Spain, a neutral in the World War, come to be in the situation described by Romanones in 1920?

The remainder of this introduction will consider the position of the military within Spain's Restoration political system (1874–1931). The chapter will then examine the role of the military in Spanish politics in the context of World War One in two parts. The first will discuss how, in the aftermath of the Spanish-American War of 1898, a war that fits into the pattern of geo-political changes immediately preceding World War One, the military re-emerged as a key player in the Restoration order and how concerns over recruitment and mobilization contributed to the Spanish decision to declare its neutrality in 1914. The second part will focus directly on the World War itself and investigate how the military's involvement in a three-pronged crisis in the summer of 1917 contributed to the demise of constitutional rule in 1923.

In the nineteenth century the combination of a weak crown and narrow political parties meant that military acquired a moderating role in politics by facilitating changes in government through *pronunciamientos* (barracks coups).<sup>4</sup> After a tumultuous period between 1868 and 1874, which, with the army at its centre, saw the installation of a new royal dynasty and a short-lived republican experiment, the chief architect of the Restoration, the Conservative statesman Antonio Cánovas del Castillo, sought to bring stability to Spanish society by removing the military from politics. The restored monarch, Alfonso XII (reigned 1874–1885), once a cadet at Sandhurst, was styled as a soldier-king in the Prussian-German fashion. Furthermore Article 52 of the Constitution of 1876 assigned him supreme command of the Spanish military.<sup>5</sup> On a personal level the king pursued a lifestyle as “first soldier of the nation”; a role that included the conspicuous wearing of uniforms in public and enthusiastic involvement in military exercises.<sup>6</sup> These developments were significant as not since the time of Charles I (Charles V as Holy Roman Emperor) in the 16th century had a Spanish monarch maintained military customs.<sup>7</sup> Cánovas also co-opted the so-called “political generals” who had brought about the *pronunciamientos* of old into the regime by ceding to them control of the Ministry of War, thus giving the Armed Forces a large degree of autonomy over their

4 Carolyn P. Boyd, *Praetorian Politics in Liberal Spain* (North Carolina, 1979), x.

5 “Constitución de la Monarquía Española,” *Gaceta de Madrid*, 2 July 1876, 9–12.

6 This became increasingly pronounced during the reign of Alfonso XIII (reigned 1886–1931). See Teresa González-Aja, “Sport, Nationalism and Militarism – Alfonso XIII: Sportsman, Soldier, King,” *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 28 (2011): 1987–2030.

7 Gabriel Cardona, *El poder militar en la España contemporánea hasta la Guerra civil*, Historia (Madrid, 1983), 21.

internal affairs. Similarly, the most prominent of these generals were awarded titles of nobility and seats in the Senate in order to satisfy their ambition. However, while this guaranteed that the upper echelons of the officer corps were able to maintain a level of direct political influence, it also highlighted the failings of the Restoration political settlement. Although Cánovas achieved his goal of creating political stability, it paid more attention to outward appearance than to internal cohesion. Rather than truly reducing the influence of the military on politics, it merely channelled it towards the regime for its own purposes. Ultimately, this came at the cost of non-interference by civilians in the military, together with an acceptance that any thoroughgoing and, indeed, necessary modernization of the armed forces would be next to impossible.

### New World, New Century

It was in 1898, during the regency of Queen Maria Christina, by birth an Austrian princess, that the on-going question of Cuban independence from Spain led to the intervention of the United States of America on the island, thus provoking the outbreak of the Spanish-American War. Spain's long-term foreign policy of international isolation left it with few options during the conflict and the subsequent ten-week campaign saw the destruction of Spain's naval squadrons, with minimal American losses, at Manila Bay and Santiago de Cuba respectively.<sup>8</sup> The resulting peace terms, formalised in the Treaty of Paris of 1898, reflected the broad "age of colonial redistribution" that preceded World War One and led to the Spanish surrender of Cuba, the Philippines, Guam and Puerto Rico to the United States.<sup>9</sup> Of Spain's overseas possessions, there remained only its modern-day archipelagos, the North African enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, small territories around the Gulf of Guinea, and the remainder of the Spanish East Indies, although these Pacific territories were sold to Germany in 1899. Materially, Spain survived the shock of the loss of empire, due in part to the repatriation of capital from the former colonies, two exceptionally good harvests in 1898 and 1899, and a fall in the value of the peseta,

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8 Cánovas' quest for political stability crossed into the realm of foreign affairs, where retrenchment was his linchpin. Enrique Moradiellos, "Spain in the World, from Great Empire to Minor European Power," in *Spanish History since 1808*, eds. José Álvarez Junco and Adrian Shubert (London, 2000), 115.

9 Moradiellos, "Spain in the World," 116.

which boosted exports.<sup>10</sup> Politically, the regime endured but it was nevertheless deeply discredited by the defeat, not least in the eyes of the army, which harshly criticised the government in the military press.<sup>11</sup>

The nature of Spain's capitulation showed that the Spanish Armed Forces were in disarray. As figures collected by Pedro Pascual from *El Diario del Ministerio de la Guerra (Journal of the Ministry for War)* reveal, in the overseas campaigns between 1895 and 1898 alone, Spain's military suffered 44,389 deaths, of which 41,288 (93% of the total) were caused by disease, rather than combat.<sup>12</sup> On an organizational level, the mismanagement of the Armed Forces was equally apparent: by the war's end the Spanish army was employing some 499 generals, 578 colonels and 23,000 officers of lower rank, in command of just 80,000 rank-and-file troops, figures that weighed heavily on its budget.<sup>13</sup> Even more absurdly, despite possessing only two warships in late 1898, the Spanish Navy maintained 147 admirals.<sup>14</sup> Within the military command a new restlessness also bubbled under the surface. The threat of a coup d'état by the popular former-Captain General of the Philippines, Camilo de Polavieja, in late 1898 and early 1899 was dissipated fully only when Polavieja entered a new Conservative government as War Minister. The ambitious plan of military reform he laid out in a provocative manifesto, however, was curtailed by the budgetary austerity imposed by the Finance Minister, Raimundo Fernández Villaverde.

From the perspective of civil and military relations, the long-term effects of the defeat were twofold. Firstly, dissatisfaction amongst Spain's industrial elite in regions like the Basque Country and Catalonia in particular led to the emergence of regional nationalism as a political force that challenged the Restoration establishment; the military fiercely opposed this as an attack on the integrity of Spanish state and demonstrated a violent hostility to its supporters, independently of the government. Secondly, as Spain modified its foreign policy to

10 Joseph Harrison, "The Catalan Industrial Élite, 1898–1923," in *Élites and Power in Twentieth-Century Spain*, eds. Frances Lannon and Paul Preston (Oxford, 1990), 58.

11 After the Battle of Santiago de Cuba the military daily *La Correspondencia Militar*, for example, stated, "May the government resign and put an end to the ineptitude, shocks and weakness that make us the object of ridicule abroad, break down the spirit of the country and harm the army..." "¿A qué espera el gobierno?" *La Correspondencia Militar*, 8 July 1898.

12 Pedro Pascual, "La prensa militar y el 98," *Coloquios de Historia Canario Americana* 13 (1998): 265.

13 Julio Busquets, *El militar de carrera en España; estudio de sociología militar* (Barcelona-Caracas, 1967), 25.

14 Sebastian Balfour, *The End of the Spanish Empire, 1898–1923* (Oxford, 1997), 167.

reflect this new political reality in the first two decades of the 20th century, it was progressively drawn into a long, difficult, and highly unpopular colonial war within a newly created Spanish “zone of influence” in the north of Morocco. Spain’s campaigns there would deeply divide the officer corps, alienate the army from the public, and highlight the difficulty the government faced in mobilising troops before World War One. Let us look at the first of these, the rise of regional nationalism.

The loss of empire had a profound shock the Spanish national psyche. On a cultural level it would inspire a new wave of intellectual interest in the so-called “problem of Spain” and the reasons for its national decline.<sup>15</sup> Politically, it brought to the fore the chief political question of late nineteenth-century Spain: whether development would be led by a strong agrarian sector centred around Castile and Andalusia or by more fragile industrial interests, still in need of protectionist policies, but with strong potential for growth.<sup>16</sup> Due to the unequal development of the different regions of Spain, with the Basque Country and Catalonia in particular evolving into important industrial peripheries, this question became tied to ideas of regional nationalism, which highlighted these differences in its discourse. The loss of the captive colonial markets, combined with bourgeois dissatisfaction with the regime’s failure to achieve reform by the 20th century, contributed to the emergence of these nationalisms as an alternative political force in the Restoration, particularly so in Catalonia after 1901, when a precursor to the influential *Lliga Regionalista* (Regionalist League) party, obtained four seats in the Congress of Deputies. This served to antagonise the military, which had been brutalized and scarred by the events of 1898, and was now largely relegated to peninsular garrison duty.

In the words of Sebastian Balfour, the colonial disaster created a “psychosis of national disintegration in the military”.<sup>17</sup> A number of factors contributed to this. To begin with, the “Constitutive Law of the army” of 1878, which established the duties and jurisdiction of the military, assigned the Spanish army a role in the defence of the nation against both its external and internal enemies. The officer corps’ largely middle-class social composition at the turn of the century also made it intensely hostile to any notions of democratization. Here,

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15 For a more thorough treatment of this topic see: José Luis Abellán, *El “problema de España” y la cuestión militar: historia y conciencia de una anomalía* (Madrid, 2005), 27–47.

16 Ucelay Ucelay da Cal, “The Restoration, Regeneration and the Clash of Nationalisms, 1875–1914,” in *Spanish History Since 1808*, eds. José Álvarez Junco and Adrian Shubert (London, 2000), 125.

17 Balfour, *Spanish Empire*, 176.

the relative weakness of the Spanish economy, together with the underemployment of male professionals who had few other places to go than the military, meant that the officer corps became strongly bureaucratic in mentality and tendency.<sup>18</sup> However, the unlikelihood that Spain would fight any war in which the army might redeem itself in the near future also meant that it became increasingly intolerant towards regionalism, which threatened national integrity, and class conflict, which threatened public order.<sup>19</sup> As a result, the army progressively sought to cast itself as the guarantor of national unity.

This new mentality manifested itself violently on 25 November 1905, when 200 disgruntled junior officers wrecked the printing press and offices of a Catalan satirical magazine, *¡Cu-Cut!*, upon its publication of a vignette which mocked the army's ability to win a battle.<sup>20</sup> As news of the attack spread, messages of support for the officers responsible came in from the regional garrisons. Pre-empting events that would occur in 1917, junior members of the officer corps began to form action committees to demand that legislation be brought to the parliament both to place press attacks on the military under the jurisdiction of its courts and to resist the separatist threat.<sup>21</sup> The War Minister, General Valeriano Weyler, a reliable legalist, was sent to Barcelona to contain the situation but quickly realised that the grievances of the junior officers had expanded beyond the issue at hand to encompass more general complaints against the military hierarchy itself. The senior generals thus moved to assume control of the movement, making its demands their own, in order to prevent a total collapse in military discipline.<sup>22</sup> By 30 November Alfonso XIII, who since his coronation in 1902 had been seeking to recover for the Crown some of the political authority eroded during the regency, publicly stated that he would support the army over the government. Not only did this bring about the resignation of Prime Minister Eugenio Montero Ríos, it also seemed to invite further rebellion on the part of the army. The new government headed by Segismundo Moret installed General Luque, a vocal supporter of the rebellious officers, as the War Minister in order to placate them. When Moret introduced the legislation demanded by the army, entitled the "Repression of Crimes against the

18 Boyd, *Praetorian Politics*, 27.

19 Boyd, *Praetorian Politics*, 10.

20 The vignette in question can be seen in *¡Cu-Cut!*, 23 November 1905, 742, <<http://mdc2.cbuc.cat/cdm/compoundobject/collection/cucut/id/10724/rec/207/lang/es>>.

21 This issue had long been a point of debate during the Restoration. The Code of Military Justice of 1890 established military jurisdiction over attacks on the army and its honour. However, the Supreme Court had ruled that this did not affect the press, which was protected under the 1876 Constitution.

22 Boyd, *Praetorian Politics*, 14.

Fatherland and the army Bill”, though commonly referred to as the “Law of Jurisdictions”, in February 1906, his Liberal Party argued that it was merely a temporary measure required to appease military opinion. Ultimately, however, it would stifle public-sphere debate on the army for the next 25 years and legitimize a state of “politicized semi-mutiny” that would endure in it until the 1920s.<sup>23</sup> Of particular note was its first article, which expanded the definition of crimes against the Fatherland specifically to include those committed by individuals who fought for “the independence of a part of Spanish territory”, making them liable to imprisonment for life.<sup>24</sup> In this way violent struggle for regional independence was placed on a footing equal to that of fighting under an enemy flag, a legal clause that is representative of the military mentality at this time.

The second long-term military consequence of the Spanish-American War was rooted in foreign policy. The events of 1898 represented a new opportunity for Spain to depart from the international isolation pursued by Cánovas, who had been slain by an anarchist gunman in 1897. Although the idea of Europe came to serve as a reference point for Spanish modernization, the nature of Spain’s defeat in 1898 served to highlight its relegation to the status of a minor power. With its influence on continental affairs limited, in the age of neo-colonialism that accompanied the arrival the 20th century, Spain’s remaining overseas territories, centred on the North-African enclaves of Melilla and Ceuta in particular, came to represent an important channel of communication with its European neighbours.<sup>25</sup> The young king, Alfonso XIII, enthusiastically urged his governments to escalate the Spanish presence on the African continent, particularly when his personally-held goal of annexing the new Portuguese First Republic gained little traction at home and abroad.<sup>26</sup> By 1912, Spain’s steady diplomatic integration into the alliance system of the Entente powers left it in control of a newly-created Spanish protectorate made up of two small strips of territory, one to the north of Morocco and another bordering the Spanish Sahara.<sup>27</sup>

23 Ucelay da Cal, “Restoration, Regeneration and the Clash of Nationalisms,” 129.

24 “Parte Oficial,” *Gaceta de Madrid*, 24 April 1906, 317–318.

25 Juan Carlos Pereira Castañares and José Luis Neila Hernández, “La España de Alfonso XIII en el sistema internacional de posguerra (1919–1931),” *Historia Contemporánea* 34 (2011): 119.

26 This earned Alfonso the nickname of ‘the African’. Alfonso Osorio and Gabriel Cardona, *Alfonso XIII* (Barcelona, 2003), 143.

27 For an account of this process, as well as the treaties behind it see: Sebastian Balfour, “Spain and the Great Powers in the Aftermath of the Disaster of 1898,” in *Spain and the*

Successive Spanish governments swayed between expansion and defeatism in Morocco. Economically, for example, the territories in the protectorate offered little more than their iron ore mines, while there was also limited popular enthusiasm for the neo-colonialist venture in Spain as elsewhere in Europe. Indeed, the lack of a coherent Spanish policy on the matter seems representative of the archaic nature of Restoration politics, where governments could act with a large degree of autonomy from the electorate due to their reliance on contrived election results.<sup>28</sup> Far from serving as a means of integrating the masses into national life, in fact, Spain's pre-1914, neo-colonial project rapidly came to undermine the Restoration regime. This became particularly apparent in July 1909 when local tribesmen attacked railway workers near Melilla. When on 10 July the Conservative government of Antonio Maura mobilized the peninsular reserves to pacify the region, a large number of those summoned were older men from the 1903 and 1905 reserve lists who had not expected further military service. After two weeks of tension as the troops departed a strike was called and the government declared a state of war in response. What followed was a week of anti-clerical, anti-militarist and anti-colonialist rioting across Catalonia. In the repression of the "Tragic Week" the army was pitted against the Catalan working class, leading to the deaths of eight soldiers and policemen, and 124 civilians. A further 1,700 civilians were subsequently indicted by military courts for "armed rebellion".<sup>29</sup> The sense of chaos increased on 27 July when news reached the mainland of a major military reversal at El Barranco del Lobo near Melilla, in which the Spanish army suffered some 180 fatalities and a further 1,000 casualties in an ambush.<sup>30</sup>

What did these events mean for Spain before World War One? The Law of Jurisdictions heralded the beginning of a rapid and progressive militarization of public order in the 20th century. The Tragic Week of 1909, in contrast, was largely a popular reaction to the coercive power of a state that had done little to improve the conditions of the lower classes.<sup>31</sup> In this way it served to highlight the difficulty the Spanish government would face in mobilizing its military before or during World War One. On the eve of World War One, Spain was engaged in a difficult colonial war that offered it little prestige and

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*Great Powers in the Twentieth Century*, eds. Sebastian Balfour and Paul Preston (London, 1999), 13–31.

28 Castañares and Hernández, "La España de Alfonso XIII en el sistema internacional de posguerra (1919–1931)," 130.

29 Boyd, *Praetorian Politics*, 20.

30 Sebastian Balfour, *Deadly Embrace: Morocco and the Road to the Spanish Civil War* (Oxford, 2002), 22.

31 Mary Vincent, *Spain, 1833–2002: People and State* (Oxford, 2007), 103.



scant economic compensation. The colonial effort itself failed to attract popular support and soon it became the preserve of the military and king alone.<sup>32</sup> With the colonial army geographically and morally isolated from the nation, a new *africanista* mentality emerged amongst its officers, whose methods became increasingly violent. Reflecting on this, the philosopher José Ortega y Gasset stated that, "Morocco, from the scattered soul of our army, made a clenched fist, morally ready to attack."<sup>33</sup> The access of these *africanistas* to battlefield promotion on the basis of merit rather than seniority, unlike the mainland garrisons, drove a wedge between them and their peninsular counterparts. In 1911 and 1912, the Liberal government of José Canalejas sought to resolve the recruitment problems behind the Tragic Week of 1909 with two new conscription laws, which aimed to establish universal military service in place of the historic lottery systems of *quintas* that had allowed the wealthy to designate replacements (*redención a metálico*). However, fearing the effects of a rapid influx of well-educated recruits on the military hierarchy, a provision to designate recruits "quota soldiers", liable for less service upon the payment of substantial sum, was added to the law, thus diluting its democratizing effects.<sup>34</sup> For Romanones, the effect of this was clear: "While this law remains unmodified; while it remains stained by inequality, the basis of our army will not be democratic, nor will the regime in which we live."<sup>35</sup>

### World War One and the Crisis of the Restoration

In the summer of 1914, the Conservative government of Eduardo Dato correctly read that there was strong support for non-intervention in the War. This feeling was reinforced by the widely-held belief in Spain until the First Battle of the Marne that the conflict would end quickly and in Germany's favour. In an effort to stress this, the Spanish government was the only in Europe not to call up its reserves before the War.<sup>36</sup> The government's room for manoeuvre here was limited by the attitude of the king. The Court was almost entirely pro-German,

32 Boyd, *Praetorian Politics*, 22.

33 José Ortega y Gasset, *España invertebrada: Bosquejo de algunos pensamientos históricos* (Madrid, 1921), 73.

34 Cardona, *El poder militar*, 8.

35 Romanones, *El Ejército y la política*, 139.

36 Gerald H. Meaker, "A Civil War of Words: The Ideological Impact of the First World War on Spain, 1914–1918," in *Neutral Europe between War and Revolution, 1917–23*, ed. Hans A. Schmitt (Virginia, 1988), 5–6.

due to the influence of Alfonso's Austrian mother, Maria Christina.<sup>37</sup> Alfonso, however, was also married to a British granddaughter of Queen Victoria, Victoria Eugenie of Battenberg. For King Alfonso, like the other monarchs of Europe, therefore, the World War was very much a family affair. Furthermore, the king was keen for Spain to remain aloof from the conflict in the hope that he would later be able to act as a mediator between the sides, thus solidifying Spain's place in any new European Concert.<sup>38</sup> It was with this in mind that Alfonso, at his own expense, established the Pro-Captives Office in the Royal Palace in Madrid. This humanitarian service investigated the whereabouts of some 250,000 missing persons during the War, inspected some 4,000 hospitals and prisoner camps, and achieved the pardon of 102 captives who had been sentenced to death, acts that saw him proposed, unsuccessfully, for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1917.<sup>39</sup>

The stabilization of the fronts by 1915 made it clear that the War would not be as brief as Spain's political class had anticipated. Even as the temporary consensus upon which Dato had based his decision in 1914 began to break up towards 1916, however, the government nevertheless sought to cling to neutrality. Socially, the War's continuation beyond 1914 saw the division of Spain's intellectual elites into Francophile and Germanophile camps, which broadly supported democracy and freedom, and authority and order respectively.<sup>40</sup> Economically, neutrality initially proved to be beneficial for Spain, which was able to export supplies to both the Allied and Central Powers and, as a result, experienced an industrial take-off. The nature of the War meant that imports were drastically decreased, meaning that Spain's balance of trade swung from chronic deficit to sustained profit. However, as Romero Salvadó notes, the development of the Spanish economy over the course of the War did not ultimately consolidate its industrial infrastructure, nor did these profits create general prosperity for the population.<sup>41</sup> As it stood, economic growth concentrated around the more industrialized regions of Spain, like the Basque Country

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37 Francisco J. Romero Salvadó, *Spain, 1914–1918: Between War and Revolution* (London: 1999), 13.

38 Wayne H. Bowen, *A Military History of Modern Spain: From the Napoleonic Era to the International War on Terror* (Westport, 2007), 55.

39 Enrique González Fernández, "La obra humanitaria del rey Alfonso XIII durante la Primera Guerra Mundial," *Mar Oceana: Revista Del Humanismo Español E Iberoamericano* 2 (1995): 283; See also Manuel Gracia Rivas, "Alfonso XIII y la labor humanitaria de España," *Revista de Defensa* 301 (2014): 60–61.

40 Francisco J. Romero Salvadó, "Spain and the First World War," in *Spain and the Great Powers*, eds. Balfour and Preston (London, 1999), 34.

41 Salvadó, "Spain and the First World War," 36.

in the north and Catalonia in the east. In contrast, the more agricultural regions of Castile, in the centre, and Andalusia, in the south, entered recession. While the industrial class enjoyed a new source of riches, the working class was badly affected by inflation caused by the increased external demand and a drop in imports.<sup>42</sup> The decline in living standards for Spain's poor came to a head in 1915 when a continuing *crisis de subsistencias* (basic commodity shortages) translated into food riots, which brought about the collapse of the Conservative government in December.

In Dato's place the king summoned the head of the Liberal Party, the Count of Romanones, who strongly supported the Allied cause. The year 1916, which formed the backbone of Romanones' fifteen-month premiership, was to prove crucial for Spain's experience of World War One and the subsequent collapse of the Restoration political system. Attempts by the government to combat shortages through a reduction in tariffs on food imports, the *Ley de Subsistencias*, ultimately failed to resolve the problem. The continued economic hardship experienced by the working class as a result of this led to a historic meeting and pact between the anarcho-syndicalist *Confederación Nacional del Trabajo* (CNT) and the Socialist *Unión General de Trabajadores* (UGT) at Saragossa in July. As labor unrest expanded, their attitude to the increasingly defensive government, which had periodically suspended constitutional guarantees in the face of strikes, hardened and they began considering a general strike. Meanwhile, an emboldened *Lliga Regionalista*, the party that represented the thriving Catalan bourgeoisie, began a political campaign which sought to break the hold of the dynastic Conservative and Liberal parties on Spanish politics and redirect influence from Madrid towards the nation's industrial periphery. The *Lliga* decisively intervened against the Liberal government when in June the Finance Minister, Santiago Alba, a noted Castilian politician, outlined his intention to carry out a ten-year National Plan of Reconstruction to tackle budget deficits. To fund this, however, Alba proposed a tax on "excess" war profits from industry and trade, but not agriculture, and soon he found himself under attack by the *Lliga* and its leader, Francesc Cambó, who organized a political campaign against it. Alba struggled to find the support he needed for the plan and by September 1916 it was abandoned altogether due to the need to pass a new budget, something which the previous Conservative government had failed to achieve entirely in 1915.<sup>43</sup>

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42 For charts representing the balance of payments and evolution of prices see: Romero Salvadó, *Spain, 1914–1918*, 23–24.

43 Salvadó, *Spain, 1914–1918*, 48–52.

While the king intrigued with the German military attaché, Major Arnold Kalle, over a policy of benevolent neutrality towards Germany in the summer of 1915 – surely the best that the Central Powers could expect due to Spain's geographical isolation – Romanones secretly sounded out the Allies over the terms Spain would expect for expanded support of the Allied cause or even an entry into the War on their side.<sup>44</sup> The British, however, were ultimately sceptical about the strength of the Spanish Armed Forces, as well as their readiness to participate in the War.<sup>45</sup> Within the Spanish government itself there was also grave concern over the strength of the Navy and of coastal defences.<sup>46</sup> The decision to remain neutral in 1914 may well have been an expression of will on the part of Alfonso and of the Spanish people more broadly, but it was also a public declaration of military unpreparedness. The Dato and Romanones administrations sought to address the problem in 1915 and 1916, but this came at the cost of interfering in army affairs, traditionally off-limits to civilians, and would have serious repercussions for civil and military relations by 1917.

Wartime reform centred on re-establishing control over the military budget, which, since 1909, had spiralled out of control due to Spain's Moroccan endeavours and to the indifference of the politicians. Here the insight of Romanones is highly revealing. His figures reveal that between 1909 and 1918 the military budget increased by 97%.<sup>47</sup> Reflecting on this, he presents a shocking account of civilian oversight of the military during this period:

[O]ver 20 years of ministerial life, I do not recall, try as I may, having understood the contents of the [Ministry of] War budget; when it was subjected to review by the Councils of Ministers (Cabinets) of which I formed part, I could never, and not due to the limitation of my mental faculties, manage to understand the lines that made up its foundation, let alone its detail. I retain the memory of seeing the Minister of War attend the Council supplied with a voluminous bundle of documents ... I read figure after figure. Occasionally, a summary would appear to contain a clear idea but soon it was lost in a sea of meaningless items.<sup>48</sup>

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44 Wayne H. Bowen, *Military History*, 59; see also Romero Salvadó, "Spain and the First World War."

45 Salvadó, "Spain and the First World War," 41.

46 Bowen, *Military History*, 62.

47 Romanones, *El Ejército*, 97.

48 Romanones, *El Ejército*, 88.

The more significant of the two wartime attempts at reform came in September 1916, when Romanones' War Minister, General Luque, introduced a Bill of Military Reform. His plan sought to increase the army's size to 180,000 men, together with a reduction in the number of front-line divisions from 14 to 10. This would be funded by reducing the officer corps' strength by over 3,000, with most of the eliminated positions coming from the junior and middle ranks of the hierarchy. Although the redundant officers would continue to receive their full pay, their numbers would be progressively reduced by early retirements and selective promotions, eventually leading to an 11 million peseta saving each year, which would be reinvested in equipment. Furthermore, Luque, committed the government to the system of promotions by merit, in place of the traditional system by seniority, which had created such enmity during the Melillan campaigns of 1909 and 1910. As a first step to achieving this, he proposed a series of aptitude tests for officers receiving peacetime promotions by seniority; those deemed unfit would be passed over. As well as this, Luque re-opened the reserve-officer list in order to allow promotion from the enlisted ranks and widen the social base of the largely middle-class officer corps.<sup>49</sup> While the bill was hardly radical, its measures weighed most heavily on officers of junior and middle rank, who had been hurt by economic hardship like so many others in Spain during the War.<sup>50</sup> As news of the aptitude tests filtered down, junior Infantry officers became incensed when they learned that their counterparts in the artillery and engineers would not have to undergo inspection, due to the privileges they maintained from the nineteenth century. The protection of these privileges had been achieved through the formation in the 1880s of *Juntas de Defensa* (Defence Committees), which lobbied the government to protect the officers' interests, and by the end of 1916 the Infantry officers in Barcelona began organizing their own in order to resist Luque's reforms.<sup>51</sup>

Although the king was initially sceptical of the *Juntas* and their attacks on the military hierarchy, by the beginning of 1917 he seemed willing to tolerate their activities in order to keep the military on his side. The *Juntas* were by no means revolutionary and the focus of their discourse, despite talk of wider reform, on questions of promotion, salary and privilege highlighted their essentially trade-union character. In general terms, they opposed the

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49 Boyd, *Praetorian Politics*, 52.

50 For Stanley G. Payne, their suffering was exemplary: "No members of Spanish society were harder hit by the accelerating price inflation of the World War years [than junior officers]." Stanley G. Payne, *Politics and the Military in Modern Spain* (Stanford, 1967), 125.

51 Boyd, *Praetorian Politics*, 52–55.

*africanistas*, the palace favourites, personnel reductions, merit promotions and aptitude tests. Alfonso's attitude towards them was suddenly changed by two events, however. The first was the Revolution in Russia in March which saw the Tsar abdicate, an event that deeply troubled the Spanish monarch. The second was a 20,000-strong, pro-Allied rally, held in Madrid's bullring by republican groups on 29 May, at which the speakers attacked the king for his pro-German stance.<sup>52</sup> The escalation of the Central Powers' submarine campaign against neutral shipping at the beginning of 1917 had already increased tension in government and brought the fall of the popular Romanones in April when he disagreed with the king over how to respond to the sinking of a Spanish steamer. When Alfonso ordered General Aguilera, War Minister in the replacement Marquis of Alhucemas administration, to suppress the Juntas at the end of May, neither of them anticipated the depth that their organization had penetrated the army. The subsequent refusal by the Juntas' leaders to obey the order to disband on 28 May 1917 led to their arrest and imprisonment in Barcelona. On 1 June, however, the interim leaders of the Juntas presented to the government a manifesto that amounted to an ultimatum. It stated that the army "resigned for so many years to every kind of sacrifice, including that of its dignity, since the disastrous end of the colonial campaigns", had formed the Juntas "in order to study the means to correct these serious ailments... and to respectfully ask for their remedy through the legal channels of the [army's] higher authorities [...]". Furthermore, it insisted that they had acted entirely legally but that the imprisonment of their leaders had "tried their capacity for [further] sacrifice." It demanded the release of the arrested officers and the official recognition of their organization, and, in an indirect threat, concluded that this must be carried out in 12 hours in order to maintain calm amongst their ranks.<sup>53</sup> The personal intervention of the king, terrified by the possibility of a hostile army, secured the release of the Juntas' leaders the following day. On 9 June Alhucemas finally resigned when the Captain General of Barcelona, General Marina, formally recognised the Juntas' statutes without cabinet approval. Instead of summoning a government with a mandate for reform, the king charged Eduardo Dato with the formation of another Conservative cabinet. The subsequent approval of the statutes by the Dato cabinet on 12 June effectively institutionalized army indiscipline.<sup>54</sup>

52 Romero Salvadó, "Spain and the First World War," 42–43.

53 'Manifiesto de la Junta de Defensa de la Arma de Infantería. 1º junio 1917' reproduced in *La crisis del sistema canovista 1898–1923*, eds. María Carmen García-Nieto and Javier María Donézar (Madrid, 1972), 302–303.

54 Boyd, *Praetorian Politics*, 67.

Looking to establish themselves as a long-term political force, the Juntas sought an ally in the reform-minded but deeply cautious Antonio Maura but they were unable to convince him to act against the king. The insurrection of the officers, however, created a popular sense of hope that reform might be achievable and, as the summer progressed, the possibility of an alliance between the army, bourgeoisie and proletariat, led by the *Lliga Regionalista*, seemed possible.<sup>55</sup> Contact between the nominal leader of the Juntas, Colonel Benito Márquez, and the *Lliga* resulted in nothing though, partly due to Maura's refusal to act as a potential bridge between both sides, and when a *Lliga*-led assembly of republican, socialist and reformist parliamentarians met in Barcelona on 19 July to discuss constitutional reform the army as a whole, Juntas included, was firmly behind of the government, 30,000 troops patrolled the city and four warships waited in the harbour.<sup>56</sup> Márquez himself was censured by the Superior Junta for his unauthorized dealings with the Catalan leadership and the possibility of their alliance disappeared quietly.<sup>57</sup>

In Valencia, meanwhile, a small-scale transport strike, which began coincidentally on 19 July 1917, provided the government with an opportunity to cast itself as protector of the social order by provoking a general strike that would also force the army to intervene on the government's side and cause the conservative *Lliga* to break with the left. The socialist UGT and its new ally, the anarcho-syndicalist CNT, had already agreed in March 1917 to prepare a general strike over wartime living standards and when this eventually occurred on 13 August it was intended to coincide with a socialist-led sympathetic strike for the Valencian rail workers. Ultimately, however, it was rushed and poorly prepared.<sup>58</sup> The strike had little resonance outside the cities and the expected coalition of anti-government forces never materialized. A state of emergency was declared by the government and within one week the strike was crushed: by its end 71 people were dead, 200 wounded, and another 2,000 arrested.<sup>59</sup> The *Lliga* rapidly distanced itself from its erstwhile socialist allies in the assembly movement and the reformist coalition broke apart. The reaction of the army surprised most, however. Fears that the Infantry might throw its lot in with the workers were allayed by the brutality it displayed to the strikers. Indeed, the Vergara Regiment of Colonel Márquez, who had so recently reached out to the assembly movement was responsible for ten deaths in the

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55 Salvadó, "Spain and the First World War," 44.

56 Romero Salvadó, *Spain, 1914–1918*, 114.

57 Boyd, *Praetorian Politics*, 80.

58 Boyd, *Praetorian Politics*, 83.

59 Salvadó, *Spain, 1914–1918*, 122.

town of Sabadell (Barcelona). The army, Juntas included, had shown itself to be the praetorian guard of the Restoration political order.

When the Juntas received word of Dato's manipulation in October, they wrote to the king and demanded that a new cabinet be formed within 72 hours. The following day, 27 October, Dato met Alfonso and was asked to resign. This event effectively marked the end of Cánovas' *turno-pacífico* political system, in which the two main parties rotated in government. From this point until its end in 1923 the Restoration would be governed primarily by coalitions and "governments of management" charged with the passing of budgets or pieces of essential legislation; in essence, they ruled from crisis to crisis. The so-called "Cabinet of Titans", formed in desperation in March 1918 and headed by Maura, back in the fold after a political isolation dating from 1909, would contain as ministers Dato, Romanones, and Alhucemas, as well as Cambó, who had abandoned all pretence of reform to bring the *Lliga* into government with the dynastic Conservatives and Liberals. This coalition would last until 9 November 1918 and practically see Spain through to the Armistice just two days later.

### Conclusion

Spain, like its European neighbours, belligerent and neutral, would find the post-war return to "normality" immensely challenging. The dynastic Conservative and Liberal parties of the Restoration struggled to overcome the stagnation in Spanish politics through constitutional means once they had tied their fate to the military in 1917. The economy entered a major recession, as wartime export markets reopened to competition from the rest of the world; increased labor militancy would follow. However, unlike in 1917, when the socialists played the leading role, from 1919 onwards, the more radical anarcho-syndicalist CNT would dominate as their erstwhile allies returned to their pre-war orthodoxy. The regime itself would progressively cede authority to the military in matters of public order over the next four years as peasant protest in Andalusia led to its military occupation (the Bolshevik Triennium) and a terroristic employers' war, primarily in Catalonia, gave birth to a wave of street killings, known as *pistolero*. The reaction saw the conservative, urban middle classes become increasingly open to an authoritarian alternative. The Military Reform Bill introduced by decree in March 1918 to resolve the matter of the Juntas permanently gave in to their demands and actually increased the size of the Spanish military. Furthermore, it stripped the Ministry of War of its discretionary power to choose officers for important army positions. Promotions would continue to be made primarily on the basis of seniority, something



that would seriously undermine the effectiveness of the army in Morocco.<sup>60</sup> The resumption of military operations there in 1919 would soon spell disaster for the Restoration order. Isolated by wartime neutrality and wounded by the divisions that surfaced in 1916 and 1917, the Spanish army would drift towards a major defeat at the Battle of Annual in Morocco, which saw the massacre of some 8,000 Spanish soldiers in July 1921.<sup>61</sup> Establishing responsibilities for the disaster would dominate political discourse for the following two years and, in September 1923, provide the justification for the coup d'état of General Primo de Rivera, which brought nearly fifty years of constitutional rule to an end.

What did World War One mean for Spain and its military? The reasons for the progressive re-entry of the military into Spanish politics in the 20th century lay in a combination of the structural weaknesses of the Restoration regime itself and a post-Spanish-American War hypersensitivity to national disintegration. The escalating Spanish presence in Morocco before World War One also served to morally isolate the military from the Spanish population and accentuate its hostile mentality. As the colonial campaigns progressed the brutalizing effect of the conflict would see this violence replicated at home in peninsular Spain, as in 1917. This overall process was ultimately linked to the broad changes that occurred as the world drifted towards the War in 1914: these were the emergence of new world powers and the decline of others, neo-colonialism, and a Europe-wide concern with recruitment and mobilization.

The pressures of the World War dynamically altered Spain's social and economic situation. Writing in June 1917, the philosopher Miguel de Unamuno astutely commented that "The Spanish Revolution is underway. It is not the revolution from below, nor the revolution from above; rather it has come from the middle."<sup>62</sup> The War did not spell the end for the Restoration order; instead, the hardships it created hastened the entry of previously excluded elements of Spanish society into the political arena. The revolution from below may have been extinguished in the hot summer of 1917 but the emergence of Juntas and, to some extent, the campaign of the *Lliga* were representative of a newly awakened middle class in Spanish politics that sought greater representation in a system that had previously relied on their apathy. The long-term effects of the failed general strike of 1917 were highly significant too. The government tied itself to the military but by surrendering to the Juntas it was left with little credibility in the post-war years. The popular perception of these events did

60 Boyd, *Praetorian Politics*, 102–103.

61 Payne, *Politics and the Military*, 168.

62 Miguel de Unamuno. 'Comentario en El Día 12-VI-1917,' reproduced in *Artículos olvidados sobre España y la Primera Guerra Mundial*, ed. Christopher Cobb (London, 1976), 94.

not coincide with their reality, however, and, together with the October Revolution in Russia, this unrest served to create a new, anti-Bolshevik imaginary amongst elements of the middle class. As they scrambled to protect themselves and their property from the radicals of the CNT, their attitudes hardened and the military seemed to offer them the protection they craved. In this way, they became more open to an authoritarian alternative to the political atrophy of the Restoration. In 1923 Primo de Rivera promised to provide this.

Finally, it would be worth briefly examining the nature of neutrality. Although Spain was largely spared the human slaughter of World War One, its merchant fleet being a notable exception, neutrality proved to be a double-edged sword for the military. As Bowen notes, Spain's non-participation prevented it from benefiting from the "military renovation" taking place on the battlefields, leaving it in its backward state.<sup>63</sup> Instead, in Spain the War largely took place in public opinion. In his 1921 work, *Invertebrate Spain*, Ortega y Gasset pointed out the absurdity of this situation. In keeping with his elitist philosophy, he argued that the army, like the individual, must aspire to great deeds:

An army cannot exist if the possibility of a war is eliminated from its horizon[...] Without war there is no way to raise the moral standards of an army, for it to bear the weight of discipline, or to have any guarantee of its effectiveness[...] Once it was resolved that there would be no wars, it was inevitable that the other classes would avoid the army[...] It became isolated, denationalized, inconsistent with the rest of society and diffuse internally. Reciprocity [of these feelings] became inevitable...<sup>64</sup>

While it may be difficult to agree with Ortega's assessment that the Spanish army needed war on a moral level, it may yet go some way to explaining both how, in the age of nationalisms, the army of a neutral nation came to play such a violent and decisive role in politics, and to highlight the creeping effects of militarism.

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63 Bowen, *Military History*, 66.

64 Ortega y Gasset, *España invertebrada*, 70–71.

## World War I and Its Impact on Catalonia

*Florian Grafl*

Immediately after the beginning of World War One, the cabinet in Madrid officially declared Spain's neutrality. One month after the outbreak of the hostilities, on August 25 1914, the Spanish Prime Minister Eduardo Dato wrote to Antonio Maura, his predecessor, explaining his position:

Our position is not to abandon that policy. We would depart from neutrality only if we were directly threatened by foreign aggression or by an ultimatum. [...] Germany and Austria are delighted with our attitude as they believed us committed to the Entente. France and Britain cannot criticize us as our pacts with them are limited to Morocco. Moreover, we do not owe them anything since in the dreadful year of 1898 they did nothing for Spain. [...] I do not fear that the Allies would push us to take sides with or against them. [...] They must know that we lack material resources and adequate preparation for a modern war. Even if the country was ready to launch itself into a military adventure, our collaboration would have little consequence.<sup>1</sup>

Dato's point, that Spain, due to the defeat in the war against the USA in 1898 and the equally disastrous colonial war in Morocco one decade later which he refers to in this letter, was not in a fit state to participate in the European conflict seems quite convincing and the fact that Spain remained neutral until the end of the War, in spite of constant changes of government in these years, seems to prove him right, even if the policy of Spanish neutrality was not beyond debate during wartime. Already, some days before this letter, on 19 August 1914, *El Diario Universal* newspaper, the mouthpiece of Count Romanones, leader of the Liberal party and one Dato's biggest political rivals, published a controversial article entitled "Neutralidades que matan" (or "fatal neutralities"), arguing that Spain should enter the War on the side of the Entente:

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1 The English translation of this letter can be found in: Francisco Romero Salvadó, *Spain 1914–1918. Between War and Revolution* (London, 1999), 6, who refers to the quotation of the original letter in: Gabriel Maura Gamazo, Melchor Fernández Almagro, *Por qué cayó Alfonso XIII. Evolución y disolución de los partidos históricos durante su reinado* (Madrid, 1948), 472–473.

Geopolitical, economic and diplomatic imperatives impose collaboration with the Entente. Spain is surrounded by the Allies, the sea-lanes are controlled by them, the vast bulk of our trade is with France and Britain and theirs is the largest portion of foreign investment in our country. Moreover, Spain's economic life depends upon British coal and American wheat [...] our collaboration with them would only represent the logical continuity of the international policies undertaken by different Spanish governments between 1900 and 1913 [...]. Neutrality unsupported by the neutral's own force is at the mercy of the first strong state which finds it necessary to violate it. [...] The Balearic and the Canary Islands, the Galician coasts are undefended. [...] If Germany wins, will she thank us for our neutrality? No, she will try to rule the Mediterranean. She will not take French continental territory. She will seize the African coast from Tripoli to Fernando Poo. [...] We shall lose our hopes of expansion in Morocco. We shall lose our independence. We shall lose the Balearic Islands. Nor will German expansion in the economic and industrial domain compensate us for the ruin of the countries with whom our interests in those respects have been up to now identified. On the other hand, if the Allies triumph they will owe us no debt of gratitude and will remodel the map of Europe as they think fit. [...] There are neutralities which are fatal!<sup>2</sup>

In fact, during the war years Spain became deeply divided between Germanophiles, who admired the German monarchy for its traditional values as discipline and authority, and whose main supporters in Spain were the clergy, the army, the aristocracy and the upper classes, and Germanophobes, those, such as republicans, socialists, the middle classes and intellectuals, who hoped that Spain would at some point in the future become a fully democratic state.<sup>3</sup>

World War One, however, not only caused serious public debates in Spain, but had far-reaching effects on the Spanish economy and society as well. On the one hand, thanks to the opportunity to deliver goods to both sides of the conflict, some in Spain, mainly the industrialists, were able to gain considerable fortunes. On the other hand, the growing inflation rate during the war years pushed many working class families onto the margins of subsistence and beyond, even. The main consequence of the political, economic and social

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<sup>2</sup> The English translation of this article again is adapted from: Romero Salvadó, *Spain 1914–1918*, 7–8.

<sup>3</sup> The division of Spain into Germanophiles and Germanophobes is well explained by Romero Salvadó, *Spain 1914–1918*, 7–22.

changes Spain underwent during World War One was that the Restoration monarchy headed by King Alfonso XII and later by his son Alfonso XIII, which, after a century of bloody battles for power and military rebellions, had given Spain a certain political stability since its establishment in 1875, came to an abrupt end only a few years after World War One.<sup>4</sup> What followed was another period of rapid political changes, starting with the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera in 1923, which soon was overcome by the Second Spanish Republic in April 1931, an attempt to establish a democratic system in Spain, an experiment which, however, failed after a few years and directly led to the Civil War, the biggest catastrophe in the history of Spain.<sup>5</sup>

Given the huge impact World War One had on Spain despite its neutrality, it is rather surprising that the years from 1914 to 1918 have to date rarely been examined as an independent period of time in the history of Spain.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, this case study tries to analyse the impact of World War One on a particular region of Spain – Catalonia – the region where the consequences of the War were most felt, not only due to its geographical proximity to the conflict but also because of the fact that Catalonia, along with the Basque country, was the most important industrial region in Spain (and therefore the most affected by the economic changes caused by the War). Catalonia was also the region where the hopes for an independent state, separated from the Spanish central state, were strongest.

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4 A recent book which focuses on different aspects of the downfall of the Spanish Restoration monarchy is Francisco Romero Salvadó and Angel Smith, eds., *The agony of Spanish liberalism. From revolution to dictatorship, 1913–1923* (London, 2010).

5 For the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera once see the classic work by Shlomo Ben-Ami, *Facism from Above: The Dictatorship of Primo de Rivera 1923–1930* (Oxford, 1983) as well as the recent monograph by Eduardo González Calleja, *La España de Primo de Rivera (1923–1930). La modernización autoritaria* (Madrid, 2005). Many more studies are available dealing with the Second Spanish Republic and the Civil War, for example: Julián Casanova, *The Spanish Republic and Civil War* (Cambridge, 2010); Manuel Álvarez Tardío and Roberto Villa García, *El precio de la exclusión. La política durante la Segunda República* (Madrid, 2010) or indeed Manuel Álvarez Tardío and Fernando del Rey Reguillo, *The Spanish Second Republic Revisited. From Democratic Hopes to the Civil War (1931–1936)* (Brighton, 2011). For the dimensions of the massive bloodshed of the Civil War, it suffices to consult the recent book by Paul Preston, *The Spanish Holocaust, Inquisition and Extermination in Twentieth-Century Spain* (London, 2012).

6 Apart from the book by Romero Salvadó already mentioned, on the occasion of the hundredth anniversary of the First World War, as in many other countries as well, new books were published dealing with this period of time in Spain also. Especially worth mentioning are Paul Aubert and Eduardo González Calleja, *Nidos de espías. España, Francia y la primera guerra mundial 1914–1919* (Madrid, 2014), as well as Fernando García Sanz, *España en la Gran Guerra. Espías, diplomáticos y traficantes* (Madrid, 2014).

Barcelona was, already in this period, by far the biggest city in Catalonia, the indisputable centre of both Catalanism and industrialization and, due to its port, it was the first place of refuge of foreigners trying to escape the War.<sup>7</sup> Given that the post-war years from 1918 to 1923 constitute one of the most violent periods in the history of the Catalan metropolis, starting with the street fights involving Catalans protesting for the independence of what they believed to be their home country, incidents which were shortly afterwards overshadowed by bloody struggles between entrepreneurs and workers, my main question is how did World War One contribute to the radicalization of the already existing conflicts in Barcelona?

### The Catalanists' War in the Ramblas

As it was expected, last night the demonstrations on the Ramblas and the Plaza de Cataluña continued. At 8 pm the Ramblas offered an impressive sight. A huge crowd of people had gathered on this central avenue and made use of its absolute legitimate right to claim the independence of Catalonia. The police, who at the same time had already occupied the Plaza de Cataluña, the Ramblas and the streets nearby, were armed with sabres and took action against the protesters and dissolved the demonstration. The action of the police was as unexpected as brutal. [...] In total nine persons were arrested. The numerous injured persons were brought and cared for in the pharmacies nearby.

This report by the republican newspaper *El Diluvio* on 14 December 1918 shows the intensity of the fights between the Catalanists and the police in the Ramblas in the months after the end of World War One. The victory of the Entente was celebrated with great enthusiasm in Catalonia on November 11th.<sup>8</sup> The Catalans hoped that the rearrangement of Europe after the defeat of the central powers would make it possible that Catalonia, as other regions in Europe, now could become an independent state.

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7 The most important books on this period in Barcelona are the following: Joaquín Romer Maura, *La rosa de fuego. Republicanos y anarquistas* (Barcelona, 1975); Temma Kaplan, *Red City, Blue Period. Social movements in Picasso's Barcelona* (Berkeley, 1992); Angel Smith, ed., *Red Barcelona. Social protest and labor mobilization in the twentieth century* (London, 2002); Chris Ealham, *Class, Culture and Conflict in Barcelona, 1898–1937* (London, 2005).

8 For the events taking place in Barcelona on the day of the armistice, see: Rafael Tasis i Marca, *Barcelona. Imatge i història d'una ciutat* (Barcelona, 1963), 457–458.

Catalonia has been a part of Spain ever since 1460 when Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabel of Castile married and by unifying their kingdoms laid the foundation of what later turned into the modern Spanish state. Two hundred years later, in the Spanish-French War of 1635 to 1659, the northern part of Catalonia (above the Pyrenees) became a part of France. In the War of the Spanish Succession (1701–1713), fought between the Habsburgs and the Bourbons, Catalonia supported Karl of Habsburg and was severely punished by the Bourbon Philip of Anjou after his victory. Barcelona was conquered by Franco-Castilian troops in 1714 and Catalan culture was repressed severely for the first time.

These measures had an almost devastating effect and it took nearly 150 years until Catalanism revived. The time of *Renaixança* (rebirth) started with the publication of Bonaventura Aribau's poem *La Patria* in 1833, in which he praised his Catalan home-country and the Catalan language. During that time, however, Catalanism had no political implications but the aimed rather to raise the popularity of Catalan culture, seen for example in the introduction of the *Jocs Florals* (flower games), a Catalan poetry contest, in 1859. The intentions of the Catalan movement changed at the turn of the century. One of the main reasons for this change was the so-called "Disaster of 1898", which had a huge impact on the mentality of the Spanish people. In that year, Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines, the last Spanish colonies apart from Morocco, were lost in a war with the USA. To everyone at that time it became obvious that Spain had lost its status as one of the leading European imperial powers. This led to a profound mental crisis in Spain which simultaneously cast much doubt on the Restoration monarchy.

As a result, in Catalonia as well as in the Basque country, already at this point the most powerful industrial areas of Spain, for the first time in modern Spanish history political movements claiming the separation from the Spanish central state became popular.<sup>9</sup> In Catalonia, this process started when Enric Prat de la Riba (1870–1917) founded the *Lliga Regionalista de Catalunya* in 1901, a conservative right-wing party which demanded more autonomy for Catalonia. The war in Morocco made it obvious that Catalan people already had started to follow their own interests: when in 1909 Catalan troops were about to be sent to the African continent to support the Spanish army there, huge protests followed which culminated in the "Tragic Week", seven days of rioting in

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9 For a detailed examination of the development of Catalan nationalism up to the end of the nineteenth century, see the recent study by Angel Smith, *The Origins of Catalan Nationalism, 1770–1898* (Basingstoke, 2014).

Barcelona.<sup>10</sup> In 1917 the Catalans caused another severe crisis for the Spanish state. When King Alfonso XIII refused to recall the Cortes, the Spanish parliament in Madrid, the Catalans opened their own parliament in Barcelona, provoking a huge political standoff.<sup>11</sup>

Already during World War One Catalan nationalism had grown considerably since the wave of nationalism which had affected all the countries who took part in the hostilities had also spilled over into Catalonia. About 40,000 Catalan volunteers had fought in World War One for the Entente, and in return the Catalans hoped for the support of the Allies in their struggle for independence. These hopes were further nourished by the concept of the self-determination of smaller nations enunciated by the American president Woodrow Wilson for whom celebrations were held in Catalonia and places and streets named after him. The growing Catalan nationalism was noted with concern in Madrid. In the Cortes, for the first time, an autonomy status for Catalonia was discussed. But, in the end, the application for more autonomy made by the Mancomunitat, the Catalan local parliament, was refused on 12 December 1918. Neither did the Allies intervene in favour of the Catalans, as they had hoped for. The euphoria of the first days after the end of the War now turned into frustration and most of the Catalan delegates withdrew from the parliament in Madrid.<sup>12</sup>

After the political negotiations in Madrid had finally come to a dead end, the demands for Catalan independence were taken to the streets. As in other European cities, street protest in Barcelona had its roots in the religious processions and *festivitive* parades in early modern times.<sup>13</sup> Until the second half

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10 The classic study on the Tragic Week is Joan Conelly Ullmann, *The Tragic Week. A Study of Anticlericalism in Spain 1875–1912* (Cambridge, 1968). In the course of the hundredth anniversary of the Tragic Week, many new works were published, for example: Alexia Domínguez Álvarez, *La Setmana Tràgica de Barcelona 1909* (Valls, 2009); Dolors Marin, *La Semana Trágica. Barcelona en llamas. La revuelta popular y la Escuela Moderna* (Madrid, 2009); David Martínez Fiol, *La Setmana Tràgica* (Barcelona 2009).

11 For an overview of the events of the year 1917 in Spain, see Francisco Romero Salvadó, “Spain’s revolutionary crisis of 17: A Reckless Gamble”, in *Agony*, eds., Romero Salvadó and Smith, 62–91.

12 For a contemporary view from the perspective of a Catalanist, see Josep Marià Poblet, *El moviment autonomista a Catalunya dels anys 1918 a 1919* (Barcelona, 1970). For a more distant and objective analysis of the events, see Klaus-Jürgen Nagel, *Arbeiterschaft und nationale Bewegung in Katalonien zwischen 1898 und 1923* (Saarbrücken, 1991), 428.

13 James Amelang, “Public Ceremonies and Private Fetes. Social Segregation and Aristocratic Culture in Barcelona, ca. 1500–1800”, in *Conflict in Catalonia. Images of an urban society*, ed. Gary McDonogh (Gainesville, 1986), 21–23.



of the nineteenth century it had become a common feature of public life in Barcelona, where most people were unable to read and write. The joint walk through the streets showed that the protesters shared the same values and desires and as a large crowd gave them a feeling of power.<sup>14</sup>

Already in the last months of World War One there had been smaller violent incidents in connection with the growing Catalan nationalism. On 29 September 1918, the first anniversary of the death of *Lliga* founder Prat de la Riba, a small group of Catalanists equipped with flags of the USA and of Catalonia passed the Paseo de Gracia, a boulevard in the upper-class area of Barcelona until they were dispersed violently by the police.<sup>15</sup> Similar incidents occurred during the last weeks of the War.<sup>16</sup> But only in December 1918 and January 1919 did the fights in the Ramblas become frequent and regularly followed the same pattern: in the evenings, at around 8pm, the Catalanists, who mainly consisted of employees and students, but some workers as well, moved through the Ramblas shouting their demands for Catalan independence.<sup>17</sup> The choreography of protest included, on the one hand, the *senyera*, the red and yellow horizontally-striped Catalan flag, a nineteenth-century symbol of militant Catalanism which during the first decades of the twentieth century turned more and more had into a symbol of national identity as well as a symbol of struggle.<sup>18</sup> On the other hand the Catalanists provoked the authorities as well as the Spaniards by singing the song “*Els Segadors*” (meaning “the cradlers”). This song, which recalled the Catalan uprising against the Spanish monarchy of 1640, had become a kind of unofficial national anthem of Catalonia by the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>19</sup>

14 For the meaning of street protest in Barcelona at the turn of the twentieth century, see Kaplan, *Red City*, 13–14.

15 This event is described in Albert Balcells, Enric Puyol and Jordi Sabater, *La mancomunitat de Catalunya i l'autonomia* (Barcelona, 1996), 102.

16 For example, such an event is documented in *El Dia Grafico*, 17 Nov. 1918.

17 Enric Ucelay da Cal and Estat Català, *The strategies of Separation and Revolution of Catalan Radical Nationalism 1919–1933* (Columbia, 1979), 98; Amongst the 42 Catalan nationalists who were arrested between 11–14 Jan. 1919, were five students, four shop assistants and 25 employees, according to Isidre Molas, “Federació Democràtica Nacionalista (1919–1923),” *Recerques* 4 (1974): 137–153, here 140.

18 For the meaning of the Catalan *senyera* see Jordi Alberti, *La bandera catalana. Mil anys d'història* (Barcelona, 2010) and also Pera Anguera i Nolla, *Les quatre barres. De bandera històrica a senyera nacional* (Barcelona, 2010).

19 For the origins of the song and its evolution into an unofficial national anthem of Catalonia, see Jaume Ayats, *Els Segadors. De cançó eròtica a himne nacional* (Barcelona, 2011) and also Pera Anguera i Nolla, *Els Segadors. Com es crea un himne* (Barcelona, 2010). In an example of its use, it was reported that, after a mass meeting on the evening of 23 Dec.

In the struggles in the Ramblas, the Catalanists not only had to fight the police, but also members of the “Liga Patriótica Española” (League of Patriotic Spaniards), which claimed to have about one thousand members at the beginning of 1919.<sup>20</sup> After three months of regular confrontations, the struggles in the Ramblas reached their climax in the second half of January 1919. On 19 January 1919, two young Catalanists were murdered.<sup>21</sup> Only a few days later, on January 24th, a street fight in the Ramblas between Catalanists and the police left many persons injured.<sup>22</sup> In the following days, more violent clashes took place resulting in seven persons being severely injured. The escalation of violence caused protests all over Spain which put the government under pressure and as a consequence, on 28 January, Catalan symbols were forbidden.<sup>23</sup> In the following years there were only two minor incidents,<sup>24</sup> but on 11 September 1923, the Catalan national holiday, there was another big street battle which resulted in 30 persons being injured when Catalan, Basque and Galician nationalists gathered on the Plaza de Cataluña and demanded autonomous status for their home regions. These incidents were amongst the reasons which encouraged Primo de Rivera to bring forward his coup d'état, from the originally planned date of 15 September to the night of 12–13 September; one of the first things Primo de Rivera did when he came to power was to ban all Catalan culture from public life.<sup>25</sup>

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1918, about one hundred people waving Catalan flags and singing „Els segadors“ moved through the Ramblas, see *El Diluvio*, 24 Dec. 1918. About two weeks later, there was a similar incident, as documented in *El Diluvio*, 13 Jan. 1919.

20 Alejandro Quiroga, *Nation and Reaction*, in *Agony*, eds., Romero Salvadó and Smith, 202–229, here 207–208.

21 Anguera i Nolla, *Les quatre barres*, 188–189.

22 This incident is documented in *El Correo Catalan*, 25 Jan. 1919.

23 A very detailed overview of the events is to be found in Eduardo González Calleja, *El máuser y el sufragio. Orden público, subversión y violencia política en la crisis de la Restauración 1917–1931* (Madrid, 1999), 346–348.

24 *El Noticiero Universal* reported on 3 May 1920 that, on the day before, on the occasion of the “Jocs Florals” a group sang “Els Segadors” and shouted “Mori Espanya” (or “death to Spain”) and “Visca Catalunya lliure” (“Long live free Catalonia”), but this incident did not have any consequences. More than two years later, a similar incident was reported which did not have any major consequences either, see *La Vanguardia*, 12 Sept. 1922.

25 Quiroga, “*Nation and Reaction*”, 202.

## The Radicalization of the Class Struggle in Barcelona by World War One

On the evening of January 8th, 1918, businessman José Antonio Barret went on a walk with a friend. Suddenly, they were approached by a group of persons armed with pistols who fired about fifty bullets at them. While his companion was only slightly injured, Barret was hit by twelve bullets and died immediately. Apart from Joan Tapias, who was gunned down on 7 October 1917, Barret was the first industrialist in Barcelona to be assassinated.<sup>26</sup>

Relations between workers and entrepreneurs had been affected by mutual acts of violence ever since the beginning of the industrialization in Catalonia in the second half of the nineteenth century. In 1832 the first factory had been erected in Barcelona, but only three years later, it was burned down by the workers who were afraid of losing their jobs because of the introduction of steam engines.<sup>27</sup> As a response, five suspects were executed and the workers' association had to face severe reprisals for years. Twenty years later, in 1855, the first general strike in Spanish history was called out by Catalan workers in response to the execution of the popular labor leader Josep Barceló who had been judged under dubious circumstances as a common criminal.<sup>28</sup> During this strike, the director of the factory Vapor Vell in Barcelona's labor district Sans was murdered.<sup>29</sup> In the first two decades of the twentieth century, due to the growing influence of the trade unions, strikes in Barcelona became common affairs in the struggles between workers and entrepreneurs. These strikes turned large parts of the city into a battlefield, with regular gun fights between workers and the police. In the second decade of the twentieth century, the strikes became more violent in the way that both blacklegs as well as entrepreneurs were singled out as targets and attacked.<sup>30</sup>

The assassination of Barret, however, put the bloody struggle between workers and entrepreneurs on a new level. Before this, attacks on entrepreneurs had been rather spontaneous affairs, whereas the murder of Barret was carefully planned and carried out. Together with his brother, José Antonio Barret was

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26 There are detailed reports on the assassination of Barret for example in *El Diluvio*, 9 Jan. 1918, as well as in the morning edition of *El Noticiero Universal*, 9 Jan. 1918.

27 Ealham, *Class*, 31.

28 See Josep Maria Planes i Martí, *Els gangsters de Barcelona* (Barcelona, 2002), 60–62.

29 Albert Balcells, "Catalunya contemporània" in *Història de Catalunya*, ed. Albert Balcells (Madrid, 2009), 589–886, here 631.

30 The relation between the strikes and the growing violence in the labor conflicts is examined very well in Angel Smith, *Anarchism, Revolution and Reaction, Catalan Labor and the Crisis of the Central State, 1898–1923* (New York, 2007), 232–240.

the owner of a big company with about 1000 workers which was said to produce munitions for the Allied forces.<sup>31</sup> Due to this fact, the German secret service was deemed responsible for the assassination of Barret.

Already, in 1918, the Spanish anti-German newspaper *El Radical* reported on 6 June of that year that about 70,000 German spies were active in Spain. On one hand this seems exaggerated, but on the other hand different sources seem to prove that the German secret service in Spain was quite influential.<sup>32</sup> In Barcelona, the German secret service effectively gathered information through middlemen about the routes of Spanish cargo vessels carrying goods for the Allied forces which were later sunk by German submarines.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, the sources indicate that the German secret service also tried to stop the trade between Catalan companies and the Entente by creating unrest among the workers.<sup>34</sup> However, there is no proof that they went so far as to hire persons for contract killings. On the contrary, the fact that *Solidarid Obrera*, the leading mouthpiece of “workers’ solidarity” and the labor movement, commented on the murder of Barret with words to the effect that “for all pigs, the day of Saint Martin arrives sometime” rather indicated that the murderers of Barret were to be found in the working class.<sup>35</sup>

Nevertheless, the influence of the German secret service was present in Barcelona even after the end of World War One. Manuel Bravo Portillo, a police officer in Barcelona, had collaborated with the German secret service during the War and, for this, he was suspended from service. Later he became the head of the “Banda Negra” or “black gang”, a parallel police sponsored by the the Federación Patronal, the employers’ association.<sup>36</sup> The task of the gang was

31 A short biography of José Antonio Barret is to be found in Soledad Bengoechea, *Organització patronal i conflictivitat social a Catalunya. Tradició corporativisme entre finals del segle i la dictadura de Primo de Rivera* (Barcelona, 1994), 327–328.

32 The activities of the German secret service are documented in the Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes (Political Archive of the Foreign Office) in Berlin and are exemplified by the letter of Otto Engelhardt, former German consul in Seville, to the German president Paul von Hindenburg, PP AA R 72005, 17 July 1929.

33 There were regular reports on Spanish ships sunk by the German “pirates”, for example in *El Radical*, 12 June 1918, & 25 July 1918.

34 So it seems that the German secret service tried to exert influence on labor leaders such as Josep Negre, Borobio and Francisco Jordan, see Joan Ferrer i Farriol, *Baltasar Porcel, La revuelta permanente* (Barcelona, 1978), 147–149.

35 *Soledad Obrera*, 9 January 1918. The feast of Saint Martin – 11 Nov. – is traditionally the day in Spain when fattened pigs are slaughtered for the winter.

36 The gang is documented in most detail in the memoirs of the former police officer Manuel Casal Gómez, *La Banda Negra. Origen y actuación del pistolero en Barcelona 1918–1921* (Barcelona, 1977).

to gather information on syndicalists, with the aim of arresting or even killing them. Bravo Portillo recruited the members of the gang from the lower classes, so the forty to fifty men who formed the gang comprised of former prisoners and pimps, as well as police officers who had been disgraced. The first murder the Banda Negra committed was of Pablo Sabater, secretary of the union of dyers, on 19 July.<sup>37</sup> Although Bravo Portillo was never officially put on trial, it must have been clear to most of the syndicalists that he had pulled the strings and in fact he was killed in an act of revenge not even two months later.<sup>38</sup> The new chief of the gang was a German named Fritz Stallmann. He was born in Potsdam and, like many criminals, came to Barcelona during World War One. There he changed his name to Baron von König, pretending to be aristocratic. He soon became a close friend to Bravo Portillo, from whom he took over the leadership of the gang.<sup>39</sup> With Von König, the violence used by the group also took on a higher intensity. There was no pretence that the victims were to be arrested. They were simply shot in the street. Whereas his predecessor had made the gang relatively loyal to the police and the employers, Von König mainly followed his own ambition to make as much money as possible. Therefore he not only continued with the contract killing of syndicalists but also started to blackmail factory owners.<sup>40</sup> However, in doing so, he lost step by step the protection of the authorities and he was expelled from Spain without trial in June 1920.<sup>41</sup>

The radicalization of the conflicts between workers and entrepreneurs during and after World War One was not only caused by the German secret service and its collaborators, but in more general terms, as already indicated, by the economic and social changes caused by the consequences of the War as well. Barcelona, as the industrial centre of Spain, with hundreds of thousands of industrial workers was greatly affected by these changes, which broadened even further the gap between rich and poor which already existed in Spain.

37 For a more detailed description of the assassination of Pablo Sabater, see Maria Amàlia Pradas Baena, *L'Anarquisme i les lluites socials a Barcelona 1918–1923. La repressió obrera i la violència* (Barcelona, 2003), 95.

38 Gerald Brenan, *The Spanish Labyrinth. The social and political background of the Spanish Civil War* (Cambridge, 2014) [original, 1943], 69.

39 For more information on this person see the article by Juan Ventura Subirats, “La verdadera personalidad del ‘Baron de König’”, *Cuadernos de Historia Económica de Cataluña* 5 (1971), 103–118.

40 Francisco Romero Salvadó, “‘Si vis pacem para bellum’. The Catalan Employers’ Dirty War, 1919–23”, in *Agony*, eds., Romero Salvadó and Smith, 181.

41 The process of Von König’s expulsion from Spain is documented in the following file; Archivo Historico Nacional (Madrid), AHN 34A (3).

On one hand, the industrialists in Catalonia greatly profited from the War, a period of time which was for example remembered with great enthusiasm by the industrialist Pedro Gual Villabí in his memoirs:

It was a fantastic age [...] in which all businesses were easy and prosperous, giving rise to a real orgy of profits. [...] Every day it was said that it [the War] had radically changed a thousand institutions and a thousand habits and, as I heard these reflections, I kept telling myself: Of course, as it has even changed my wife! Indeed, such an austere, cool and even sometimes unsociable woman became sloppy, attentive and extraordinarily vivacious. A woman who never asked me a single question about my businesses...now followed with interest its progress and enjoyed its excellent prospects.... She bought earrings, other jewels, a magnificent fur coat, expensive tailor-made dresses...and then the automobile.... Oh, the day when we could show off our stunning Renault!<sup>42</sup>

On the other hand, the living conditions of the lower classes became even more desperate. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the life expectancy of the 18.6 million inhabitants of Spain had been no more than about 35 years, much less than in other European states. Even if this mainly was caused by the poor conditions of the health system which resulted in high childhood mortality, it seems that the living conditions in general in Spain during that period were very tough.<sup>43</sup> This rate was increased by World War One, which led to high inflation, so that food prices rose between May 1915 and May 1921 by 90%.<sup>44</sup> The poor of Spain did not have much hope that politics could improve their situation. A welfare system, such as it existed in other European states, did not really exist in Spain and it seemed that this was not to change soon. As in many other Spanish cities, food riots also took place in Barcelona in January 1918.

Not surprisingly, crime rates increased during this time as well. Already at the beginning of the twentieth century, Barcelona was well-known across Europe for being a centre of vice. Especially infamous was the lower part of the Raval, the waterfront area bordered by the two big avenues Parallel and the Ramblas, which during that time was one of the most densely populated

42 The original version is to be found in Pedro Gual Villabí, *Memorias de un industrial de nuestro tiempo* (Barcelona, 1923), 106–121. This translation is taken from Francisco Romero Salvadó, *The foundations of civil war: revolution, social conflict and reaction in liberal Spain, 1916–1923* (New York, 2010), 27.

43 Julián Casanova and Carlos Gil Andrés, *Historia de España en el siglo xx* (Barcelona, 2009).

44 Albert Balcells, *El Pistorismo. Barcelona (1917–1923)* (Barcelona, 2009), 11.

regions in Europe. The contemporary writer Francisco Madrid later contributed further to this infamous reputation by applying to it the name Barrio Chino (roughly translated as China Town) after inner-city Los Angeles, although no Chinese actually lived in Barcelona. Since many contemporary authors and journalists have written a lot about that district, it is not always easy to decide what was based on real facts and what stories were actually only legends which contributed to the moral panic. The district was built in the 1830s as Barcelona's first working-class settlement. In the course of the nineteenth century, thousands of people came in search of work – firstly from rural Catalonia but later from other parts of Spain as well – and settled down there in order to work in the factories which had been built. In the first decades of the twentieth century, however, the factories closed and were relocated to the suburbs and the district lost its character as an industrial zone. The former factory buildings were turned into bars and restaurants attracting working- and middle-class men from all parts of the city as well as sailors from the harbour.<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, it became Barcelona's centre of prostitution and drug trafficking. For many working-class women, prostitution was the only possible way to make ends meet.<sup>46</sup> There are estimates for the year 1911 which indicate that about 10,000 women were working as prostitutes in Barcelona, but given the fact that the contemporaries took especial notice of the presence of prostitutes in the city during that time, one might guess that the actual figures were a lot higher.<sup>47</sup> The organization of the prostitution was in the hands of so-called *Pinxos*, pimps. They cultivated their own lifestyle and regularly were involved in bloody fights with their rivals.<sup>48</sup> They also were organized in gangs, which fought each other. For example, the well-known pimp L'Aragones was murdered by his rival Nelo and his gang on March 8th 1904.<sup>49</sup>

Drug trafficking was closely connected in Barcelona to prostitution but only started later. Until the beginning of World War One, cocaine was nearly unknown in Barcelona and only during this time did it become popular. As early as 1915, there were many establishments in which cocaine, morphine and other drugs were available and often it was women who passed the drugs to the

45 For a short history of this district, see: Chris Ealham, "An 'Imagined Geography'. Ideology, urban space and protest in the creation of Barcelona's 'Chinatown' c.1835–1936", *International Review of Social History* 50 (2005): 373–397.

46 Kaplan, *Red City*, 85–86.

47 Nagel, *Arbeiterchaft*, 105.

48 Paco Villar, *Historia y leyenda del Barrio Chino. Crónica y documentos de los bajos fondos de Barcelona 1900–1992* (Barcelona, 2003), 61–63.

49 Miquel Badenas i Rico, *El Paralel, història d'un mite. Un barri de diversió i d'espectacles a Barcelona* (Lleida, 1998), 243.

clients. In spite of a 1918 law that prohibited the trade in narcotics, it was only during the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera that the fight against the drugs trade in Barcelona was taken seriously.<sup>50</sup> Nevertheless, it remained a social problem until the Civil War: in 1928, a report from journalist Arturo Bono revealed that drug consumption in Barcelona was still a “grave danger” and that the city had about a thousand addicts. Four years later, another newspaper report dealing with drug trafficking in Spain argued that due to its harbour Barcelona had become one of the most important transfer sites for drugs between America and Europe.<sup>51</sup> According to the testimonies of contemporaries, it was mainly foreign adventurers and playboys who had come to Barcelona in the war years who were involved in this business and who had established a kind of criminal underworld, which remained intact for almost two decades until city life as a whole came to a standstill because of the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War.

### Conclusion

Despite the neutrality of Spain, World War One had wide-ranging consequences for Catalonia. Probably the most striking effect was the radicalization of Catalan nationalism, whose followers were encouraged by the promises the Allies made to smaller nations and who later took their frustration out onto the streets, so that the Ramblas in Barcelona became the main battleground between Catalanists and Spanish patriots. Although the effects of the War on the Catalan economy cannot be directly connected to the radicalization of Catalan nationalism, they nevertheless were quite significant and left the Catalan industrialists and workers in open hostility to one another which, soon after the end of the wartime economic boom Spanish industry has undergone, turned into open acts of collective violence. Finally, the changes in Catalan society which were caused by the waves of foreign immigrants which had come from other European countries to Catalonia – in order to avoid the War or to make profit out of it – should not be underestimated. It led to a significant crime wave, mainly in Barcelona, where the security forces, due to their small numbers (a ratio of one policeman for every 5,000 citizens), were helpless to stop illegal activities which in many cases were initiated and led by former spies and other dubious personalities from abroad. To sum up, it seems no exaggeration to claim that World War One led to a profound radicalization

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50 Paco Villar, *Barrio Chino*, 113–115.

51 This report was published in *La Noche*, 4 Feb. 1928 and 27 Jan. 1932.



of Catalan society, which became obvious in various social arenas. To make things worse, these struggles became more violent due to the fact that, as a general effect of World War One, weapons such as pistols and guns became much easier to access than in the years before the War. So it makes some sense to conclude that World War One, despite Spain's neutrality, was one of the main reasons why Catalonia, in the five years which followed the War, went through one of the most violent periods in its history.

# Fabricating National Unity in Torn Contexts: World War I in the Multilingual Countries of Switzerland and Luxembourg

*Ingrid Brühwiler and Matias Gardin*

In a 2013 interview on the resemblances between the period leading to World War One and today, Luxembourg's former prime minister Jean-Claude Juncker declared; "Anyone who believes that the eternal issue of war and peace in Europe has been permanently laid to rest could be making a monumental error. The demons haven't been banished; they are merely sleeping."<sup>1</sup> For Juncker, 100 years after the outbreak of that war, modern anti-German sentiments on the continent had become so strong that they threaten the idea of a stable and unified Europe: "I see obvious parallels with regards to people's complacency," he added. "In 1913, many people believed that there would never again be a war in Europe."<sup>2</sup> A situation that is antithetical to Europe's post-war stability, consensus and cohesion has emerged through these present-day crises, and this situation has become contradictory and unpredictable, leading to Juncker's somewhat hasty and clumsy comparisons with World War One.

On 27 February 1915, the French Swiss schoolteacher J. Peterman expressed similar concern for the youth of Switzerland during the war. He advocated a strengthening of the virtues of endurance, courage, dedication, generosity, solidarity and "love for others" (*l'amour d'autrui*) in education:

We do not want to dwell on the people's opinion that reminds us constantly about our neutrality with the risk of a foolish complacency or cowardice, but let us remind them strongly that nothing is more honourable to a large or small nation or to each individual than to respect a man's word, a signed agreement; the fates of Belgium and Luxembourg cannot and must not leave us indifferent.<sup>3</sup>

1 "Jean-Claude Juncker Interview: 'The Demons Haven't Been Banished'", Spiegel Online, 11 Mar. 2013. <<http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/spiegel-interview-with-luxembourg-prime-minister-juncker-a-99html>>.

2 "Jean-Claude Juncker Interview".

3 J. Peterman, "Le rôle de l'école dans les circonstances actuelles", *L'Éducateur* (27 Feb. 1915), 134. All translations from German and French in this chapter are our own.

He concluded that there was a need to address the current European situation in various school subjects. Not only could these events help to develop feelings of a shared national culture, but they could also serve to educate pupils in humanity. As Peterman observed, pupils today should avoid becoming “small excessive Francophiles or mad Germanophobes.”<sup>4</sup>

The above issues are at the heart of our analysis in this chapter. In the voluminous literature on the relationships among nation-states, war and peace, and education in early twentieth-century Europe, Luxembourg and Switzerland have often been portrayed as special cases.<sup>5</sup> On the one hand, Switzerland, united by choice despite substantial ethno-linguistic divisions, constituted a nation that was created by its own will (*Willensnation*).<sup>6</sup> Exceptional Swiss national identity (*Sonderfall Schweiz*) became located at the intersection of Swiss German, French and Italian cultural peculiarities.<sup>7</sup> Luxembourg’s mixed culture (*Mischkultur*), on the other hand, has been depicted as unique or genuinely original, or an unusual example amongst its European counterparts, most notably in relation to its influential neighbours Germany and France.<sup>8</sup> Together with student mobility resulting from the lack of a national university until 2003, Luxembourg’s linguistic *Sonderweg* has usually been highlighted in its *Mischkultur*.<sup>9</sup>

In their ambitious *Education and War*, Blair, Miller and Tieken offer a refreshing and welcome contribution to the context described above by considering the role of education during war and peace.<sup>10</sup> They passionately argue, “Schooling has not simply been a casualty of conflict, but rather has been implicated in the conduct, resistance, and aftermath of wars in complicated

4 Peterman, “Le rôle de l’école”, 134.

5 For Luxembourg, see, for example, Siggy Koenig, “Luxemburg” in *Die Bildungssysteme Europas*, eds., Hans Döbert, Wolfgang Hörner, Botho van Kopp and Lutz-Rainer Reuter (Baltmannsweiler, 2010), 428–41. For Switzerland, see for instance Patrick Stevenson, “Political Culture and Intergroup Relations in Plurilingual Switzerland”, *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 11 (1990): 227–56.

6 See Kaspar Villiger, *Eine Willensnation muss wollen. Die politische Kultur der Schweiz: Zukunfts- oder Auslaufmodell?* (Zürich, 2009).

7 See Ulrich Ammon, *Die deutsche Sprache in Deutschland, Österreich und der Schweiz. Das Problem der Nationalen Varietäten* (New York, 1995), 30.

8 See Pit Péporté, Sonja Kmec, Benoît Majerus and Michel Margue, *Inventing Luxembourg. Representations of the Past, Space and Language from the Nineteenth to the Twenty-First Century* (Leiden, 2010), 1–22.

9 See Jean-Jacques Weber and Kristine Horner, “The trilingual Luxembourgish school system in historical perspective: progress or regress?”, *Language, Culture and Curriculum* 25 (2012): 3–15.

10 Elizabeth Blair, Rebecca Miller and Mara Casey Tieken, eds., *Education and War* (Cambridge, 2009).

ways.”<sup>11</sup> With reference to its wartime proponents, they note, “Constituents use educational institutions to disseminate and reproduce dominant ideologies or to empower and inspire those marginalized; or to simultaneously promote both oppression and liberation.”<sup>12</sup> However, until very recently, as they correctly argue, “few journalists or academics consider the role of education in these conflicts.”<sup>13</sup> This study adds to these intriguing discussions by taking as its starting point the notion of “citizenship through education” in the Swiss Confederation and the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg during World War One. Although Switzerland escaped military attack, Luxembourg was occupied by the German Empire – thus playing a crucial part in the outbreak of the war – and had to address a set of questions that, although fundamentally different, were also in the realm of schooling. However, the longer the war lasted, the more it affected Swiss economic, political and social developments. By linking education to global events during this period, in this article, we analyse how neutrality was interpreted in these two countries, their shared commitment to multilingualism, and their aim of educating *national* citizens. Viewed in this light, the reactions of Luxembourg’s teachers to the war show stances regarding citizenship education that differed from those in Switzerland.

While World War Two has been portrayed as an event that created national solidarity (resulting, in the case of Luxembourg, from the struggle against the National Socialist regime), World War One was marked by schisms and bitter internal divisions in both countries. This period has been chosen for critical investigation then because it provides ideal conditions to analyse educational systems at the time of German occupation, food shortages, unemployment, large-scale immigration, industrial and general strikes, and constitutional crises. Taking the teaching profession as our case study against this challenging background, our primary objective is to investigate how different teacher journals published from 1910 to 1919 – with a particular emphasis on the war years of 1914–1918 – addressed the topic of education and World War One. For Switzerland, two major journals are studied: the French-speaking *l’Educatteur* and the German-speaking *Schweizerische Lehrerzeitung*.<sup>14</sup> For Luxembourg, the

11 Blair, Miller and Tieken, eds., *Education and War*, 1–2.

12 Blair, Miller and Tieken, eds., *Education and War*, 1–2.

13 Blair, Miller and Tieken, eds., *Education and War*, 1–2.

14 *L’Educatteur* was founded in 1865. In 1913 it had 3,015 members and 1,364 subscribers. See Schweizerischer Lehrerverein, II. *Aufsätze zur Kenntnis des Schulwesens in der Schweiz und den Kantonen Schweiz* 14 (8 Apr. 1911), 123. The *Schweizerische Lehrerzeitung* was founded in 1856. In 1910 it had 7,109 members and 5,200 subscribers.

teacher journal *Luxemburger Lehrerzeitung* is examined.<sup>15</sup> Teacher journals are of crucial importance for this research because they provide relevant insights into the functioning of professional discourse in reference to contemporary issues. Written by teachers, they shed light on the interplay among schools, war and peace, and citizenship. As an anonymous teacher in Luxembourg observed in 1918; “Due to the prohibitive control of war, need increases gradually to the unbearable. On another note, it must be mentioned that most likely no other public officials have been as affected by the expansion of duties caused by war distress as the teaching profession.”<sup>16</sup>

Combining this observation with the context of 1914–1918 in general, we can safely assert that this topic has not been the subject of any major sustained discussions or conclusions in academic literature. In this sense, Swiss and Luxembourgish educational developments during World War One remain largely terra incognita. By identifying common themes in these discussions, this chapter poses questions such as the following: what issues most concerned teachers? With reference to war and peace, what did the Luxembourgish and Swiss educators seek to accomplish and why? As opposed to the Swiss position in World War One, how were these attitudes reflected in the Grand Duchy as a fully-occupied nation during the war?

This chapter is divided into two sections. In the first section, we begin by providing background on Switzerland and Luxembourg in the 1910s to explain the wartime situations and the very different circumstances in the two countries, and we introduce our case study sources. In our second section, we pay attention to the question of neutrality: which national figures in specific historical situations demanded citizenship education, and what arguments did they advance? Overall, this chapter draws on teacher journals in relation to the war, exploring the differences and similarities between the Swiss and Luxembourgish journals regarding national citizenship.

### Switzerland and Luxembourg in the 1910s

While nationalism based on distinct ethnic divides was gaining momentum everywhere in Europe in the 1910s following the breakup of the Concert of

15 See Victor Kalmes, *Über die Anfänge des Lehrersyndikalismus in Luxemburg* (Luxembourg, 1983), 125.

16 “Schlussbemerkungen”, *Luxemburger Lehrerzeitung* (1 Jan. 1918), 96. It should also be noted that authors writing in these journals were not always teachers, but also inspectors, directors, teacher education institutions, and other educationalists.

Europe, ethno-linguistic affiliations became more pronounced in Switzerland. For example, in the Gotthard Convention of 1909, Germany and Italy increased their influence in the Confederation, leading to protests and petitions in the French-speaking part of the country.<sup>17</sup> Strengthening its overall position, the Swiss army reorganised in 1907 and 1911 to improve the education of soldiers. Long before the outbreak of World War One and its opposing coalitions, the question of military alliances had been broadly discussed within the highest political and military circles. For example, in 1907, the German and Austro-Hungarian generals had repeatedly asked about Swiss intentions in potential future conflicts. There were no similar contacts with France, however, which created an imbalance in foreign affairs and led to a delicate situation for the policy of Swiss neutrality.<sup>18</sup>

Whereas the Swiss Federal Council directed the general mobilisation of 220,000 soldiers on 1 August 1914,<sup>19</sup> an action that in itself reinforced the unity of the nation, the Grand Duchy's army was loosely made up of Gendarmes and Volunteer Corps (*Corps des Gendarmes et Volontaires*) of only a few hundred men.<sup>20</sup> As the Schlieffen Plan was enacted on the Western front, following German mobilisation and the July crisis,<sup>21</sup> Luxembourg found itself in the middle of great international power struggles that were beyond its national control. As a substantially smaller and under-resourced nation-state, it had no choice but to let the *Deutsche Heer* pass.

Although Switzerland had direct contact with Luxembourg during the war (for example, by sending foodstuffs), in Swiss daily newspapers, these violations of Luxembourg's and especially of Belgium's neutrality were condemned in the French-speaking cantons. The Swiss-German newspapers partially justified the invasion but clarified that this justification was only due to the necessity of the situation.<sup>22</sup> To reduce this cultural gap (*fossé moral* /

17 Roland Ruffieux, "Die Schweiz des Freisinns (1848–1914)" in *Geschichte der Schweiz und der Schweizer*, ed. Jean-Claude Favez (Basel, 2006), 639–730, 705–6.

18 Hans Rudolf Fuhrer, "Weltkrieg. Erster. Militärische Lage. Kriegsvorbereitungen", *Historisches Lexikon der Schweiz*, <<http://www.hls-dhs-dss.ch/textes/d/D8926.php>>.

19 Rudolf Jaun, "Vorwort" in Jean-Jaques Langendorf and Pierre Streit, *Ein bedrohtes Land. Das Schweizer Volk und seine Armee während der beiden Weltkriege* (Gollion, 2010), 9.

20 See, for example, Péporté et al, *Inventing Luxembourg*, 77, 87.

21 For example, see A.J.P. Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe, 1848–1918* (Oxford, 1954).

22 Alain Clavien, *Grandeurs et misères de la presse politique* (Lausanne, 2010), 81; Peter Alemann, *Die Schweiz und die Verletzung der belgischen Neutralität im Weltkrieg. Abhandlung zur Erlangung der Doktorwürde der philosophischen Fakultät 1 der Universität Zürich* (Buenos Aires, 1914), 58; Jean-Jaques Langendorf and Pierre Streit, *Ein bedrohtes Land. Das Schweizer Volk und seine Armee während der beiden Weltkriege* (Gollion, 2010), 86.

*Röstigraben*) between the German- and French-speaking cultures in Switzerland, several intellectuals, army personnel, politicians, and journalists (such as Carl Spitteler, Oskar Wettstein, Konrad Falke and Paul Seippel) appealed to a shared Swiss national ideal to demonstrate unity.<sup>23</sup> On 1 October 1914, the Federal Councilors felt it necessary to make a public plea to restrain sympathies for the aggressor countries and to stress the nation above its ethno-linguistic differences. Nevertheless, in early January 1916, the cultural gap had again grown wider, largely due to a situation known as the Colonels' Affair (*Oberstenaffäre*).<sup>24</sup>

Not unlike Luxembourg, although Switzerland did escape military attack, the war increasingly affected economic, political and social developments in the country as it continued. Due to economic growth, Swiss cities and their populations had rapidly expanded, resulting in reduced emigration and increased immigration. In general, the situation of workers became difficult and led to a growing number of strikes between 1900 and 1914.<sup>25</sup> More specifically, the working classes suffered from sharp increases in food prices, unemployment, and a lack of governmental social policies. From 1916 onwards, increased social inequality led to several smaller strikes, which culminated in the general strike (*Landesstreik*) of November 1918.<sup>26</sup> Ninety-five thousand Swiss soldiers were called by the Federal Council to repress the demonstrations.<sup>27</sup>

In Luxembourg, the period between 1915 and 1919 was equally marked by turmoil. Frequently changing cabinets found little or no support in the parliament (*Chambre des Députés*) after the death of the country's long-standing Prime Minister Paul Eyschen in October 1915. The left-right cleavage induced by the Industrial Revolution in the south of the country had given rise to new political parties in the early years of the 1900s and, as these parties'

23 Alemann, *Die Schweiz*, 35–38.

24 A messenger regularly brought information bulletins of the Swiss general army staff to the Austrian and German ambassadors. This activity was disclosed, and the responsible colonels Wattenwyl and Egli were dismissed. However, the discipline of these officials provoked violent reactions in the Swiss-French print media and demonstrations within the population. Hateful remarks against the Swiss-Germans, especially the Swiss-German officers, became increasingly widespread. See Langendorf and Streit, *Ein bedrohtes Land*, 100–02; Clavien, *Grandeurs et misères*, 84.

25 Clive Church and Randolph Head, *A Concise History of Switzerland* (Cambridge, 2013), 184–89.

26 See, for example, Markus Bürgi, "Erster Weltkrieg-Soziales", *Historisches Lexikon der Schweiz*, <<http://www.hls-dhs-dss.ch/textes/d/D8926.php>> (accessed 4 Dec. 2013).

27 Max Huber, *Geschichte der politischen Presse im Kanton Luzern 1914–1945* (Luzern, 1989), 116; Langendorf and Streit, 115–120.

by-products, to workers' demands for Bismarckian-style welfare legislation.<sup>28</sup> However, by 1915, a fragmented left stood against a divided right. Important educational decisions were often postponed, and politics in general was conducted haphazardly. From 1915 to 1920, five different governments held office, headed successively by Prime Ministers Eyschen, Mongenast, Loutsch, Thorn and Kauffman.

The party system in this period was characterised by both inter- and intra-party volatility, with centrifugal party-system competition and an unoccupied political centre.<sup>29</sup> Governments encountered multiple opposition from the left and right, and the ideological distance between the political movements grew increasingly wide, culminating in dramatic trade-union and socialist insurgencies, especially from 1916 on. Similar to the Swiss case, in June 1916, miners' strikes spread in Luxembourg City and Esch-sur-Alzette. These strikes were only finally suppressed with the help of the German army. This situation was further aggravated by the new wave of radical ideas stemming from the Russian Revolution of 1917, the conflictual role played by Grand Duchess Marie-Adélaïde *vis-à-vis* the Luxembourg governments before her abdication in January 1919, and the introduction of universal suffrage in October of that same year.<sup>30</sup>

In such an uncertain climate, much like the *Zeitgeist* all over Europe, educationalists in both countries demanded greater national unity through explicit citizenship education in both nations' schools. By highlighting relevant moral principles within this wider *problématique* – their increased social bearing for the nation and state – education had a mission to foster peace. The period leading up to and during World War One had created new conditions that required fundamentally different types of *Weltanschauung*, specific and fresh ways of viewing the nation. As a national integration strategy, it became fundamental to understand what qualities a good Swiss or Luxembourgish citizen should possess.

Published by Luxembourg's Federation of Teachers (*Luxemburger Lehrerverband*) beginning on 1 October 1905, *Luxemburger Lehrerzeitung* endeavoured to appeal to a broad national clientele during the war. As the events of World War One unfolded, the journal published numerous articles relating to the

28 Guy Thewes, *Les Gouvernements du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg depuis 1848* (Luxembourg, 2011), 58–63, 68–9.

29 See Giovanni Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems: A Framework for Analysis* (Cambridge, 1976), 305–12.

30 Gilbert Trausch, *Histoire du Luxembourg: Le destin européen d'un « petit pays »* (Toulouse, 2002), 237–41; Gilbert Trausch, *Histoire du Luxembourg* (Paris, 1992), 112–7.



topics of neutrality, war and peace, and their impacts on education. These sections were often titled “War and Schools” (*Krieg und Schule*), “Domestic/Foreign School Chronicle” (*inländische/ausländische Schulchronik*), “Guidance” (*Zum Geleit*), or “Letters to the Editor” (*Briefkasten*).<sup>31</sup> However, the complicated and uncomfortable relationship between the German Empire and Luxembourg was seldom (if ever) mentioned, although some teachers clearly seemed to make these implications: “The elementary school does not aim at the formation of narrow-minded patriotism that only appraises and defies one’s own country but at the formation of feelings for the whole of humanity, of humanism.”<sup>32</sup>

Similar to the Luxembourgish teacher journal, the two Swiss publications *L’Educatteur* and *Schweizerische Lehrerzeitung* were both official journals of the teachers’ unions in the French- and German-speaking parts of Switzerland, respectively. These publications were edited by teachers and aimed to unify the nation’s teacher corps. The French-speaking *L’Educatteur* particularly intended to replace the alternative cantonal journals by bringing together Protestant primary school teachers in their respective areas. In both journals, World War One was broadly discussed in terms of peace and neutrality, exceptional Swiss national character, daily routines in economic, social, political and military life, and the influences of these factors on education and youth. The publications also reported educational developments in other countries. Throughout the war, the teacher journals intensely promoted the unity of Swiss national identity. This tendency was especially marked at the beginning of World War One, whereas a type of “war exhaustion” could be felt as the war progressed.<sup>33</sup> Unlike the *Lehrerzeitung* in Luxembourg, which was printed fortnightly, *L’Educatteur* and *Schweizerische Lehrerzeitung* were weekly publications.

### Neutrality, War and Peace

Neutrality was broadly discussed in the Swiss and Luxembourgish teacher journals, with special attention to concomitant factors, such as internal order, solidarity, pacifism, humanism and national harmony. In other words, the war had consequences for the immediate future of teaching in both countries. Indeed, teachers were asked to give lessons on the status quo and thereby to

31 Luxemburger Lehrerverband, *Luxemburger Lehrerzeitung* (Luxembourg, 1916–1918).

32 “Die Volksschule und der Staat”, *Luxemburger Lehrerzeitung* (1 Apr. 1916), 201.

33 See, for example, A. Sonnaillon, “Quelques réflexions actuelles”, *L’Educatteur* (1 May 1915), 273–4.

inform their classes of the difficult conditions of the war. However, given the German occupation of Luxembourg, the journals show actions and reactions towards citizenship in Luxembourg that differed from those in Switzerland.

For the Swiss teachers to distinguish between different European neutrals in World War One, didactic instructions were given regarding civic lessons. In an article titled “The Neutralities” (*Les neutralités*), authored by teacher G. Jaquerod and published in *L’Educatteur* on 27 February 1915, Luxembourg is mentioned alongside (and compared with) Belgium and Switzerland in a summary of the three European neutrals:

It can be argued that the violations of the neutrality of Belgium and especially of Luxembourg are worse than a violation of the Helvetic neutrality would have been. There are nuances in the characteristics of the three neutralities, which before the war had long existed in Europe: the neutrality of the Swiss Confederation, which is the oldest, then that of the kingdom of Belgium, and, finally, the most recent, that of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. These nuances are due to their specific histories, which are far more significant than any legal powers. This historical significance brings to light that Switzerland has adopted neutrality only through its free will, whereas Luxembourg and Belgium are obliged to maintain neutrality by dominant powers.<sup>34</sup>

The article concludes that the violation of Luxembourg’s neutrality has been the worst and least justifiable: “The German Empire, which was committed to defending Luxembourg, has neglected its task. It seized the territory that it promised to protect.”<sup>35</sup>

In Luxembourg, which was “trapped” between the French and German cultural spheres, neutrality was rendered differently in articles such as “The Elementary School and State” (*Die Volksschule und der Staat*) and “Importance of Elementary School for Human Development” (*Wichtigkeit der Volksschule für die Menschenbildung*).<sup>36</sup> Whereas the latter article stressed education and “harmonious unity” (*harmonische Einheit*), in the first piece it was implied that Luxembourg’s predicament in World War One might make it even more difficult to maintain the future impartiality of the Grand Duchy:

34 G. Jaquerod, “Les neutralités”, *L’Educatteur* (27 Feb. 1915), 143.

35 Jaquerod, “Les neutralités”, 144.

36 For the first, see *Luxemburger Lehrerzeitung* (1 Apr. 1916), 196–201. For the latter, see *Luxemburger Lehrerzeitung* (21 Oct. 1916), 348–52.

However, the most severe requirement of the state is the blood steersman, when he calls his sons for military service during an outbreak of war in defence of the fatherland, and we see today thousands, even millions of young men who have spilled their blood in the battlefields and sacrificed their lives. Thank God! Our fatherland has so far been free from this blood steersman. God let us remain so also in the future.<sup>37</sup>

Luxembourg's history and reassurance of her independence, often written *in medias res* with 1839 as the focal point, were central elements of civic education during the war.<sup>38</sup> Education's civilising mission, the newly elevated role of the state, and pupils' rights and moral obligations to the nation were highlighted: "It is not enough that students learn the geography and history of Luxembourg more or less completely. No, they have to know the nature of the state, its objectives, its administration and the services it provides, but also the responsibilities that fall on citizens."<sup>39</sup>In both Swiss teacher journals, two articles on the topic of "neutrality" were published before the outbreak of the war: "The National Culture at School" (*La culture nationale à l'école*) in *L'Éducateur* in October 1912 and "Civic Education" (*Staatsbürgerliche Erziehung*) in *Schweizerische Lehrerzeitung* in May 1913. The first stressed neutrality in daily life as important to Switzerland as a nation-state as "a conquest of the will."<sup>40</sup> The second reflected that civics should be politically and denominationally neutral and that teachers were obliged to foster the conscientiousness of their pupils.<sup>41</sup> Shortly after the war began, an article appeared in both Swiss journals

37 "Die Volksschule und der Staat", *Luxemburger Lehrerzeitung* (1 Apr. 1916), 199.

38 Two major textbooks on citizenship were published in the course of the war: the anonymous *Fortbildungsschüler im Recht- und Pflichtstaat: Bürgerkunde* in 1916 and Pierre Kieffer's revised version *Luxemburger Bürgerkunde: Rechte und Pflichten: Abriss der Volkswirtschaftslehre: Leitfaden zum Gebrauch in den Oberprimär- und Fortbildungsschulen* in 1918. Both texts implied national collaboration within the Luxembourgish population towards shared objectives by correlating the state with family, church, local community, citizens' legal rights and responsibilities, personal property, "appropriate" gender roles, and the national economy. For further details on technical high schools, see *Luxemburger Lehrerzeitung* (1 Sept. 1917), 259–64. See also the book review of the above, "Der Fortbildungsschüler im Rechts- und Pflichtstaat", in *Luxemburger Lehrerzeitung* (1 May 1917), 206–7.

39 "Die Volksschule und der Staat", *Luxemburger Lehrerzeitung* (1 Apr. 1916), 200.

40 Albert Chessex, "La culture nationale à l'école", *L'Éducateur* (19 Oct. 1912), 617–9.

41 "Staatsbürgerliche Erziehung" (II. Aufsätze zur Kenntnis des Schulwesens in der Schweiz und den Kantonen, Schweiz), *Schweizerische Lehrerzeitung* (24 May 1913), 195–6.

(on the same date and with the same content) that tied Swiss political neutrality to education:

If the teacher refers to the current news, he must not forget that we live in a neutral country and that he is a civil servant of this country [...] As in denominational affiliation, the school has to be neutral in politics. Schools are not the place to arouse sympathy or antipathy towards the aggressor countries.<sup>42</sup>

The Department of Education in Zurich, which had issued the circular, noted that it was addressed to all school boards and teachers in Switzerland. In other articles, neutrality was mentioned regarding diverse aspects of the Swiss national idea: the country's relationship to its neighbours, the moral-intellectual aims of its educational system, its specific history, the role of its military as the maintainer of impartiality, and its neutrality as a privilege in the current circumstances.<sup>43</sup>

In Luxembourg as well, the *Lehrerzeitung* expressed an ongoing worry for the future neutrality of the country.<sup>44</sup> The educational circumstances in the neighbouring countries were viewed as contaminated by war-related hatred, perceptions of the enemy and egoism that needed to be rapidly eliminated from Luxembourg's education system.<sup>45</sup> The war had brought detrimental self-interest instead of solidarity with wide-reaching societal consequences:

While the combatants outside in the battlefields sacrifice their goodness and blood for the fatherland, with a true contempt for death, for many people at home, sickening egoism and greed have unfortunately become incredibly widespread, and that goes for not only the belligerent nations but also the neutral countries. The consequences of this behaviour on the part of the population appear everywhere with regards to the unprecedented increase in the cost of all necessary life items, food, clothing, etc.

42 *Schweizerische Lehrerzeitung* (10 Oct. 1914), 388.

43 W. Rosier, "La mission sociale de la femme", *L'Éducateur* (28 Aug. 1915), 497; "Volks- und Mittelschulen auf der Landesausstellung" (II. Aufsätze zur Kenntnis des Schulwesens in der Schweiz und den Kantonen, Schweiz), *Schweizerische Lehrerzeitung* (10 Oct. 1914), 383–5; E. Frey, "Un nouveau son de cloche en Allemagne", *L'Éducateur* (12 Feb. 1916), 83–4.

44 See for example, "Verwahrlosung der Jugend im Kriege", *Luxemburger Lehrerzeitung* (1 Feb. And 15 March 1917), 122–25 and 172–74.

45 "Die Verwahrlosung der Jugend im Kriege", *Luxemburger Lehrerzeitung* (15 March 1917), 172–73.

It has required energetic measures by the government to prevent a real famine.<sup>46</sup>

In this way, the classroom became an important microcosm of the Luxembourgish society as a whole; teachers were to provide a competent example of how to manage and address national affairs at a time of deepening international conflict. As in Switzerland, neutrality in the field of education was highlighted as a desirable characteristic peculiar to Luxembourg as a nation-state. The education system, like the country itself now under foreign occupation, could not afford to take any risks in the realm of public relations or to allow any form of dissidence within its ranks.<sup>47</sup>

In summary, neutrality was mentioned in all of the teacher journals in similar terms, although there were more articles written on the topic in the French-speaking journal in Switzerland than in the German-speaking one. With two exceptions, all of the articles concerning the issue of World War One and neutrality were published between October 1914 and July 1917. Via neutrality, schools attempted to resist the adverse wartime conditions and sought a full transformation of World War One at home. For Swiss and Luxembourgish teachers, World War One extended far beyond the actual battlefields, trench systems or diplomatic stalemates. In contrast to chauvinistic propaganda practised abroad, the aim of many educationalists was rather to provide humanistic elements in a world that was so sharply divided by the European war fronts. However, it is perhaps no surprise that, at times, this endeavour became difficult to navigate in the Luxembourgish context given the German occupation:

When the school teaches its young in this sense, it has its main purpose in something that Fichte refers to as the leading motive in public education: "Love for the fatherland reaches patriotism [when it] is first directed to the welfare of a particular people, but it can also aim at the improvement and transformation of the entire human race." [...] So, after all, we want to be true humanists in whom people and public see equal beings, to whom we show respect and human kindness.<sup>48</sup>

All the same, whereas the Swiss journals featured an immediate increase in articles on the topics of war and peace after the outbreak of World War One, in the *Luxemburger Lehrerzeitung* major articles focusing on similar topics

46 "Die Volksschule und der Staat", *Luxemburger Lehrerzeitung* (1 Apr. 1916), 197.

47 "Die Volksschule und der Staat", 196–97.

48 "Die Volksschule und der Staat", 201.

did not appear until 1916. This hesitation and caution were partially due to the unstable national situation after August 1914. Given the immediacy of the German invasion, the *Lehrerzeitung* ceased to publish altogether between 15 July 1914 and 31 December 1914. It was not until 1916 that the global war was acknowledged as something taking place outside of Luxembourg's "neutral" territory, thus further alienating or distancing the country from the two great European alliances of the early twentieth century: the Triple Entente and the Central Powers. In Switzerland, the first articles were mainly concerned with the maintenance of national cohesion due to the *fossé moral* of the two main cultures, which had been catalysed by the war. In general, the first texts described specifically Swiss patriotism, the mobilisation of the army, financial support for the occupied countries, and how to address the current situation in schools. In short, whereas there was a sharp increase in articles addressing the issue of war and peace in Luxembourg from 1916 until the war's end, the opposite occurred in the Swiss case, and a sort of "war exhaustion" could be felt in the journals after the onset of World War One.

Turning to similarities between the countries, in all of the journals, World War One was broadly discussed in terms of national unity and peace; daily routines in economic, social and political life; and the negative effects of the war. In the Swiss journals, the role of the country's military was also explicitly highlighted. In Luxembourg, special attention was first drawn to internal order, harmony, surveillance and discipline in schools. It was the role of teachers to ensure the smooth execution of these wartime educational regulations by showing vigilance and rigour in teaching practice. Teachers were asked to give lessons on the present situation and thereby to inform their classes of the problematic conditions of the war. Given the multilingualism in both countries, shared history and common national ideas were often mentioned in the articles to demonstrate that truly *national* education was needed and that "the national culture" had to be strengthened after the war's end.<sup>49</sup> The topics of "war and peace" – and their far-reaching societal impacts – were often compared with battles in Swiss and Luxembourgish history.

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49 For example, see G. Chevallaz, "L'instituteur et la guerre", *L'Éducateur* (3 Jul. 1915), 417–21; P. Chappuis, "Education, enseignement, vie scolaire", *L'Éducateur* (13 Apr. 1918), 228–232; E.T., "Randbemerkungen zur Zeit", *Schweizerische Lehrerzeitung* (10 Oct. 1914), 385–86; Dr. H.S. Hasler, "Nationale Erziehung und staatsbürgerlicher Unterricht", *Schweizerische Lehrerzeitung* (11 Aug. 1917), 297–99 and (18 Aug. 1917), 305–06.

Almost from the beginning of the war, both Swiss teacher journals wrote about the end of the war or predicted that the battles would not last long.<sup>50</sup> In the same context, numerous articles addressed the cruelty of war. However, there were also discussions of the war as a positive development with so-called purifying cultural effects.<sup>51</sup> Some articles stressed the “fighting instinct” (*instinct combatif*) and therefore declared the war a natural event.<sup>52</sup> To combat this idea, psychologist Pierre Bovet, director of the Jean-Jacques Rousseau Institute in Geneva, published a book titled *Instinct Combatif* that described the results of his studies to demonstrate that children needed activities that were unrelated to the war.<sup>53</sup> The first review of the book, by E. Briod in *L’Educatateur*, addressed the general content. However, five months later, in July 1917, an article titled ‘School and pacifism’ (*Ecole et pacifisme*) written by Albert Chessex was published in the same journal. Chessex asked, “Our aim is to examine with the book of M. Bovet two current problems: how is a teacher to react in the tension of on the one hand the fighting spirit of the children and on the other hand tendencies of pacifism and antimilitarism?”<sup>54</sup> Chessex then explained portions of the book with three theories, concluding that the socialist party of Switzerland denied all need for the national defence and military tasks but that “the first task of Swiss schools is to ensure that Switzerland continues to exist.”<sup>55</sup> He accused the socialists of provoking a “national suicide.”<sup>56</sup> In these and other articles, political and social tensions that were generated by the war were analysed, sparking fears of weak national unity. Moreover, criticism of pacifistic ideas was aroused. However, many more articles were published in both Swiss teacher journals each year during the war about the desire for and cultivation of peace.<sup>57</sup>

50 For example, see G. Chevallaz, “L’école après la guerre”, *L’Educatateur* (3 Jul. 1915), 417–21; “Wohin”, *Schweizerische Lehrerzeitung* (23 Jan. 1915), 27–28.

51 For instance, see E. Savary, “Lettre d’un instituteur français”, *L’Educatateur* (22 May 1915), 323–25; P. Chapuis “En marge de l’histoire”, *L’Educatateur* (18 Nov. 1916), 657–61; “Randbemerkungen zur Zeit”, *Schweizerische Lehrerzeitung* (10 Oct. 1914), 385–86; “Der deutsche Krieg und der deutsche Unterricht”, *Schweizerische Lehrerzeitung* (15 May 1915), 168–9.

52 E. Briod, “L’instinct combatif”, *L’Educatateur* (17 Feb. 1917), 105–6.

53 Briod, “L’instinct combatif”, 105–6.

54 Albert Chessex, “Ecole et pacifisme”, *L’Educatateur* (21 June 1917), 495.

55 Chessex, “Ecole et pacifisme”, 497.

56 Chessex, “Ecole et pacifisme”, 497.

57 For example: Paul Chapuis, “Pacifisme”, *L’Educatateur* (12 Jun. 1915), 372–73; G. Chevallaz, “Le patriotisme”, *L’Educatateur* (19 Dec. 1914), 771–74; C. Flubacher, “Der Ritt mit dem Kriege”, *Schweizerische Lehrerzeitung* (25 Dec. 1915), 455–57; “Tagessorgen”, *Schweizerische Lehrerzeitung* (26 May 1917), 189–90.

In Luxembourg during that same year of 1917, the *Lehrerzeitung* expressed concern for the future of young Luxembourgers in an article entitled “Neglect of youth in the war”.<sup>58</sup> In the words of the teachers, World War One had led to an increasingly poisonous educational atmosphere that had a damaging effect on pupils and students.<sup>59</sup> The war-torn French and German situations were presented as alarming examples of how not to conduct Luxembourg’s future education policy. In Switzerland, these negative war effects were discussed in relation to increased rates of criminality and a growing number of war orphans in the warring countries. Other topics included conversions of schoolrooms into military lodgings, the stresses of daily life, the difficulties of teacher-soldiers, how to elevate the moral character of youth during the war, and, finally, ways to integrate war events into daily school life. Some articles also reflected on how the reputation of schooling, and education in the country per se, had improved during the war.<sup>60</sup>

### Conclusion

During the war, national unity was strongly promoted in all of the journals we have examined from the two countries. In Switzerland, the internal political conflict between the two main cultures challenged national unity. However, it must be considered that the *fossé moral* (moral or cultural gap) was mostly a war of words and was rarely a physical conflict. The internal “battle was fought through newspapers, books, magazines, brochures and cartoons, not to mention hearsay.”<sup>61</sup> Nevertheless, teachers felt the need to react to this battle and pleaded for greater unity. Thus, the intention in Switzerland was neither a national curriculum nor a centralised school system but a national citizen moulded through educational institutions equipped with “a sense of nation.”<sup>62</sup> More precisely, the national citizen was viewed as responsible for the common good. The private family became more important than the state, in contrast to

58 “Die Verwahrlosung der Jugend im Kriege”, *Luxemburger Lehrerzeitung* (1 Feb. and 15 March 1917), 122–5 and 172–4.

59 “Die Verwahrlosung der Jugend im Kriege”, 123.

60 For example, “La criminalité infantile et la guerre”, *L’Educateur* (17 Feb. 1917), 107–08; “Rückblick”, *Schweizerische Lehrerzeitung* (29 Dec. 1917), 479–81.

61 Church and Head, *A Concise History of Switzerland*, 197.

62 Lucien Criblez and Rita Hofstetter, “Erziehung zur Nation. Nationale Gesinnungsbildung in der Schule des 19. Jahrhunderts”, *Die Konstruktion einer Nation. Nation und Nationalisierung in der Schweiz, 18. – 20. Jahrhundert*, eds., Urs Altermatt, Caterine Bosshart and Albert Tanner (Zürich, 1998), 167.



the German *Bürger*,<sup>63</sup> who expected broader protection by the state.<sup>64</sup> In Luxembourg, which was fully occupied by the German Empire during the war, the construction of national citizens was additionally challenged by frequently changing cabinets and the rejection of extreme forms of patriotism. Therefore, the notion of citizenship also included a mixture of the French *citoyen* and German *Bürger*.

Neutrality was discussed in school in Switzerland as a privilege in the current situation, bearing in mind the specifically Swiss historical context linking military defence, liberty and diverse aspects of nationality. Neutrality was highlighted in both countries as a specific characteristic of each nation-state. However, in Switzerland, the army-related and militarized nature of neutrality was stressed, in contrast to Luxembourg where strong anti-militaristic sentiments abounded. In Switzerland, in the context of increased solidarity amongst military personnel coupled with a general desire to show solidarity with occupied countries, teachers were asked to found humanitarian aid organisations or to join existing ones.

In Switzerland, the teacher journals immediately reacted to the outbreak of the war with articles about war and peace, whereas in Luxembourg, similar articles appeared two years later, from 1916 on. In the first Swiss contributions after the outbreak of the war, a type of war enthusiasm can be perceived; later, the negative effects of the war were described more often and the glorification of war diminished. Both countries produced similar discussions of World War One and national unity, peace, and daily difficulties in economic, social and political life. In Luxembourg, special attention was given to internal order and discipline in school, and school reform movements were strengthened. In both countries, shared ideals were forced on the populations and viewed as critical to educating national citizens. Moreover, in both countries, war was deemed cruel but was seen to possess some benefits for the education of future citizens after the end of the war. In particular, in all of the teacher journals, articles can be found in which teachers observe an increasing social prestige in education due to the war.

Today, with regards to crisis prevention, tolerance, mutual respect, co-operation and democratic citizenship, the European University Association (EUA) has repeatedly warned that the current crisis could generate new divisions across Europe, reviving old tensions within the EU and creating new problems,

63 For more details about “Bildung” and “Bürger”, see Rebekka Horlacher, *Bildung* (Bern, 2011).

64 Daniel Tröhler, “International Curriculum Research: Why and How?”, in *International Handbook of Curriculum Research*, ed., William F. Pinar (New York, 2014), 60–66, 65.

especially between the southern and eastern member states, similar to the reasoning of former Prime Minister Juncker of Luxembourg whom we quoted at the beginning of this chapter.<sup>65</sup> For the *EUA*, in some ways, the present crises of European identity demonstrate a return to pre-World War One conceptions of national rivalry. One might disagree with Juncker and consider that the demons of World War One are sleeping soundly in 2016, yet we must bear in mind that 100 years ago, they were also not permitted to fully awaken in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg or the Swiss Confederation. In today's Europe, they most certainly have not been laid to rest, as the current political crises in countries such as Ukraine clearly demonstrate. In some sense, the Swiss and Luxembourgish educationalists in World War One were faced with challenges similar to those faced by present-day European societies: how to improve societal unity in multilingual and cultural communities. From this perspective, the World War One educationalists in those two small nations seem to have largely succeeded. By highlighting the important place school and the teaching profession acquired in this period, the empirical data presented here forms a precious aid to understanding more generally the role of schooling in nation-building in twentieth-century Europe.

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65 See, for example, *EUA*, "Europe 2020 Strategy", <[http://www.eua.be/Libraries/Publications\\_homepage\\_list/EUA\\_Statement\\_to\\_Heads\\_of\\_State\\_Government.sflb.ashx](http://www.eua.be/Libraries/Publications_homepage_list/EUA_Statement_to_Heads_of_State_Government.sflb.ashx)>.

## Imperial Service, Alienation, and an Unlikely National “Rebirth”: The Poles in World War I

*Jens Boysen*

Describing the “war experience” of a whole people is always difficult, given the complexity and diversity of actual human experience. This holds true even for the official warring nations that acted within a unified legal and political framework. Poland, in contrast, was one of those nations that took geopolitical shape in Central Europe after World War One by territories taken from the three “eastern” powers Germany, Russia and Austria-Hungary that had all lost the war, if with very different general outcomes. In any case, due to the positive outcome for the Poles in terms of state-building, both Polish historiography and collective memory ever since 1918 have tended to interpret the establishment of national independence as a kind of “natural”, inevitable event brought about by Polish determination and skill and favourable international conditions, but also “historical justice”.<sup>1</sup>

This notion was connected with the idea of the right of all peoples to national self-determination as advocated notably by US President Woodrow Wilson. Indeed, it was in the first place the American public to whom the aforementioned lofty rationale of Allied warfare was directed, in order to justify the US war entry.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, it was given a prominent place during the 1919 Paris peace conference and afterwards within the political mythology of the Entente Powers and the newly emerged nation states. It was pivotal to the Allied and Associated Powers’ cause to claim the moral high ground vis-à-vis

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- 1 There are a variety of historical works from various periods which suggest such a narrative. [English translations of Polish titles are given throughout the footnotes as an aid to non-Polish speakers]. See, for example, Kazimierz Władysław Kumaniecki, *Odbudowa Państwowości Polskiej. Najważniejsze dokumenty 1912 – styczeń 1924* [*The reconstruction of Polish statehood. Newest documents from 1912 until January 1924*] (Warsaw-Cracow, 1924); Tadeusz Piszczkowski, *Odbudowanie Polski 1914–1921. Historia i polityka* [*The reconstruction of Poland 1914–1921. History and politics*] (London, 1969); Janusz Pajewski, *Odbudowa państwa polskiego 1914–1918* [*The reconstruction of the Polish state, 1914–1918*] (Warsaw, 1985).
  - 2 See Victor S. Mamatey, *The United States and East Central Europe, 1914–1918. A study in Wilsonian diplomacy and propaganda* (Port Washington, 1972). For a more global approach, see Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment. Self-determination and the international origins of anticolonial nationalism* (Oxford, 2007).

the “authoritarian” Central Powers by, among other things, interpreting the war as aimed at the “liberation” of the stateless nations from imperial rule. While this is easy to disprove, especially for Britain and France, by looking at the chronology of the Allied warfare and its motivations, it was crucial for the territorial and political claims made by the new states as apparent bearers of a better international order.

As became quickly clear in Paris, the Western Powers knew little about the complex fabric of Central and Eastern Europe, and what knowledge they did have they deliberately interpreted in such a way as to give the greatest possible advantage to their little Allies situated between Germany and Russia. The motive for this was the notably French attempt to resuscitate the 18th-century concept of the *barrière de l'Est*, a chain of buffer states supposed to stem the westward advance of Petrine Russia, given the name, now in 1919, of “cordon sanitaire”. While officially directed in the first place against the spread of Soviet Bolshevism, actually this geopolitical construction served mainly as a Western strategic stronghold in the rear of Germany.<sup>3</sup> In this context, France sought to build up especially Poland as a rival to Germany, which enhanced resentment on part of the latter beyond the general disappointment with the stipulations of the Versailles Treaty. This prominent position had been granted to Poland already by US President Woodrow Wilson’s *Fourteen Points* of 8 January 1918 as a result of lobbying on the part of Ignacy Paderewski and Roman Dmowski, activists of the nationalist National Democratic Party who promised that their “justly” reinstated country would be a pivot of liberal democracy in Central Europe.

Indeed, a crucial element of the Allied “liberation of nations” narrative was the allegedly democratic character of the national independence movements, from which the representatives of those stateless nations not only drew their negotiating mandate vis-à-vis the Entente Powers but their justification for the superiority of the new national-democratic order over the old imperial regimes, i.e. the order established by the Congress of Vienna in 1815. The implicit logic was – essentially following Immanuel Kant’s notion of *Perpetual Peace*<sup>4</sup> – that a community of democratic states would also at the international level establish good relations and mechanisms of peaceful conflict management. The League of Nations was built in 1920 as a global – if de facto rather Eurocentric – organization upon the same assumptions; both initiatives would

3 See Kalervo Hovi, *Cordon sanitaire or barrière de l'est? The emergence of the new French Eastern European alliance policy 1917–1919* (Turku, 1975), 136–217.

4 James Bohman and Matthias Lutz-Bachmann, eds., *Perpetual Peace. Essays on Kant’s Cosmopolitan Ideal* (Cambridge, 1997).

later fail due to a lack of serious adherence to those principles on the part of most, if not all, states involved. In particular, the allegedly progressive and peaceful character of the new nations of Central and South-Eastern Europe proved to be an illusion already immediately after the official end of the Great War. By the armistice of 11 November 1918 a surge in violence occurred, lasting well into the 1920s.<sup>5</sup>

Next to the democratic shortcomings of the new polities, another essential problem here were numerous conflicts on this point among the aspiring (pre-) nations in Central Europe whose territorial claims were mutually exclusive, due to a high degree of intertwined settlement that left, between the ethnically “pure” cores, vast mixed areas claimed by rival neighbours on a variety of historical, geopolitical, economic and other grounds. The resulting border wars between the successor states – all, except for the Soviet Union, claiming to belong to the same “national-democratic” camp – could not be directly influenced by the Western Powers, in a significant difference from the conflicts along the German-Polish border.<sup>6</sup> Thus, they had to leave the settlement in the east to violence and enforced peace treaties such as the Polish-Soviet Treaty of Riga in 1921.<sup>7</sup> However, the Western Powers’ hope that their little Allies would finally create some sort of strategic network to keep the defeated countries in check was to fail.

Closely connected with practical policies of the “new” nations was the importance of historical memory as the constructed genetic narrative for an imagined community. In the Polish case, both inter-war historiography and state-funded “historical policy” would claim that all Poles had for a long time had a full-fledged political consciousness and thus had consistently wished and worked for national independence, including insurrectionist plans. In particular, their military and other services for the “partition powers” were said to have been only of a tactical nature or possibly inspired by fear. This mythical view was certainly related to the general nexus in modern history between

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5 As an overview see the contributions to Robert Gerwarth and John Horne, eds., *War in Peace. Paramilitary Violence in Europe after the Great War* (Oxford, 2012).

6 Jens Boysen, “Polish-German Border Conflict,” in: 1914–1918-online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War, eds. Ute Daniel, Peter Gatrell, Oliver Janz, Heather Jones, Jennifer Keene, Alan Kramer, and Bill Nasson, issued by Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin 2014–10–08. DOI: 10.15463/1e1418.10336 .

7 See Alan Sharp, *The Versailles settlement. Peacemaking after the First World War, 1919–1923* (Basingstoke, 2008), especially 139–168. On Poland’s border wars, see most recently Benjamin Conrad, *Umkämpfte Grenzen, umkämpfte Bevölkerung. Die Entstehung der Staatsgrenzen der Zweiten Polnischen Republik 1918–1923* (Stuttgart, 2014).

warfare and nation-building;<sup>8</sup> however, by all available empirical knowledge, as a representation of actual experience it cannot be maintained for the vast majority of Poles.

### Life before the War: The Poles as a “Small Nation” Living in “Colonial Peripheries”?

Generally, in trying to apply the key terms of the volume title to the Poles before and during the First World War, one encounters terminological and semantic problems: As one thing, the Poles themselves tend to claim to be counted not among the small but among the large (or even, “great”) nations. They do so by invoking both their numerical size at the time and today (in 1914, there were c. 25 million ethnic Poles<sup>9</sup>; today, Poland has c. 38 million citizens who are almost completely ethnic Poles) and the fact that until the partitions of Poland in the late 18th century this had been one of the largest states, or rather, empires in Europe. Indeed, by any definition applied in modern historiography the “First Republic” dissolved in 1795 was not a nation-state but a multi-ethnic empire dominated by the Polish Catholic high nobility (the magnates) and in many respects similar to the “partition powers” Russia, Austria and Prussia. Accordingly, Polish nationalism during the larger part of the 19th century referred to the imperial goal of re-establishing that Republic and its aristocratic societal order.<sup>10</sup> It is also in this context that one must perceive the habitual (in Poland) labelling of these territories as “Polish lands”, although they had never been ethnically homogeneous. This term reflects a, often *a posteriori*, Polish perspective based on the territorial status before the partitions without making any reference to the actual ethnic composition, which would become a problem after 1918. Indeed, whatever Polish political groups did claim before or after the war, the (re-)establishment of Polish statehood would more often than not go beyond mere independence and aim for a new

8 Jörn Leonhard and Ulrike von Hirschhausen, “Does the Empire strike back? The Model of the Nation in Arms as a Challenge for Multi-Ethnic Empires in the Nineteenth and early Twentieth Century,” *Journal of Modern European History* 2 (2007): 203–208.

9 No fully reliable numbers can be given here due to the then intertwined ethnic settlement patterns in Central Europe and the resulting arbitrariness of any methodology applied by the respective censuses. Indeed, beginning already before the First World War and continued in the interwar period, population statistics were often disputed between titular nations’ authorities and minority representatives in multi-ethnic states.

10 See Miroslav Hroch, *Ethnonationalismus – eine ostmitteleuropäische Erfindung?* Oskar-Halecki-Vorlesung 2002 (Leipzig, 2004), 20–21.

imperial position for the Poles, which included the domination of other ethnic groups, often on the grounds of an alleged civilizational superiority.

After 1815, however, "Poland" was for a long time a mental map only of certain privileged groups not necessarily representative of a Polish "national collective". At the same time, the integration of those territories and their population, ethnically Polish and other, into their respective suzerain states, and the consequent societal processes of change, were at least as formative, notably for the rural majority population, as any more or less preserved memories of the ancient Republic or, actually more widely spread, the Napoleonic wars. In the last third of the 19th century, a modern idea of nationhood began to spread slowly that aimed to include all societal strata, in particular the peasants,<sup>11</sup> and thus diverged quite strongly from the actual tradition of the old Republic. As a result, by the eve of World War One, the ancient "Polish lands" and the Poles themselves had undergone considerable change, and any practical reference to the old Republic was bound to engender serious problems.

Yet another, and quite fundamental, problem is the above quoted notion of a national "restoration", or "rebirth", in 1918, which is habitually employed by Polish historiography and by some non-Polish authors as well. The romanticising, and thus hardly analytical, language is here the minor problem. More importantly, neither by the standards of international law nor by those of political or social historiography can one speak with much conviction of an identity of the First and the Second Polish Republics. The Polish Question being one of the most complicated issues of the entire 19th century, suffice it here to say that the 1815 Final Act of the Vienna Congress had granted the Poles certain "national rights" including the usage of their language in public life and some sort of representation, whose precise form was to be determined by the respective rulers.<sup>12</sup> In the early 19th century, the ethno-linguistic paradigm, so characteristic for later periods and linked to the concept of *Kulturnation*, was only slowly unfolding even in Western Europe; in the lands of the demised Polish Republic, however, the inherited notion of a "republic of aristocrats" still prevailed. Given their conservative agenda, the Great Powers also referred to "Polishness" principally to mean, and to be represented by, the Polish nobility.

Similarly problematic is the notion of "colonial periphery". Indeed, the colonial/post-colonial approach has in recent years been transferred from

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11 On the Galician example see Kai Struve, "Polish Peasants in Eastern Galicia: indifferent to the nation or pillars of Polishness? National attitudes in the light of Józef Chałasiński's collection of peasant youth memoirs," *Acta Poloniae Historica* 109 (2014): 37–59.

12 On this complex, see Brian E. Vick, *The Congress of Vienna: Power and Politics After Napoleon* (Cambridge, 2014), 278–320.

the overseas context in which it had been developed, to the “borderlands”<sup>13</sup> or “internal peripheries”<sup>14</sup> of the European empires, and in many ways been brought to scholarly fruition. On the Polish case, a number of publications have raised interesting features with regard to the in many respects peripheral position held by the Poles in the territorial and political context of the “partition powers”, notably Germany.<sup>15</sup> Beyond sheer geography, however, these interpretations are only partially convincing. Not only are there numerous examples of Poles integrating with the respective non-Polish “centres”, but there is an essential methodological and semantic tension between the concepts of “imperial” and “colonial rule” that calls for caution regarding any application of the latter term to the life of Poles in Germany and the other “partition powers”. In post-1871 Germany, the Prussian authorities resorted, under the influence of modern nationalism, to various policies aiming at either assimilation or marginalization of the Polish minority; these policies concerned the public usage of the Polish language, schooling, the purchase of landed property, house construction and other issues. Poles known to hold manifest nationalist convictions could not reach higher positions in public service (which was, however, in the first place due to Prussian anti-Catholicism), while the officer corps anyway maintained an exclusivist co-optation mechanism.<sup>16</sup>

However, despite many important observations as to those policy changes in Imperial Germany, it is an exaggeration to call the Polish-inhabited regions of Prussia “Germany’s real colony”.<sup>17</sup> Doubtless, those policies created an atmosphere of alienation, and on the German side developed indeed a colonial

13 See, for example, Omer Bartov and Eric D. Weitz, eds., *Shatterzone of Empires: Coexistence and Violence in the German, Habsburg, Russian, and Ottoman Borderlands* (Bloomington, 2013); Alexander Victor Prusin, *The lands between. Conflict in the East European borderlands, 1870–1992* (Oxford, 2010).

14 As introduction to this approach, the most useful still remains Hans-Heinrich Nolte, ed., *Internal peripheries in European history* (Göttingen, 1991).

15 See, for example, Philipp Ther, “Deutsche Geschichte als imperiale Geschichte. Polen, slawophone Minderheiten und das Kaiserreich als kontinentales Empire,” in *Das Kaiserreich transnational. Deutschland in der Welt 1871–1914*, eds. Sebastian Conrad and Jürgen Osterhammel (Göttingen, 2004), 129–148; Róisín Healy, “From Commonwealth to Colony? Poland under Prussia,” in *The Shadow of Colonialism on Europe’s Modern Past*, eds. Róisín Healy and Enrico Dal Lago (London, 2014), 109–125.

16 See Jens Boysen, *Preußische Armee und polnische Minderheit. Royalistische Streitkräfte im Kontext der Nationalitätenfrage des 19. Jahrhunderts (1815–1914)* (Marburg, 2008), 57–70.

17 Sebastian Conrad, *Globalization and the Nation in Imperial Germany* (Cambridge, Eng., 2010), ch. 3: “Between the Poles: mobility and nation in Germany’s ‘real colony’”, 144–202. Even further – too far – towards ‘colonizing’ Poland goes Kristin Kopp, *Germany’s Wild East. Constructing Poland as Colonial Space* (Ann Arbor, 2012).



discourse that was partially inspired by overseas colonial experience.<sup>18</sup> But crucially, not only did those policies fail to bring about any significant change in favour of the German population, but the Poles managed to exploit the actual modernity of civilization and education and the rule of law in Imperial Germany to create their own cultural and economic networks and generally improve their standard of living – something far beyond the possibilities of an actual colonial population.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, importantly with a view to later events, the level of violence on the part of the authorities but as well among the ethnically mixed population was rather low, notably if compared with other “troublesome” regions of pre-war Europe such as Ulster, the Balkans and indeed the two other “partitions” in the Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires.

In Austrian Galicia, the privileged position enjoyed by the Polish upper-class after 1867 as regional rulers just below the Emperor did not leave much room for any disloyal designs. Nostalgia for the old Republic – especially as it could be freely expressed unlike in Germany and Russia – did not question adherence to the Catholic Habsburg dynasty. In Cracow it was even possible to hold in 1910 the clearly anti-German celebrations of the 500-year anniversary of the Battle of Grunwald (Tannenberg), including the unveiling of a related monument. The main source of trouble inside Galicia before 1914 was the national awakening of the Ruthenians (Ukrainians) who protested Polish domination and requested their own crown land in eastern Galicia where they were in the majority outside the city of Lemberg (Polish: Lwów; Ukrainian: L'viv). Thus, the Ruthenians rather than the Poles may have felt that they lived in a “colonial periphery” where in turn the Poles rather than the Austrian administrators were the colonizers. While Vienna sought to apply here a classical divide-and-rule policy, the conflict threatened to jeopardize Austria's defence against Russia; moreover, part of the Ruthenians showed Russian sympathies which was in turn politically exploited by the “loyal” Poles.<sup>20</sup>

In Russian Poland (Congress Poland) the situation was least predictable. Here and in other borderlands of the Romanov empire, the Russian revolution of 1905 had turned into civil strife that combined social and ethno-national

18 See Robert L. Nelson, “The Archive for Inner Colonization, the German East and World War I,” in *Germans, Poland, and colonial expansion to the East. 1850 through the present*, ed. Robert L. Nelson (Hampshire, 2009), 65–93.

19 Scott Eddie, “The Prussian Settlement Commission and its activities in the land market, 1886–1918,” in *Germans, Poland, and colonial expansion to the East*. ed. Nelson, 39–63.

20 See Pieter M. Judson, “Marking National Space on the Habsburg Austrian Borderlands: 1880–1918,” in *Shatterzone of Empires*, eds. Bartov and Weitz, 122–135.

conflicts into a volatile blend.<sup>21</sup> In order to divert danger from their own territories, Germany and Austria had supported the Tsarist government in stifling this unrest; however, this did not reduce the fierce anti-German attitude rife in the Russian government and as well the just emerging Russian parliament (Duma), which would be a major factor driving Russia to war in 1914.

Moreover, it was during this very phase around 1905 that the two main rivals for leadership towards Polish independence developed their programmes: Roman Dmowski and Józef Piłsudski. Dmowski saw Germany as the main enemy of Polish national development, precisely because of its modernity and energy; accordingly, he sought shelter for a united Poland as part of a federalized and modernized Russia, which also fit into his ethno-nationalist perception. In stark contrast, Piłsudski as a nobleman from Lithuania with memories of Poland's imperial past regarded Russia as the oppressor (and rival) of the Poles and thus favoured an at least limited cooperation especially with Austria. Differently from Dmowski, he did not exclude the use of violence and actually participated in the riots in Congress Poland.<sup>22</sup> After these were pacified, he fled to Galicia where he offered the Austro-Hungarian army command intelligence services and the raising of a volunteer force for the anticipated war against Russia. From 1908 onwards, this group was gathered around Piłsudski – who had never seen any military service – as a personal leader, as an early example of an irregular leadership pattern that would spread after 1918 in the chaos of Central and Eastern Europe.

The industrialized region then still referred to by the Poles as the “kingdom” of 1815 was also the origin of the third significant political current of the time. The Social Democratic Party for the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania led by Rosa (Róża) Luxemburg and Julian Marchlewski dismissed the plan of Polish nation-state building in favour of international revolution.<sup>23</sup> In order to be more effective at that level, they went to Germany and joined the SPD as the leading Socialist party of Europe.

So, this European periphery of Tsarist Russia was not only in many respects more developed than the core of Russia proper, but also provided the Poles – to whatever extent they felt or not at that moment to be a nation – with their foremost political leaders.

21 On Tsarist policies, see Theodor R. Weeks, *Nation and State in Late Imperial Russia: Nationalism and Russification on Russia's Western Frontier 1863–1914* (DeKalb, 1996).

22 As an older but still valuable overview, see Jan Molenda, *Piłsudczycy a narodowi demokraci 1908–1918 [The Piłsudski Camp and the National Democrats 1908–1918]* (Warsaw, 1980).

23 For the wider context, see Ulrich Haustein, *Sozialismus und nationale Frage in Polen* (Cologne, 1969).

### The War: Poles to Arms

The beginning of World War One saw those Poles liable for military service join the ranks of their respective armies without any noticeable hesitance. Altogether, during the four years of war an approximate number of two million ethnic Poles saw military service as German<sup>24</sup> (c. 400,000), Austro-Hungarian or Russian soldiers (c. 800,000 each).<sup>25</sup> This orderly behaviour was owed in the first place not, as the post-1918 mainstream Polish narrative would have it, to fear of punishment but mostly to a feeling of duty, the wish – as with probably the vast majority of all soldiers – to protect their families and homes, and also the sheer familiarity with “their” state and army. Accordingly, most ethnic Poles did not need to be “coerced” to fight for their “imperial” countries, and for most of them there is no evidence as to any eagerness to desert and join a (future) Polish army.<sup>26</sup> As indicated before, the decades preceding the war had seen a growth of national self-awareness on the part of the Poles, and the Catholic Church as well as Polish private associations supported “patriotic” education in private homes especially in Germany and Russia where public education emphasized the historical glory of the Hohenzollerns and Romanovs, respectively. But with most Poles, these had been measures of cultural self-preservation and had not translated into any political agenda not to mention a violent one, i.e. armed separatism. Only small nationalist groups such as boy scouts (*skauty*) or certain student or pupils’ associations had after 1900 articulated such ideas and styled themselves as “avengers” of their stateless nation.

24 Formally, most Poles belonged to the Prussian army as one of four contingents of the German Reich's troops; practically, however, and advanced by the war experience, the term “German army” was generally used.

25 Due to diverse historical registration systems, exact numbers are hard to establish. In particular, older Polish accounts did not always take into account the multi-ethnic character of post-1918 Poland. The data given here are based on Andrzej Chwalba, *Historia Polski 1795–1918* (Cracow, 2001), 593, and Robert Traba, “Zapomniana Wojna. Wydarzenia 1914–1918 w polskiej i niemieckiej pamięci narodowej [*Forgotten War. The events of 1914–1918 in Polish and German national remembrance*],” in Robert Traba, *Krajna tysięcy granic. Szkice o historii i pamięci* (Olsztyn, 2003), 160.

26 See Julia Eichenberg, “Coercion, Consent and Endurance in Eastern Europe. Poland and the Fluidity of War Experiences,” in *Legacies of Violence. Eastern Europe's First World War*, eds. Jochen Böhrer, Włodzimierz Borodziej and Joachim von Puttkamer (Munich, 2014), 235–58, here 236–42.

However, this was a rather typical generational phenomenon all over Europe as it would show itself during the (alleged) “war enthusiasm” of August 1914.<sup>27</sup>

As regards other potential sources of (dis)loyalty, it is true that in the three armies there were very different career chances as officers for nationally “confessing” Poles – best in openly multi-ethnic Austria, shaky in Russia and, as indicated, rather limited in Prussia<sup>28</sup> – but this did not concern the bulk of ordinary soldiers who came mostly from a peasant or other lower-class background. Their situation was similar everywhere in both peace and war, and not much different from that of the “titular” soldiers with German, Hungarian or Russian mother tongue. So, although Polish children learned by heart their national poet Adam Mickiewicz’s (in)famous prayer of 1832 for a “general war to liberate the peoples”, few Poles – even known “national activists” – actually welcomed the outbreak of the Great War. Living in a region that they knew was bound to become the Eastern front, they were quite aware of war’s most likely “gift”: mass physical destruction and human losses, and the prospect of Poles fighting each other in different uniforms.<sup>29</sup> Still, they obeyed mobilization orders when they came, just like Socialists of all countries despite their internationalist convictions. It must be remembered that, like everybody, not least the state and army leaders, they hoped for a short war bringing only limited, if any, damage to their homes and families; and for this to happen, a quick victory of one’s own side had to be achieved.

However, when this proved illusionary after the initial phase of the war there were signs with the Poles and other national minorities of a limited enthusiasm and potential for mobilization for the “German war”. One expression of this was an increased rate of desertion across the Western front between the end of 1914 and mid-1915. It was there that, like the bulk of the German army, most ethnic Poles were also sent in August 1914 according to the Schlieffen Plan. According to German, French and British documents, a considerable number of Polish soldiers mostly from units of the Vth Prussian Army Corps (from the Posen<sup>30</sup> and Lower Silesian regions) as well as Danes and Alsace-Lorrainers deserted to the side of the Entente Powers. However, most of the

27 See Boysen, *Preußische Armee*, 285–86. For the nationalist narrative, see Janusz Karwat, *Od idei do czynu. Myśl i organizacje niepodległościowe w Poznańskim w latach 1887–1919* [From idea to deed. The thought of and organization towards independence in the Poznań province, 1881–1919] (Poznań, 2002), 248–70.

28 For the Austrian and Russian armies, see an overview in Boysen, *Preußische Armee*, 193–206.

29 See Boysen, *Preußische Armee*, 278–80.

30 This refers to both the city (in Polish, Poznań) and the province of which it was the capital (in Polish, *Wielkopolska* or “Greater Poland”).

Poles and Danes – unlike the Alsace-Lorrainers who were habitually offered French citizenship – while unwilling to fight for Germany had no intention of joining the ranks of its enemies, either. And while volunteers for the Entente side were rewarded with better treatment as long as they were still in captivity, the “objectors” were punished by even harsher conditions than had to be endured by the “normal” Germans. As concerns the Poles, their desertion rate dropped to average numbers by mid-1915, possibly due to severe measures taken by the German authorities against deserters’ families, or maybe to the unexpected successes in the East that led to the occupation of Russian Poland by the Central Powers and allowed many Prussian Poles to serve there.<sup>31</sup>

Another critical situation could arise when ethnic Polish soldiers encountered each other on different sides in battle, at least in an abstract sense as usually one could not know who the other soldiers were. During the Russian attack on Galicia that led by December 1914 to the temporary occupation of most of that region, large numbers of Poles fought on both sides, including numerous high-ranking officers as they were absent in the German army. In contrast, during the battles in East Prussia between August 1914 and February 1915, there were rather few Poles on the German side, mostly in *Landwehr* (militia) units; the Masurians who belonged by majority to the 20th Prussian Army Corps (seated in Allenstein) and defended their home region spoke Polish but did not regard themselves as Poles. In the attacking Russian army, in turn, there were quite a number of Poles from Russian Poland; the loyalist National Democrats sought to interpret this fact as evidence for a “Slavic” community against the “pan-German” threat.<sup>32</sup> These efforts dovetailed with the proclamation issued on 14 August 1914 by the Russian supreme commander, Great Duke Nikolai Nikolayevich, in which he promised to unite all Poles under Tsarist rule. Interestingly, the Austro-Hungarian and German army commands, too, had in August 1914 issued similar appeals to the Russian Poles to rise against Russian oppression. All these attempts failed but effectively, after a century of common efforts to silence the “Polish question”, all three powers

31 See Jens Boysen, “Nationale Minderheiten (Polen und Elsass-Lothringer) im preußisch-deutschen Heer während des Ersten Weltkriegs 1914–1918,” *Nordost-Archiv N.F.* 17 (2008), 108–136; Alexander Watson, “Fighting for Another Fatherland: The Polish Minority in the German Army, 1914–1918,” *English Historical Review* 126 (2011): 1137–66; Eichenberg, “Coercion,” 242.

32 See Dariusz Radziwiłłowicz, *Tradycja grunwaldzka w świadomości politycznej społeczeństwa polskiego w latach 1910–1945* [*The Grunwald tradition in the political consciousness of Polish society in the years 1910–1945*] (Olsztyn, 2003), 67–84; Caspar Ferenczi, “Nationalismus und Neoslawismus in Rußland vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg,” *Forschungen zur osteuropäischen Geschichte* 34 (1984): 7–127.

reopened this matter – carelessly, from their point of view – which enabled, as the war went on, Polish activists to pursue its internationalization. The Western Powers would only considerably later take an interest in this, not least because they were focused on their Tsarist ally to whom, in the case of an Entente victory, the “Polish question” would have to be left for solving.

### Polish Home Fronts

As anticipated, the battles on the Eastern front touched on most territories inhabited – next to other ethnic groups – by Poles. Thanks to the German victories in East Prussia and the stopping of Russian units in Congress Poland just east of the German border in late 1914, the Prussian Poles were spared the fate of Russian occupation and accompanying destruction that East Prussia had to endure over several months (and that hardened the German identity of the Masurians); from 1915 on, the front was pushed ever farther eastward. As a consequence, the agricultural Prussian eastern provinces served mainly as a supply base for food and other products needed by the army and the urban population.<sup>33</sup> The Poles in Galicia underwent considerable hardship during the Russian occupation – that narrowly spared Cracow – but less so than the Ruthenians (Ukrainians) who were suspected and persecuted by both the Russian and the Austro-Hungarian military authorities for alleged espionage, and the Jews who fled in vast numbers to the Austrian interior out of – justified – fear of Russian governmental anti-Semitism. The retaking of Galicia and the subsequent occupation of Russian Poland by the Central Powers in the spring and summer of 1915 reinforced the pro-Austrian loyalty of the Poles but also fuelled their ambition to steer Austrian policy on Russian Poland. There and in other western borderlands of the Tsarist Empire, the Russian army established in August 1914 a harsh control system that aimed at pre-empting any kind of rebellion as it had occurred in 1905. Although the non-Russians generally showed loyalty to the Tsar, ethnic Germans and Jews – just like the Ruthenians in Galicia – were suspected by the military authorities as potential spies and helpers of the Central Powers, and therefore deported to the Russian interior. This policy became more rigorous when in summer 1915

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33 See Jens Boysen, “Zivil-militärische Beziehungen in den preußischen Ostprovinzen Posen und Westpreußen während des Ersten Weltkriegs,” in *Besetzt, interniert, deportiert. Der Erste Weltkrieg und die deutsche, jüdische, polnische und ukrainische Zivilbevölkerung im östlichen Europa*, eds. Alfred Eisfeld, Guido Hausmann and Dietmar Neutatz (Essen, 2013), 127–51, 132–33.

the Russian army had to withdraw; then, up to one million people of different ethnic backgrounds were deported eastwards, of whom in the region of three- to four-hundred thousand were Jews. Poles, too, were affected by those measures but often less so than other ethnic groups. In many cases, they stayed behind when others were deported or fled, and took over houses and other property especially from Jews; sometimes, they even denounced Jews to the Russian authorities. Later, the Poles of Russian Poland were again treated comparatively well by the German and Austro-Hungarian occupation forces. In all these cases, the ruling powers regarded the Poles as potential partners or at least were interested in correct and quiet relations.<sup>34</sup>

In Russian Poland, as already indicated, the situation changed fundamentally from summer 1915. Their surprise success on the hitherto secondary eastern front gave the Central Powers some breathing space, a stronger geostrategic position and fresh hope to sustain the beginning war of attrition. As was the case generally, they had in 1914/15 no clear war aims for Eastern Europe; indeed, they would continue to quarrel over the fate of Poland throughout the war. Essentially, Vienna – under the influence of the Galician Poles – favoured the “Austro-Polish solution” of uniting Russian Poland with Galicia. The Germans were opposed to this for several reasons: They did not welcome the idea of Austria extending along the whole German eastern border and thus limiting German room for manoeuvre in East Central Europe. Moreover, they did not trust – no more than the Hungarians and the German Austrians – the Austrian Poles who visibly pursued their own agenda exploiting a rather weak government in Vienna. There was also concern that the unification of Austrian and Russian Poles might work as a magnet for Prussian Poles. The pivotal point, however, was that Reich Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg until the end of 1916 hoped to win the Tsar for a separate peace. To this end, he offered the Tsar the return of Russian Poland, possibly save for some minor border corrections.<sup>35</sup>

34 See Eric Lohr, *Nationalizing the Russian Empire: The Campaign against Enemy Aliens during World War I* (Cambridge, 2003); Frank M. Schuster, *Zwischen allen Fronten. Osteuropäische Juden während des Ersten Weltkrieges (1914–1919)* (Cologne, 2004), 176–249; Joshua A. Sanborn, “Unsettling the Empire: Violent Migrations and Social Disaster in Russia during World War I,” *The Journal of Modern History* 77 (2005), 290–324; Richard Bessel, “Migration und Vertreibung: Von der Massenmigration zur Zwangsabschiebung,” in *Zeitalter der Gewalt. Zur Geopolitik und Psychopolitik des Ersten Weltkriegs*, eds. Michael Geyer, Helmut Lethen and Lutz Musner (Frankfurt, 2015), 135–48, especially 140–44.

35 See Heinz Lemke, *Allianz und Rivalität. Die Mittelmächte und Polen im Ersten Weltkrieg* (East Berlin, 1977), 178–252; Jens Boysen, “War Aims and War Aims Discussions (East Central Europe),” in: 1914–1918-online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War, eds. Ute Daniel, Peter Gatrell, Oliver Janz, Heather Jones, Jennifer Keene, Alan Kramer, and

Given this indecision, the Central Powers' occupation policy developed in a very *ad hoc* fashion. On the one hand, they used – similarly to many armies in history – the occupied territories as a resource base to compensate for the economic strain from the British blockade; so, large amounts of cattle, grain, wood and other commodities were taken out of Russian Poland and adjacent regions and sent to the interior of Germany and Austria-Hungary. Likewise, many industries stopped production for lack of raw materials and markets; as a result, many people lost their work. In order to both avoid unrest and to replace German workers who were drafted into the army, the German authorities sought to persuade those unemployed Poles to work in Germany, initially on a voluntary basis, later partially through effective coercion based on a general obligation for civilians to work. As a result, between 1915 and 1918 c. 500–700,000 Poles worked in German industries.<sup>36</sup>

On the other hand, however, German-Austrian rule provided the Poles with a cultural and (gradual) political autonomy that had been unknown under the Tsars since the last rising in 1863. Even in the absence of a clear plan, the Central Powers began to build – on the basis of their provisional administrative structures, the Imperial General Governments in Warsaw and Lublin – some sort of embryonic Polish state. As early as 1915, they had begun to “(re-) polonize” public life including local administration, schools and higher education – notably through the re-opened University and Technical University in Warsaw. This policy peaked in the proclamation by the two emperors of a “Kingdom of Poland” on 5 November 1916 that was intended to serve two purposes: firstly, giving proof of the Central Powers' “liberation policy” towards the Tsar's non-Russian subjects and, secondly, winning over the Poles to supporting the Central Powers' own war efforts, notably by raising Polish troops. Accordingly, this move was made under pressure from the German Supreme Army Command but became possible only when, after much hesitation,

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Bill Nasson, issued by Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin 2014–10–08. DOI: 10.15463/ie1418.10275.

36 See Martin Bemmann, “‘...kann von einer schonenden Behandlung keine Rede sein.’ Zur forst- und landwirtschaftlichen Ausnutzung des Generalgouvernements Warschau durch die deutsche Besatzungsmacht, 1915–1918,” *Jahrbuch für die Geschichte Osteuropas* 55 (2007): 1–33; Stephan Lehnstaedt, “Das Militärgeneralgouvernement Lublin im Ersten Weltkrieg. Die “Nutzbarmachung” Polens durch Österreich-Ungarn im Ersten Weltkrieg,” *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung* 61 (2012): 1–26; Jens Thiel and Christian Westerhoff, “Forced Labour,” in: 1914–1918-online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War, eds. Ute Daniel, Peter Gatrell, Oliver Janz, Heather Jones, Jennifer Keene, Alan Kramer, and Bill Nasson, issued by Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin 2014–10–08. DOI: <<http://dx.doi.org/10.15463/ie1418.10380>>.



Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg changed his eastern policy towards a unilateral one of creating satellite states out of the Russian borderlands, including a new Polish state.<sup>37</sup>

Despite the relative calm that reigned, in the military respect, in the Polish-inhabited areas from 1915 to 1918, a remaining element of suffering were the losses of soldiers' lives on the various fronts. As most Poles continued to fight loyally in their "imperial" armies until autumn 1918 (or autumn 1917, in the case of the Russian army), the approximate casualties among ethnic Poles during the war amounted to c. 450,000 dead and obviously many more injured.<sup>38</sup> It was a permanent challenge to their families, as in all nations, to justify those deaths, not necessarily in a political way. An interesting culturalist suggestion has been made in this context, viz. that the Poles and other majority Catholic nations may have drawn on a "female" psychological way of sustaining and "giving sense to" losses and defeat, as opposed to "male" predominantly Protestant nations such as the Germans or the British.<sup>39</sup>

### Polish Political and Military Activity – For What, and with Whom?

By looking at Polish behaviour more broadly, and in particular at political attitudes, the home fronts also showed the limits of Polish identification with the "empires", albeit to differing degrees: In the Prussian east, the local Polish elites, especially the National Democrats, applied a "minimum loyalty", i.e. they called on their fellow Poles to fulfil their legal duties as German citizens but at the same time kept a distance from the "German" war cause; in this, newspapers were crucial for shaping collective views. Indeed, the Poles showed less enthusiasm than the Germans on the occasion of German victories and contributed less to collections by the Red Cross or to the war loan schemes (which may, however, partially have been due to the fact that most Poles belonged to lower income groups). At the political level, Polish loyalist representatives urged the Reich and Prussian governments to lift at least part of the anti-Polish legislation; the addressed were generally sympathetic to this

37 See Lemke, *Allianz und Rivalität*, 321–373; Seppo Zetterberg, *Die Liga der Fremdvölker Rußlands. Ein Beitrag zu Deutschlands antirussischem Propagandakrieg unter den Fremdvölkern Rußlands im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Helsinki, 1978).

38 See Traba, "Zapomniana Wojna," 160.

39 Patrick J. Houlihan, "Religiöse Lebenswelten in Krieg und Frieden," in *Zeitalter der Gewalt*, eds. Geyer, Lethen and Musner, 199–218, here 204–5.

idea but wanted to postpone this issue until after the war.<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, there were no serious signs of disloyalty, not least because most Prussian Poles, for all the troubles they faced under German rule, did not favour any “Russian” option as they associated it with barbarism and backwardness. Only when from 1916 onwards the Western Powers began to take an interest in the “Polish question”, a third option began to materialize; but even then, it would still require a number of additional factors for the Prussian Poles to think of a “post-German” life.

In Austria, the conservative Polish elites supported the war both for fear of a Russian invasion and with a view to possibly acquiring Russian Poland and thus become the third leading nation within the Habsburg Empire. All related efforts were co-ordinated by the “Supreme National Committee” (*Naczelny Komitet Narodowy* – NKN) founded in August 1914 in Cracow; later, this body would be closely connected with the Austro-Hungarian Military General Government in Lublin. Beyond its civilian activities, the NKN was crucial for tying in the unruly Piłsudski who had in the first days of the war unsuccessfully sought to instigate an anti-Russian rising across the border and incurred the wrath of the Austrian supreme army command. His volunteer forces were saved by their formal subordination under the NKN as the Polish Legions and their alignment with the Austrian army. These forces – their maximum number was c. 30,000 in mid-1916 – proved subsequently to be valuable partners in fighting the Russian army; even more important was their activity for the creation of the political myth of “armed feats” (*czyn zbrojny*) towards Polish self-liberation that would be instrumental for establishing Piłsudski’s effective rule after 1918.<sup>41</sup>

In occupied Russian Poland, Polish politicians positioned themselves essentially as two groups: the often pro-Russian “Passivists” who refused any co-operation with the occupation authorities, and the “Activists” who were ready to work within the structures created by the Central Powers, notably the “Provisional State Council” (*Tymczasowa Rada Stanu*) set up in early 1917. They did so rather less out of sympathy for the new rulers than because this seemed to be the best way to gain concessions for some Polish statehood,

40 See Boysen, “Zivil-militärische Beziehungen,” 135–38, 141–42.

41 See Chwalba, *Historia Polski 1795–1918*, 571–73, 576–77; Jan Mleczak, *Akcja werbunkowa Naczelnego Komitetu Narodowego w Galicji i Królestwie Polskim w latach 1914–1916* [*The recruitment campaign of the Supreme National Committee in Galicia and the Kingdom of Poland in the years 1914–1916*] (Przemyśl, 1988); Mieczysław Wrzosek, *Polski czyn zbrojny podczas pierwszej wojny światowej 1914–1918* [*Polish armed feats during the First World War 1914–1918*] (Warsaw, 1990).

which indeed happened although many Poles deemed those processes too slow. After his arrival in Warsaw, Piłsudski joined the Provisional State Council but permanently urged more concessions in particular in exchange for any Polish military contribution.<sup>42</sup> As he distrusted the Central Powers (a distrust which was mutual) he continued preparations, through his clandestine Polish Military Organization (*Polska Organizacja Wojskowa*), for independent warfare in case there would be an opportunity before the war's end.<sup>43</sup> When in July 1917 his Legions were to be transformed into the nucleus of a Polish army, he refused to take an oath that included a binding commitment to the German and Austrian armies; he did so also with a view to the promises made by the new Russian government after the February Revolution. In retaliation, he was arrested by the Germans and interned in the fortress of Magdeburg until the end of the war.

### Unintended Connections Across Borders

Although the separate legal and political status of the occupied Imperial Russian area and the Central Powers' own territories was maintained – which was an obligation under international law – the setting-up of German and Austrian administrations was a first step towards effectively reducing the barriers between the Polish populations in the neighbouring countries. For example, throughout 1915 the Prussian and Austrian authorities had lengthy discussions regarding the admission of Polish-language postal and telephone communication across the borders of Germany, Austria and occupied Russian Poland. While the Prussians feared espionage and lamented a lack of Polish-speaking control personnel, the Polish-influenced Austrian administration in Lublin urged the opening; finally, in January 1916 the German government gave in.<sup>44</sup> Another channel that strengthened connections between the Poles in the neighbouring territories, was the activity since 1915 of help committees under the auspices of the Catholic archbishops in Posen and Cracow that supported the war-damaged population of Russian Poland. The Central Powers accepted these initiatives as they relieved their own supply work; however, this

42 See Jerzy Pająk, *O rząd i armię. Centralny Komitet Narodowy (1915–1917)* [For government and army. *The Central National Committee (1915–1917)*] (Kielce, 2003).

43 Tomasz Nałęcz, *Polska Organizacja Wojskowa 1914–1918* [The Polish Military Organization 1914–1918] (Wrocław, 1984).

44 See Boysen, "Zivil-militärische Beziehungen," 143–145.

meant as well that the Poles could build their own networks along ethnic, not citizenship, lines.<sup>45</sup>

Altogether, the German and Austrian Poles not only got greater access to their relatives in occupied Russian Poland, but in time especially the German-Prussian leadership found it increasingly difficult to justify the maintenance of laws that disadvantaged the Prussian Poles. Notably, the pro-Polish policies in Warsaw that included the celebration of national holidays and other manifestations, from late 1916 spilled over into Germany. Moreover, the Prussian authorities were urged by the Reich government to tolerate for “higher” political reasons what was a clear breach of the law. As a result, 1917 saw on the one hand noisy Polish manifestations of the 100th anniversary of Tadeusz Kosciuszko’s death, and on the other the almost mute commemoration of Martin Luther’s reformation in 1517 – in staunchly Protestant Prussia. Not surprisingly, many Poles began to lose their still considerable respect for the Prussian state and to emphasize their Polishness, also with a view to new international constellations taking shape in that year.

### Conclusion

The Central Powers’ initiative towards creating a Polish statehood had slowly made the Entente Powers pay more attention to this matter and its political and military aspects. After the proclamation of the “Kingdom”, a race began between the warring parties over who would best exploit the issue of “small nations”. As is known, the West finally succeeded even though, like on the battlefield, the Germans won most of the operational battles. In this context this means that they created a Polish nuclear state and tore the whole Baltic region from Russian rule; but the “fame” was finally snatched from them by the West. After the overthrow of the Tsar in March 1917, the anti-German National Democrats put their hope no longer on Russia but on the Western Powers. The “Polish National Committee” that had been founded in 1916 under Dmowski’s leadership in Switzerland, moved to Paris in 1917 and claimed to be the representation of the Polish nation, even though the Western Powers were initially reluctant to recognize them. Indeed, the essential step towards internationalization was the success by the Polish lobbyists in winning over US President

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45 See Antoni Czubiński, “Społeczeństwo polskie Prus wobec wojen 1914–1918 i 1919–1920” [“Polish society in Prussia during the wars of 1914–1918 and 1919–1920”], in *Społeczeństwo polskie w dobie I wojny światowej i wojny polsko-bolszewickiej 1920 roku*, ed. R. Kołodziejczyk (Kielce, 2001), 27–46.

Wilson for their cause. Already in his “Peace without Victory” speech of 22 January 1917 – so preceding the US war entry – as well as later in his Mount Vernon address of 4 July 1918 and the “Fourteen Points” Wilson announced the creation of an independent Polish state. Crucial for this Polish success was that Paderewski who joined up with Dmowski, managed to rally the bulk of American *Polonia* that provided not only funding and political connections, but also in 1918, volunteers for the Polish “Blue Army” (*Błękitna Armia*) set up in France as the military arm of the “Polish National Committee”.<sup>46</sup> More generally speaking, the Western Allies claimed the right to redefine the political landscape in the region between Germany and Russia, this way eclipsing both powers. This development also meant that the new Polish state (and most of the other new states) would act as a Western intermediary almost inevitably hostile towards its large neighbours.

After the armistice of 11 November 1918, even though Germany still controlled large parts of Eastern Europe, the nascent Polish authorities in Warsaw took over power from the German and Austrian administrators and handed it to Piłsudski when he returned from German imprisonment. In Galicia, the local Poles had not much difficulty declaring their established local structures national ones and linking their region to the Polish rump state governed from Warsaw. While the Austrian civilian and military personnel left without much resistance, a civil war ensued between the Poles and the local Ukrainians over the possession of eastern Galicia. This would end up in the renewed partition of Ukraine between Poland and Soviet Russia.<sup>47</sup> In the German east, local Polish activists who had worked in hiding towards a takeover of power, came out in October 1918 since they could now count on a wider public support for their goals. Yet, the use of violence was not their preferred option given the intact Prussian military structures and their reliance on the Western Allies to make Germany concede territory at the conference table. However, when this process seemed to get prolonged and the German military forces gathered strength, a rather small group of militant nationalists started the so-called Greater Polish Rising on 27th December 1918, that had been prepared for weeks. Nevertheless, this event was not a long imminent “clash of nations”, but

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46 See James S. Pula, *Polish Americans. An Ethnic Community* (New York, 1995), 54–61.

47 With an emphasis on group-specific memories, see Christoph Mick, “War and Conflicting Memories – Poles, Ukrainians and Jews in Lvov 1914–1939,” *Simon Dubnow Institute Yearbook* 4 (2005): 257–278.

the result of a highly volatile political atmosphere after the German defeat and revolution, and of the internationalization of domestic affairs.<sup>48</sup>

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48 See Jens Boysen, "Polish-German Border Conflict," in: 1914–1918-online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War, eds. Ute Daniel, Peter Gatrell, Oliver Janz, Heather Jones, Jennifer Keene, Alan Kramer, and Bill Nasson, issued by Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin 2014–10–08. DOI: 10.15463/ie1418.10336.

## The Ukrainian Moment of World War I\*

*Guido Hausmann*

World War I brought the Ukrainian question to international prominence for the first time. In fact, a short-lived Ukrainian state appeared at the end of the war, a development that Europeans would have found unthinkable just four years before, when Ukraine lacked all political agency. Indeed the term “Ukraine” was generally unknown in Europe at the time of the July Crisis. The Ukrainian population lived for the most part in the south-western territories of Imperial Russia and the north-eastern territories of the Cisleithanian half of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, namely in East Galicia and Bukovina. The Ukrainians were generally described as “Little Russians” in Russia and as “Ruthenians” in the Habsburg Monarchy. The term “Ukraine”, which had gained currency in the nineteenth century, was largely unfamiliar to the Ukrainians themselves. The Bosnian crisis and Serbia constituted the main points of conflict between Austria-Hungary (and Germany) and Czarist Russia. Despite the fact that the Pan-Slavic movement claimed the Ukrainians of both empires, considering the Ruthenians of Austria-Hungary as “Galician Russians”, the question of East Galicia and the irredentist movement of the Ukrainians in the Habsburg Monarchy and its weaker variant in Russia were secondary concerns.<sup>1</sup> Yet the region of Ukrainian settlement became one of the central theatres of war on the eastern front once the Central Powers declared war on Russia in early August 1914. As has often been the case, peripheral regions became a site where the violent conflicts of Great Powers were played out. The picture had changed completely by 1917–1918. Ukrainian nation-building had accelerated considerably over the war years. Increasingly seeing themselves as a national movement, the Ukrainians sought recognition as a political nation and even aspired to a Ukrainian state. This became possible, however, only because the war had created a power vacuum.

Historians have advanced our understanding of the civilian experiences of violence and political repression, especially in East Galicia in the first year of the

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\* Translated from the original German by Róisín Healy.

1 So Alexander J. Motyl, *The Turn to the Right: The Ideological Origins and Development of Ukrainian Nationalism, 1919–1929* (New York, 1980), 5. Generally, I limited the bibliographical reference to the essentials. The following new Ukrainian work could not be taken into consideration: Oleksandr Reént, ed. *Velyka vijna 1914–1918 rr. I Ukraïna*, vol. 1–2 (Kiev, 2014).

war. This is true for both the repressive actions of both the Austro-Hungarian occupiers, which ranged from harassment to executions and deportations of Russophile activists and other civilian population groups like Galician Jews, and the invading Russian troops in mid-August 1914, who established the General Governorate of Galicia under Count Georgij Bobrinskij. Martial law decrees led to the suppression of the public activities of the Ukrainian nationalist movement, specifically its newspapers and associations, although the Russification of the administration and education did not proceed as swiftly as the Russophiles wished. Indeed the Greek Catholic Church continued to function.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, repressive measures against the Ukrainian nationalist movement increased in Russian Ukraine, especially as martial law came into operation in districts close to the front.

The main focus of interest in recent German and western historical research on Ukraine is not the July Crisis, the outbreak of the war or the course of the war, but the outcome of the war and its political consequences. Important new German-language surveys treat the war as a background and concentrate instead on its political fallout.<sup>3</sup> Recent research on Ukraine depicts the failed attempt at state formation from 1917 to 1921 as a Ukrainian civil war or Ukrainian revolution, separate from, but shaped by the Russian Civil War of 1918–1920/21, and as an important political process, characterized by a high degree of complexity and dynamism, in its own right.

By focusing on relations between the Great Powers, recently published general histories of World War I emphasize the marginal significance of the Ukrainian question in 1914, despite the fact that the conquest of East Galicia at least was a Russian war aim.<sup>4</sup> While Serbia understandably attracts interest as a second-rank European power, this cannot be said for the Ukrainian nationalist movement and the areas of Ukrainian settlement. Ukraine is inevitably of marginal interest, as long as “the functioning of the international power

2 Anna Veronika Wendland, *Die Russophilen in Galizien. Ukrainische Konservative zwischen Österreich und Rußland, 1848–1915* (Vienna, 2001), 540–566. Aleksandra Ju. Bachturina, *Politika Rossijskoj imperii v vostočnoj Galicii v gody pervoj mirovoj vojny* (Moscow, 2000). The latest Russian monograph on military history is Sergej Nelipovič, *Krovavij oktjabr' 1914 goda* (Moscow, 2013). A more traditional account is Norman Stone, *The Eastern Front 1914–1917* (New York, 1975).

3 Kerstin S. Jobst, *Geschichte der Ukraine* (Stuttgart, 2010); Andreas Kappeler, *Kleine Geschichte der Ukraine*, 3rd edition (Munich, 2009); Rudolf A. Mark, “Die ukrainischen Gebiete 1914–1922: Krieg, Revolution, gescheiterte Staatsbildung,” in *Ukraine*, eds. Peter Jordan et al (Vienna, 2000), 279–292 [= Österreichische Osthefte, 3–4/2000].

4 Horst-Günther Linke, *Das zaristische Russland und der Erste Weltkrieg. Diplomatie und Kriegsziele 1914–1917* (Munich, 1982).



system in terms of balance, primacy and future plans" in July 1914 dominates the scholarly agenda.<sup>5</sup> The value of a different perspective is evident in the work of American historian of eastern Europe and World War I specialist, Mark von Hagen, who raises the issue of the European periphery in the War and thus makes Ukraine into an interesting and important theme of European historiography.<sup>6</sup> This perspective also guides the following remarks.

Three questions are addressed here in order to reach some conclusions about World War I and Ukraine in the twentieth century: firstly, the relationship between war experiences and nationalization for soldiers and war refugees; secondly, political conceptions of nationhood during the war; thirdly, the Ukrainian question at the end of the war and the occupation of Ukraine in 1918.

### War Experiences and Nationalization

Unfortunately, the war experiences of ordinary soldiers and civilians on the eastern front, including Ukrainian soldiers and the soldiers of Ukrainian territories, have received very little scholarly attention. While German soldiers' experience of violence has been recently explored, for instance by Benjamin Ziemann, the same cannot be said for eastern European soldiers.<sup>7</sup> A few pioneering studies work towards this, however, by combining the study of the war and the question of nation- and state-building for soldiers, prisoners of war and civilians.<sup>8</sup>

5 Gerd Krumeich, *Juli 1914. Eine Bilanz* (Paderborn, 2014), 14; Christopher Clark, *Die Schlafwandler. Wie Europa in den Ersten Weltkrieg zog* (Munich, 2013), 17; Herfried Münkler, *Der Große Krieg. Die Welt 1914–1918* (Berlin, 2013); Jörn Leonhard, ed., *Die Büchse der Pandora. Geschichte des Ersten Weltkrieges* (Munich, 2014), especially the literary report by Jost Dülffer, entitled "Die geplante Erinnerung," 351–366.

6 Mark von Hagen, *War in a European Borderland. Occupations and Occupation Plans in Galicia and Ukraine, 1914–1918* (Seattle, 2007).

7 Benjamin Ziemann, *Gewalt im Ersten Weltkrieg. Töten, überleben, verweigern* (Essen, 2013). On the difficulties in examining war experiences, see the following study of the Orthodox military clergy, Dietrich Beyrau, "Projektionen, Imaginationen und Visionen im Ersten Weltkrieg: Die orthodoxen Militärggeistlichen im Einsatz für Glauben, Zar und Vaterland," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 3 (2004): 402–420. It would be useful to have an equivalent research of the Greek Catholic clergy. Nikolaus Katzer, "Russlands Erster Weltkrieg. Erfahrungen, Erinnerungen, Deutungen," *Nordost-Archiv. Zeitschrift für Regionalgeschichte* 17 (2008), 267–292, especially 289–290.

8 See especially the following study of the Polish, Lithuanian and Jewish populations of Lviv: Christoph Mick, *Kriegserfahrungen in einer multiethnischen Stadt: Lemberg 1914–1947*

Ukrainian, as well as Polish, soldiers, fought on different sides – in the Austro-Hungarian and Russian armies – and thus against one another in World War I. The scholarly consensus is that they generally fought loyally on both sides. However, the brutal war policies in East Galicia and Bukovina in 1914 and 1915 changed the attitude of some Ukrainian soldiers on both sides.<sup>9</sup>

In Austria-Hungary, Ukrainians served in the regular units of the Austro-Hungarian army, but as early as 1914 volunteers also formed the so-called “Ukrainian Sich Riflemen”, which were channelled by the authorities into a “royal and imperial Ukrainian Legion” of 2,500 men and fought on the Austro-Hungarian side until the end of the war. This Legion contained many schoolboys and students.<sup>10</sup> This was, however, the only such separate national unit and it had no counterpart in Russia until 1917. A process of rapid Ukrainization within the former czarist army, which brought social and national elements closer together, took place after the February Revolution of 1917. On the one hand, the left-leaning Ukrainian nationalist movement influenced the soldiers, who had been striving for greater autonomy from the provisional government in Petrograd after the fall of the Romanov dynasty. The “democratization” of the army, introduced by order of the Petrograd Soviet, provided the movement with another push “from below”, as it strengthened the rights and political freedoms of ordinary soldiers. It is noticeable that the Ukrainian soldiers, who had been swept up by the nationalization process, put pressure on the newly formed political organ of the Ukrainians in Kiev, the Central Rada, and contributed to the radicalization of their national policy in relations with Petrograd.<sup>11</sup> The wish of the predominantly peasant soldiers to be closer to

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(Wiesbaden, 2010), 69–201; Alfred Eisfeld, Guido Hausmann, Dietmar Neutatz, eds., *Besetzt, interniert, deportiert. Der Erste Weltkrieg und die deutsche, jüdische, polnische und ukrainische Zivilbevölkerung im östlichen Europa* (Essen, 2013); Bernhard Bachinger and Wolfram Dornik, ed., *Jenseits des Schützengrabens. Der Erste Weltkrieg im Osten: Erfahrung, Wahrnehmung, Kontext* (Innsbruck, 2013), above all Martin Schmitz, *Tapfer, zäh und schlecht geführt. Kriegserfahrungen österreichisch-ungarischer Offiziere mit den russischen Gegnern, 1914–17*, 45–63. Gerhard P. Groß, ed., *Die vergessene Front. Der Osten 1914/15. Ereignis, Wirkung, Nachwirkung* (Paderborn, 2006).

9 Mark von Hagen, “The Great War and the Mobilization of Ethnicity in the Russian Empire,” in *Post-Soviet Political Order: Conflict and State Building*, eds. Barnett R. Rubin and Jack Snyder (London, 1998), 34–57, especially at 48; Allan Wildman, *The End of the Russian Imperial Arm* (Princeton, 1987).

10 Wolfram Dornik, “Die deutschen Kolonien,” in *Besetzt*, eds. Eisfeld, Hausmann, Neutatz, 114.

11 Mark von Hagen, “The Russian Imperial Army and the Ukrainian National Movement in 1917,” *The Ukrainian Quarterly* 3–4 (1998): 220–256, especially at 225.

home and to take part in the widely desired and expected land reform played an important role here. The nationalization process in the former czarist army was also significant in that it emphasized and promoted national divisions. This process contributed to the disintegration and transformation of the former czarist army, the formation of national military units and ultimately a national Ukrainian army. March-April 1917 marked an important phase, with the foundation of an organizational committee, a Ukrainian Military Club (which took the name of the hetman Pavlo Polubotok), the demand for a Ukrainian army, as well as the formation of the first Ukrainian regiments in the Kiev Military District. These steps were taken against the will of the provisional government and the Petrograd Soviet and the Commanding Officer on the south-western Front, General Brusilov. The Rada and Ukrainian parties and groups had strong reservations about these developments.

In May and June 1917 two Ukrainian military congresses met in Kiev and established the new Ukrainian General Military Committee, which assumed ultimate authority over all Ukrainian soldiers and military organizations. The Congresses managed to ensure that all Ukrainian recruits, including the marines, were enlisted only in Ukrainian units or units in Ukraine.<sup>12</sup> Despite the growing pressure, including from the Bolsheviks, from late summer 1917, a so-called self-Ukrainization of the 34th army corps under General Pavlo Skoropads'kyj (a general in the former czarist army) took place, along with the transfer of soldiers from one unit to another and a growing national radicalization. Evidently there were tensions between Ukrainian and Russian soldiers and these grew in light of the acute lack of capable Ukrainian officers and the spread of Ukrainian as a language of command, as opposed to Russian.

The Petrograd Ministry of War acknowledged the Ukrainization in progress in a statute about the Ukrainian General Military Committee, but demanded the latter's subordination to the War Ministry. The Central Rada formed a unified Ukrainian front (from the south-west and Rumanian front) after the Bolshevik takeover and the declaration of a Ukrainian People's Republic (on 7th November 1917 or 3rd in the western calendar). But the increasingly catastrophic economic situation undermined Ukrainian nationalist efforts to win over many soldiers, whom the Bolsheviks labelled as bourgeois and challenged with promises of radical economic reforms. Thus, by the autumn and winter of 1917 – a cease-fire came into effect between Soviet Russia and the Central Powers on 7 December – few soldiers were interested in an armed struggle against the Bolsheviks or Red Guards.<sup>13</sup>

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12 Von Hagen, "The Russian Imperial Army," 239.

13 Von Hagen, "The Russian Imperial Army," 252–256.

The POW question was closely related to this process. As is well known, prisoners of war were primarily a phenomenon of the eastern front in World War I. As a result of mobile warfare about two million soldiers of the German and Austro-Hungarian armies ended up in Russian captivity; a greater number (between two and three million) and the majority of captives held by the Central Powers came from Russia or the czarist army generally – the total number of POWs on the eastern front was over five million.<sup>14</sup> However, it is very difficult to establish the number of Ukrainian POWs on each side. Historian Claus Remer estimates that between 300,000 and 500,000 Ukrainian soldiers of the czarist army were held captive by Germany and Austria-Hungary, some of whom were housed from the beginning of 1915 in separate “Ukrainian camps” (for instance, in Rastatt, Wetzlar and Hanoverian Münden) and subjected to a concerted national policy.<sup>15</sup> Ukrainian activists combined the promotion of literacy and cultural activities with political, that is nationalist, propaganda, which at times led to serious conflicts between Ukrainian and Russian POWs.<sup>16</sup> The success of nationalist propaganda in the camps is doubtful, however. The captor states, Germany and Austria-Hungary, were very careful not to provoke any counter-measures by Russia.

By contrast, little is known about Ukrainian soldiers from Austria-Hungary in Russia. Articles VI and VIII of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk between Ukraine and the Central Powers provided for the release and repatriation of POWs of both sides.<sup>17</sup> In reality, however, the process, like everything on the eastern front, seems to have taken years. POWs were needed for labour and states such as Russia and Ukraine did not push for the repatriation of POWs. Yet the advance of German and Austrian troops into Ukraine in 1918 clearly changed policy, as former POWs were used to create Ukrainian units. This policy was easier for Germany to implement than for Austria-Hungary with its various nationality conflicts, both latent and overt.

14 Statistics derive from Reinhard Nachtigal, *Kriegsgefangenschaft an der Ostfront 1914 bis 1918. Literaturbericht zu einem neuen Forschungsfeld* (Frankfurt, 2005), 13 and 15. The number of POWs was clearly above the officially given figure, see Evgenij Sergeev, “Kriegsgefangenschaft aus russischer Sicht. Russische Kriegsgefangene in Deutschland und im Habsburgerreich (1914–1918),” *Forum für osteuropäische Ideen- und Zeitgeschichte* 2 (1997): 113–134.

15 Claus Remer, *Die Ukraine im Blickfeld deutscher Interessen. Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts bis 1917/18* (Frankfurt, 1997), 245–280; Nachtigal, *Kriegsgefangenschaft*, 40–42.

16 Von Hagen, *The Great War*, 39.

17 Oleh S. Fedyshyn, *Germany's Drive to the East and the Ukrainian Revolution, 1917–1918* (New Brunswick, 1971), 273 and 279.

In 1914 and 1915 the Austro-Hungarian military leadership deported and interned thousands of Ukrainians and Jews from Galicia in a separate camp in Steiermark. These men were not in fact POWs, but had rather been captured on suspicion of disloyalty and treason. Many of them died there because of the catastrophic living conditions and disease epidemics before the camp was finally closed in 1917.<sup>18</sup>

While the Ukrainian soldiers and POWs clearly underwent politicization, in some cases raising their national consciousness, it is harder to prove that the civilian population became politicized as a direct result of wartime events. That said, recent work – especially that of historian Ljubov' Žvanko – demonstrates the massive social dislocation caused by the flood of refugees, including in the Ukrainian areas behind the Russian front. Russia was completely unprepared for the refugee problem at the beginning of the war.<sup>19</sup> There was a mass exodus from the areas on the front in several waves in the summer and autumn 1915, firstly in the context of the Russian retreat from the south-western front, when the civilian population was evacuated, sometimes forcibly, from the areas on the front, as well as the Polish Governorate, from East Galicia (up to 100,000), Volhynia, Podolia, Bukovina, Grodno, Cholm and the Baltic provinces. Rail transports brought many to the provinces of Černihiv, Poltava, Katerynoslav, Charkiv, Cherson, partly because there was industrial work in these regions. The refugees included a high proportion of women, children and the elderly.<sup>20</sup>

At the end of 1916 and the beginning of 1917 a new wave of refugees flooded from the Romanian front into the Ukrainian hinterland, after Romania entered the war on the side of the Entente and found its territory occupied by German troops.<sup>21</sup> The organization of refugee assistance – transport, subsistence, accommodation – was confused and would have remained wholly inadequate but for volunteer efforts. As early as August and September 1914, the new town and provisional councils, which had been welcomed by the czar in August 1914, but viewed with increasing suspicion, and confessional and national organizations offered their services. So too did the Committee of Her Imperial

18 Georg Hoffmann, Nicole-Melanie Goll, Philipp Lesiak, *Thalerhof 1914–1936. Die Geschichte eines vergessenen Lagers und seiner Opfer* (Herne, 2010).

19 Ljubov' Žvanko, *Biženci peršoïi svitovoïi vïjny: ukrajins'kyj vymir (1914–1918 rr.)* (Kharkiv, 2012); Ljubov' Žvanko, *Biženstvo peršoïi svitovoïi vïjny v Ukraïni. Dokumenty i materialy (1914–1918 rr.)* (Kharkiv, 2009). The author published numerous relevant essays, e.g. “Das Flüchtlingswesen im Ersten Weltkrieg im Russischen Reich unter rechtlichen Aspekten,” in *Besetzt*, eds. Eisfeld, Hausmann, Neutatz, 333–349. For a general view, see Peter Gatrell, *A Whole Empire Walking. Refugees in Russia during World War I* (Bloomington, 1999).

20 Žvanko, *Biženci*, 44, 50f.

21 Žvanko, *Biženci*, 45.

Highness Grand Duchess Taj'jana Nikolaevna for the Provisional Support of War Casualties.<sup>22</sup> Senior Plenipotentiaries appointed by the state were supposed to work with the Senior Commanders of the armies, state authorities and aid organizations to co-ordinate and supervise the evacuation and reception of refugees. In light of the mass flight of summer 1915, the czar issued a special refugee law, the 'Law for the Satisfaction of the Needs of Refugees', which for the first time regulated state subsidies, established a special commission for the integration of refugees under the auspices of the Interior Minister and laid down guidelines for the social protection of the refugees. It did not take effect, however, until the 1915 refugees had already been evacuated. In Austria-Hungary thousands of war refugees from Galicia and Bukovina were housed in large camps, whose care has been described in Austrian scholarship as good, on the whole.<sup>23</sup>

### Politicization of the Nation

The changeable location of the front on the Austrian-Russian border in 1914 and 1915 placed the Ukrainian population on both sides in a precarious position. Ukrainians were suspected of disloyalty and treason and thus subjected to particularly harsh repression from the authorities. The politicization and nationalization of the Ukrainians of Austria-Hungary was far more advanced than that of their counterparts in Russia. Opportunities for public political activity became available after 1914 and Ukrainian activists made good use of them. These included journalist Mykola Zaliznjak and his group, the Ukrainian Liberation Organization (ULO), founded by Ukrainians from Russia in Vienna and the Metropolitan of the Greek Catholic Church, Andrej Šeptyc'kyj. They tried to show the Central Powers the significance of the Ukrainian question in the war against Russia in various ways, notably through a broad publicity campaign, in order to promote the notion of a Ukrainian nation-state. Other activists went further and formed political organizations, such as the Ukrainian Main Council established by Reichsrat Deputy Kost' Levyc'kyj in 1914, the Ukrainian National Council which sought a Ukrainian state on Russian territory in April

22 On the Tat'jana-Komitee, see Žvanko, *Biženci*, 60–75, on the associations of landscapes and cities, 113–139, 258, and on religious and ethnic organisations, 52, 139–157, 259 and 353–354. See also Žvanko, "Das Flüchtlingswesen," 337–339.

23 Wolfdieter Bihl, "Einige Aspekte der österreichisch-ungarischen Ruthenenpolitik 1914–1918," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 14 (1966): 539–550, here 545f. Dornik, "Die deutschen Kolonien," in *Besetzt*, eds. Eisfeld, Hausmann, Neutatz, 112.

1915, and the Ukrainian Parliamentary Party which came out in support of an autonomous East Galicia in the spring and summer of 1917.<sup>24</sup>

The orientations of these various groups of Ukrainian activists cannot be described here in detail, but the writings of geographer and ULO activist Stepan Rudnyc'kyj (1877–1937) provide a good example of their approach.<sup>25</sup> Rudnyc'kyj came from an east Galician family of schoolteachers, had studied with Mychajlo Hruševs'kyj among others in Lemberg, obtained a doctorate and completed a habilitation in Geography, taught at the University of Lemberg before the war and lived in Vienna during the war.<sup>26</sup>

In his work, *Der östliche Kriegsschauplatz* [*The Eastern War Theatre*] of 1915, he provided his German-speaking readers with “a geographical analysis of the large theatre of war”. He also sought to furnish useful military information and, moreover, developed a detailed territorial vision of a future Ukrainian nation-state.<sup>27</sup> He clearly challenged German and Russian geographers, who assumed the geographical unity of European Russia and thus, he believed, implicitly legitimized the territorial status quo of the czarist state. He insisted, by contrast, on geographical differences between the “Baltic lands” (that is, the Baltic provinces), White Russia, Poland and Ukraine:

European Geography has barely addressed the classification of eastern Europe into natural landscapes. All schoolbooks and encyclopaedias depict European Russia as an immovable unit. Not only is there no attempt to divide it into natural landscapes, but various platitudes are dragged in as arguments for unity.<sup>28</sup>

He is referring here to the claims of geology (tectonics), climatology, social and anthropogeography, but is principally targeting the Heidelberg

24 Dornik, “Die deutschen Kolonien,” 111–114.

25 On the Association of Liberation of the Ukraine, see Frank Golczewski, *Deutsche und Ukrainer 1914–1939* (Paderborn, 2010), 86–102; Oleh S. Fedyshyn, “The Germans and the Union for the Liberation of the Ukraine, 1914–1917,” in *The Ukraine, 1917–1921: A Study in Revolution*, ed. Taras Hunczak (Cambridge, 1977), 305–322. A more indepth study of this association is needed.

26 On Rudnyc'kyj, see Guido Hausmann, “Das Territorium der Ukraine: Stepan Rudnyc'kyjs Beitrag zur Geschichte räumlich-territorialen Denkens über die Ukraine,” in *Die Ukraine. Prozesse der Nationsbildung*, ed. Andreas Kappeler (Cologne, 2011), 145–157; Steven Seegel, *Mapping Europe's Borderlands. Russian Cartography in the Age of Empire* (Chicago, 2012), 253–258.

27 Stefan Rudnyc'kyj, *Der östliche Kriegsschauplatz* (Jena, 1915).

28 Rudnyc'kyj, *Der östliche Kriegsschauplatz*, 15.

geographer, Alfred Hettner.<sup>29</sup> Inspired by trips to Russia in 1897 and during the revolution and war of 1905, Hettner had published a geographical account of Russia, which was reprinted twice during the war and which emphasized the geographical unity of Russia. His account had been translated into Russian. Leading Russian geographers considered Hettner a great authority in the years before the Stalinization of Soviet geography. Although less well known today than the works on Russia by Max Weber or Otto Hoetzsch, his book had the same influence on contemporaries.

While Rudnyc'kyj was challenging the hold of Hettner's geographical perspective on eastern Europe on the educated German-speaking public, he enjoyed the public support of an influential sponsor, Albrecht Penck (1858–1945), a geographer originally from Vienna but based in Berlin since 1906, with whom he had studied for several years. Penck, who is controversial among scholars for his *völkisch* geography in the 1920s and 1930s, was associated with political circles which promoted the development of revolution and peripheral states in Russia during World War I.<sup>30</sup> Penck placed Ukraine in geographical terms between Central and Eastern Europe.<sup>31</sup>

Thus Rudnyc'kyj adopted a political as well as an academic position: When he spoke of “our armies”, he meant the armies of the Central Powers. Moreover, he pointed out that “the Ukrainian national consciousness [had] increased significantly among the ordinary population of southern Russia” and emphasized the cultural differences between Russians and Ukrainians.<sup>32</sup> He drew on his geographical studies to offer, firstly, concrete military suggestions as to how the areas of Ukrainian settlement that belonged to Russia might be “liberated”, and secondly, the political borders (on the basis of geographical features) of a future Ukrainian state.

He stressed the importance of the Crimea and the Black Sea coast for Ukraine in light of the military successes of the armies of the Central Powers

29 Also explicitly in Stephan Rudnyc'kyj, “Die Länder Osteuropas (mit einer Karte),” *Kartographische und schulgeographische Zeitschrift* 2 (1918), 33–41, here 41. See for example the third edition of Alfred Hettner, *Rußland. Eine geographische Betrachtung von Volk, Staat und Kultur* (Leipzig, 1916).

30 Riccardo Bavaj, “Die deutsche Ukraine-Publizistik während des Ersten Weltkrieges,” *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung* 1 (2001), 1–24, especially 7–9. For a critical perspective see Hans-Dietrich Schultz, “‘Ein wachsendes Volk braucht Raum.’ Albrecht Penck als politischer Geograph,” in *1810–2010: 200 Jahre Geographie in Berlin*, eds. Bernhard Nitz et al (Berlin, 2011), 99–153.

31 Albrecht Penck, “Die Ukraina,” *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für Erdkunde zu Berlin* (1916), 345–361 and 458–477.

32 Rudnyc'kyj, *Der östliche Kriegsschauplatz*, 4 and 7.



against czarist troops in East Galicia and Bukovina, as well as the Ottoman entry into the war on the side of the Central Powers, and optimistically recommended an invasion, even in wintertime, of the Black Sea coast to the North:

The entry of Turkey into the war has made the Pontic lowlands a war theatre of incalculable importance. If the Russian Black Sea fleet has spent its force for whatever reason, the Ukrainian coast of the Black Sea offers an extended and not unfavourable location for troop landings. One can be sure that only an attack with strong forces from the south can bring down the Russian colossus. Thus the opportunity of disembarking troops on the northern bank of the Black Sea and the operations of the allied armies in the southern Ukraine are of decisive importance for the whole war against Russia.<sup>33</sup>

He also found it important to assert and 'flesh out' geographically the Ukrainian idea in opposition to alternatives such as the Ruthenian idea (which the Austria-Hungary held firm until 1918) or Little Russian idea:

Ukraine is not simply an ethnographic concept, as the official and nationalist Russian understanding of the world would claim. It is a well defined geographical concept. Ukraine is the northern hinterland of the Black Sea, extending in the west as far as the borders of Mitteleuropa, in the north to the Polissje marshes, and in the east to the Caspian steppe.<sup>34</sup>

The geographical borders he drew for the future Ukrainian state went far beyond those of today's Ukrainian state. From Rudnyc'kyj's perspective, parts of today's Central Russian districts of Kursk and Voronezh and the North Caucasian Kuban as well as present-day Polish districts belonged to Ukraine. Ukrainian writers made such territorial demands of Stalin into the 1920s, but in vain.<sup>35</sup> One year later, in 1916, Rudnyc'kyj produced a more comprehensive publication along the same lines, which has been in continuous use up to the present. The volume, *The Ukrainian Land and People: A Popular Geographical Guide* [*Ukraina. Land und Volk. Eine gemeinfassliche Landeskunde*] (Vienna, 1916), described the political and territorial claims of the Ukrainian nationalist movement. Both of Rudnyc'kyj's publications are significant. He was the most

33 Rudnyc'kyj, *Der östliche Kriegsschauplatz*, 42–43.

34 Rudnyc'kyj, *Der östliche Kriegsschauplatz*, 88–89.

35 Leonid Maximenkov, "Stalin's Meeting with a Delegation of Ukrainian Writers on 12 February 1929," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 3–4 (1992): 361–431.

important Ukrainian geographer of his time and his writings and maps bolstered the Ukrainian politicians who wished to win international diplomatic support for a Ukrainian nation-state at the end of the war, although they did not prevail, especially over the objections of Polish diplomats.<sup>36</sup>

### The Occupation of Ukraine in 1918

When the Bolsheviks made a truce with the Central Powers in the wake of the October Revolution in Petrograd and, virtually simultaneously, military units of Bolsheviks in the east Ukrainian industrial city of Kharkiv declared a Ukrainian soviet and marched on to Kiev and the Ukrainian People's Republic based there, the Ukrainian People's Republic proclaimed its independence from (Soviet) Russia on 12th January 1918. After a brief hesitation, the new Republic approached the Central Powers, which then recognized the independence of Ukraine in a separate peace treaty at Brest-Litovsk on 27th January 1918. Military assistance against the Bolsheviks, who had occupied Kiev in the meantime, was exchanged for the delivery of Ukrainian grain to Austria-Hungary and Germany, which was urgently needed for political reasons in response to the food crisis.

While the German-Austrian occupation of Ukraine which quickly followed and lasted until the end of 1918 has been forgotten in Germany, Ukrainians consider both the Peace Treaty with Ukraine at Brest-Litovsk and the subsequent occupation regime an important part of the European history of Ukraine.<sup>37</sup> The Ukrainian government, which the Central Powers restored in Kiev, lacked both the will and the capacity to fulfil the exorbitant demands for grain and was replaced as early as the end of April 1918 by the so-called hetmanate or "Ukrainian state" under the general and land magnate, Pavlo

36 On Rudnyc'kyj, see the uncritical biography, Oleg Šablji, *Akademik Stepan Rudnyc'kyj. Fundator ukrajins'koji heohrafiji* (Lviv, 1993).

37 There is as yet no detailed exposition of the occupying rule of Central Powers. The following accounts are relevant: Golczewski, *Deutsche und Ukrainer*, 65–196; Wolfram Dornik and Stefan Karner, eds., *Die Besatzung der Ukraine 1918. Historischer Kontext, Forschungsstand, wirtschaftliche und soziale Folgen* (Graz, 2008); Von Hagen, *War in a European Borderland*, 87–114; Frank Grelka, *Die ukrainische Nationalbewegung unter deutscher Besatzungsherrschaft 1918 und 1941/42* (Wiesbaden, 2005); Peter Borowsky, *Deutsche Ukrainepolitik 1918 unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Wirtschaftsfragen* (Hamburg, 1970); Peter Borowsky, "General Groener und die deutsche Besatzungspolitik in der Ukraine 1918," *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 21 (1970), 325–340.

Skoropads'kyj (1873–1945). It was able to hold out against growing resistance in the countryside until December 1918.

The fact that the hetmanate collapsed shortly after the German evacuation causing Skoropads'kyj to flee demonstrated how dependent it had been on German protection. His conservative social and economic plans, including the return of land to estate owners, were deeply unpopular in the countryside, especially among the peasantry. He thought like a “Little Russian”, who certainly recognized the cultural peculiarities of the Ukrainians, but did not support a separate political identity for Ukraine. A directorate of the Ukrainian People's Republic assumed power, with the support of peasants and soldiers, in December 1918, but could not stabilize the country in the long term.

Skoropads'kyj's government also attempted to integrate all areas considered Ukrainian into the hetmanate, including the Crimea. With the assistance of the Germans and over the protests of Soviet Russia, Bolsheviks had been driven into the Crimea, where former czarist General Matvej Sulejman A. Sul'kevič had established a state structure.<sup>38</sup> The population of Crimea, which was not a subject of negotiations between the Central Powers and the Ukrainians at Brest-Litovsk, comprised about one-third Crimean Tatars, one-third Russians, as well as 12% Ukrainians and others.

While the imperial German government articulated no political plans for the Crimea, German military leaders viewed themselves here, as elsewhere in Ukraine, as colonial lords and saw the Crimea as a possible base for acquisitions or closer economic relations with Persia and feared a Turkish conquest. General Ludendorff wished to intensify German settlement in the Crimea, turn Sevastopol' into a German naval base and establish a German colonial state in the Crimea and the entire Black Sea region. Other military leaders such as General Groener envisaged Crimea rather as part of a Ukrainian state. The hetmanate exerted increasing economic pressure on the Crimea, which extended to a trade blockade against the Crimea. The relationship between the Crimea and Ukraine remained unresolved, however, until the withdrawal of German troops from Ukraine in December 1918.<sup>39</sup>

## Conclusion

World War I and its political consequences constitute for Ukraine the first attempt at the formation of a modern nation and nation-state. In this sense the

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38 Jobst, *Geschichte der Ukraine*, 158.

39 Fedyshyn, *Germany's Drive to the East*, 195–224.

creation of the Ukrainian People's Republic in January 1918 can be interpreted as a victory that resulted from the war and achieved, among other things, international political recognition by Germany and Austria-Hungary in the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. Yet this success was only momentary. The lasting message was that the formation of a nation-state was a precarious process, that the collapse of the state in war led to violence and chaos, as in the subsequent Ukrainian Civil War, and that neighbouring states and European Great Powers like Germany and Austria-Hungary were not interested in a Ukrainian state, merely military control and the exploitation of resources.

The realization of national weakness, alongside the interpretation of the diplomatic and international political constellations, became a fundamental part of the experiences of 1917–1920. The organization of the administration and army failed (at least in the formerly Russian areas), paramilitary formations of peasant units had become important, changing power relations had led to an escalation of violence (especially against Jews and Mennonites). It is possible to say in general terms that the Ukrainian nationalist idea became more resilient and militant as a result of the political defeat after World War I and developed no connection with democratic political culture. A good example is the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, founded in 1929 by World War I veterans in the Ukrainian regions of Poland. Moreover, the Ukrainian nationalist movement did not operate in isolation, but in contexts, including especially the German-Ukrainian relationship. It would be too much to argue, however, that the Ukrainian national defeat after World War I (and in another sense again after during World War II) had frozen political thought into national categories and made it more immutable to today than in the countries of the War's winners.

**PART 3**

*Colonial Peripheries*





## Small War on a Violent Frontier: Colonial Warfare and British Intervention in Northern Russia, 1918–1919<sup>1</sup>

*Steven Balbirnie*

The landing of British troops at Murmansk in 1918 marked the beginning of Allied intervention in the Russian Civil War's Arctic European theatre. This action was not envisaged as some anti-communist crusade; Northern Russia was a peripheral theatre of the Great War where the British and their allies endeavoured to deny the Germans supplies and potential submarine bases.

While this operation was conceived as part of wider Great War strategy, this study shall argue that it was conducted in the style of a colonial 'Small War' with small numbers of troops operating over wide areas, supported by locally recruited 'native auxiliaries' from the region's ethnic minority Finns and Karelians.

This study shall examine the independence of action enjoyed by the men-on-the-spot in the tradition of the British Empire, the manipulation of local middlemen as a form of indirect rule, the need for improvisation to overcome environmental problems, responses to Bolshevik guerrilla warfare and the use of terror by the British. It shall demonstrate that not only did the British interventionists face similar conditions to earlier colonial conflicts but they also understood these conditions within an imperial frame of reference. The purpose of this study is thus to demonstrate the intervention's dual link to the Great War and British imperial history.

### Small Wars Theory

The theory of 'Small Wars' was an important component of British military doctrine in this period, and Major-General Edmund Ironside, the commander of British forces in Archangel from winter 1918 until evacuation, admitted he found Colonel C.E. Callwell's textbook on the subject indispensable, reflecting

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<sup>1</sup> The author wishes to thank the National University of Ireland for awarding a Travelling Studentship to support this research.

in a report to the War Office that “our chief inspiration came from the old and well-trying text-book, ‘Small Wars’, which was found an infallible guide.”<sup>2</sup> By examining Callwell’s text it can be discerned how this theory relating to British imperial military operations was applicable to Northern Russia. Callwell’s military career spanned the Second Anglo-Afghan War, the Boer War and a spell at the War Office as the Director of Military Operations and Intelligence from 1914 to 1916; however his greatest claim to fame was his book *Small Wars: their Principles and Practice* which was published in 1896 and became the standard manual for colonial warfare.<sup>3</sup> Callwell’s text shall be returned to as a reference throughout this study.

In the words of Peter Duignan and L.H. Gann, the British Army:

Was designed, in the first place, for ‘imperial policing’, for fighting ‘small wars’ and minor campaigns on the frontiers of empire. In the event of a European war, it was to provide an expeditionary force, an army not numerically on a par with the great conscript armies, but sufficiently large to support an ally and to demonstrate a sense of national commitment.<sup>4</sup>

It can be logically inferred that the Northern Russian conflict was more typical of the frontier conflicts that the British Army had been designed to conduct throughout its imperial history, rather than being typical of the Western Front and the other theatres of the Great War. The multitude of frontier experiences accumulated during the nineteenth century influenced Britain’s military theoreticians, resulting in Callwell drafting *Small Wars*.<sup>5</sup> In his text, Callwell outlined that:

Small war is a term which has come largely into use of late years, and which is admittedly somewhat difficult to define. Practically it may be said to include all campaigns other than those where both the opposing sides consist of regular troops. It comprises the expeditions against savages and semi-civilised races by disciplined soldiers, it comprises campaigns undertaken to suppress rebellions and guerrilla warfare in all

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2 Report on Operations Covering Period 1 Oct. 1918 to 26 May 1919. Appendix C Notes on Operations from 1 Oct. 1918 to 26 May 1919. Major-General Ironside, 17 June, 1919. WO 106/1164 11.

3 T.R. Moreman, “Callwell, Sir Charles Edward (1859–1928)”, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Available from <<http://www.oxforddnb.com.eproxy.ucd.ie/view/article/32251>>.

4 Peter Duignan, and L.H. Gann, *The Rulers of British Africa 1870–1914* (London, 1978), 71.

5 Duignan, and Gann, *Africa*, 76.



parts of the world where organized armies are struggling against opponents who will not meet them in the open field, and it thus obviously covers operations very varying in their scope and in their conditions.<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore Callwell explained that:

The expression 'small war' has in reality no particular connection with the scale on which any campaign may be carried out; it is simply used to denote, in default of a better, operations of regular armies against irregular, or comparatively speaking irregular, forces.<sup>7</sup>

It is very clear from these descriptions that while Northern Russia was a peripheral theatre of the Great War, the conflict bore many similarities to a 'Small War'. In Northern Russia a regular British force was engaged against irregular foes that utilised guerrilla tactics.

### Independence of Action

Until the outbreak of the First World War the British Army had been typically involved in small-scale conflicts on distant African and Asian frontiers. A consequence of this distance between the authorities in London and the man-on-the-spot was that, both due to necessary practicalities and the ability to exploit the infrequency of communications, the commander on the frontier could enjoy considerable independence of action, often to the frustration of superiors in London. Northern Russia was no exception to this trend of British commanders in distant theatres pushing the limits of what their orders allowed.

The significance of relations between metropolitan officials and men in the field illustrates continuity between Britain's imperial history and the North Russian intervention. As John Darwin has pointed out, the Empire's expansion in the Victorian era was driven by the actions of men-on-the-spot, who, once on distant frontiers, were able to act with little to restrain them and could commit to campaigns which exceeded their orders that London would subsequently be forced to accept and support.<sup>8</sup> Given the peripheral nature of the North

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6 C.E. Callwell, *Small Wars: A Tactical Textbook for Imperial Soldiers* (London, 1906), 21.

7 Callwell, *Small Wars*, 21.

8 John Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World-System, 1830–1970* (Cambridge, 2009), 3.

Russian theatre, the British commanders enjoyed some considerable freedom of action and certainly Major-General Poole believed that he could effectively act on initiative with impunity.

Poole's tendency towards acting on initiative rather than on orders should be viewed within the British Empire's man-on-the-spot tradition. As Ronald Hyam explains, such a figure would "feel himself less a subordinate in a Great Empire than a ruler of an empire of his own."<sup>9</sup> Poole's tendency to go beyond the remit of his orders coupled with his autonomous behaviour and domination of the local area was typical of the attitudes and actions that predominated among the individuals who administered Britain's colonies. Ultimately, it was the fact that Poole strayed too far beyond the limits of what being the man-on-the-spot could permit him to do, which led to him losing his command in Northern Russia and being recalled to England. Examples of Poole's actions shall be addressed in the next section which discusses indirect rule.

### Middlemen

One technique which had become integral to British colonial administration over the course of their imperial history was the use of indirect rule. Indirect rule depended on established local elites acting as middlemen within the British power structure. This policy was a key component of contemporary colonial governance and was also reflected in the manner in which the British administered Northern Russia in 1918 and 1919.

In his study *Ornamentalism*, David Cannadine illustrates how it was imperial policy to support and cooperate with the pre-established hierarchies of the regions they occupied; Cannadine has argued that:

Since most Britons came from what they believed to be a hierarchical society, it was natural for them, when doing business or negotiating power, to search for overseas collaborators from the top of the indigenous social spectrum, rather than from lower down, whom they supported, whose cooperation they needed and through whom they ruled.<sup>10</sup>

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9 Ronald Hyam, *Britain's Imperial Century, 1815–1914: A Study of Empire and Expansion* (Basingstoke, 1993), 16.

10 David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British saw their Empire* (London, 2001), 124.

This can account for the willingness of the British to deal with the pre-revolutionary elites in Russia rather than the other parties and movements which composed the White faction in the Civil War.

This pattern of ruling indirectly through local middlemen was replicated in Northern Russia not long after its occupation by the British expeditionary force. While the North Russian government set up after the occupation of Archangel was led by the Socialist-Revolutionary Nicholas Chaikovsky, the real power was held by Poole who, John Silverlight has argued, “looked on himself from the start as a viceroy, ruling a dependant people.”<sup>11</sup> There was immediate friction between the British and the North Russian government, as Poole regarded Chaikovsky’s government as a purely administrative authority and preferred to deal with Commander Chaplin of the pre-revolution Russian Navy and his followers.<sup>12</sup> The Allied occupation of Archangel which brought Chaikovsky to power had only been possible through a coordinated coup launched by Chaplin against the local Red authorities, and Chaplin had already proven willing to collaborate with the British, having been sent north issued with a false passport from the British Consul at Petrograd.<sup>13</sup>

Poole’s preference for dealing with the ex-Tsarist officers based at Archangel rather than the Socialist-Revolutionary government merely reflected the long-standing British imperial tradition of collaborating with established indigenous elites in the territories they occupied; and in the case of Northern Russia the old regime officers gathered around Chaplin represented a greater continuity with the established order than did Chaikovsky or his ministers.<sup>14</sup> Chaikovsky inevitably chafed under Poole’s influence as he was regularly presented with humiliating situations which he would be expected to accept and comply with. One such example can be seen in a letter which Poole wrote to Chaikovsky to inform him:

That the city of Archangel as well as the whole province are at present under martial law. As Commander-In-Chief of Allied Forces in North Russia I consider that from the point of view of military safety it is undesirable to permit the hoisting of the red flag since it has only recently

11 John Silverlight, *The Victors’ Dilemma: Allied Intervention in the Russian Civil War* (London, 1970), 60.

12 Leonid Strakhovsky, *Intervention at Archangel: The Story of Allied Intervention and Russian Counter-Revolution in North Russia 1918–1920* (Princeton, 1944), 30.

13 Michael Occleshaw, *Dances in Deep Shadows: Britain’s Clandestine War in Russia, 1917–20* (London, 2006), 186–187.

14 Cannadine, *Ornamentalism*, 124.

been associated with the former Bolshevik government. Therefore I have given orders to the military not to permit any display of red flags in Archangel. I have the honour to beg you also to comply with my orders.<sup>15</sup>

This must have been particularly galling for Chaikovsky as the red flag in question was not the standard of the Bolsheviks but instead was a recognised international banner of socialism.

Relations became so strained between Poole and Chaikovsky that Chaplin and his fellow officers intervened by staging a coup against Chaikovsky's government. The manner in which Poole informed the United States ambassador, David Francis, of the coup gives credence to the notion that even if Poole did not necessarily orchestrate the coup, he tacitly supported it. According to Francis' memoirs, the morning after the coup, while the pair reviewed a battalion of American troops, the following exchange took place; Poole "said: 'There was a revolution here last night.' I [Francis] said: 'The hell you say! Who pulled it off?' He replied: 'Chaplin.'"<sup>16</sup> Poole's blasé attitude certainly didn't do him any favours in the eyes of Francis and matters were made worse when Francis asked Chaplin what had motivated him to take such a rash course of action. "The ministers were in General Poole's way, and were hampering Col. Donop,"<sup>17</sup> Chaplin replied unabashed. Chaplin had implicated Poole, at least indirectly, in his scheme. While Francis and the other ambassadors ensured that Chaplin's coup was reversed and the Chaikovsky government were released from captivity, the damage which this had done to Allied and White Russian relations proved to be irreversible. In the wake of the coup, Chaikovsky developed an arguably justified fear of Allied intentions, informing Francis that he believed another coup attempt was being planned by Poole and his subordinates.<sup>18</sup> Poole's inevitable dismissal was not delayed for long, and on the 14th of October he departed from Northern Russia on a ship bound for England. Poole had gone too far in treating Northern Russia as a colonial frontier, and its population as imperial subjects.

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<sup>15</sup> Strakhovsky, *Archangel*, 32.

<sup>16</sup> David R. Francis, *Russia from the American Embassy 1916–1918* (New York, 1921), 270.

<sup>17</sup> Francis, *Embassy*, 270.

<sup>18</sup> Francis, *Embassy*, 279.

## Environment

A typical feature of British colonial campaigns was that the environment posed as much of a hazard as the enemy if not perhaps more so. Terrain was generally difficult to traverse, obscured the vision of the British force and concealed the positions of the local forces more familiar with the region's topography. British expeditionary forces were also faced by extreme temperatures and weather conditions which impacted on what equipment they could use and the tactics which they employed. European Russia's Arctic north posed challenges on a similar scale to these colonial theatres.

As Callwell observed:

It is perhaps the most distinguishing characteristic of small wars as compared with regular hostilities conducted between modern armies, that they are in the main campaigns against nature.<sup>19</sup>

Callwell further explained that:

In campaigns of this class a main object to be aimed at is to shorten their duration. They take place as a rule in territories and in climates which do not suit the trained soldier.<sup>20</sup>

His study of the 1897 Tirah expedition on the borders of India's North West Frontier Province illustrates these points.

The Tirah expedition provided examples of the pitfalls faced by British forces conducting frontier operations. Faced by inhospitable terrain, an effective frontier fighting force would be reliant on solid intelligence gathering to overcome these obstacles. Any shortcomings during such operations could not simply be blamed on local geographical conditions but must also be attributed to a failure to gather adequate information on local conditions. As Callwell has pointed out:

When the expedition was being organised in 1897, the topographical features of Tirah proper, and the resources which the region offered to an invading army, were practically known only by hearsay; no force had ever penetrated into these remote valleys.<sup>21</sup>

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19 Callwell, *Small Wars*, 44.

20 Callwell, *Small Wars*, 97.

21 C.E. Callwell, *Tirah 1897* (London, 1911), 4.

Inadequate knowledge of local conditions would similarly hamper later operations in Northern Russia, compounding the difficulties already arising from the region's topography and climate. Tirah also provided an example of how local climatic conditions could impose time constraints on operations; a factor also imposed by the Arctic winter on the operations in Northern Russia. According to Callwell:

Climatic conditions may be said to have dictated a withdrawal of the troops from Tirah by a certain date; and the strain which had been thrown upon the transport resources at the command of the Indian military authorities by the campaigns in progress during the summer of 1897 in various sections of the North-West Frontier region, had made it virtually impossible for Sir W. Lockhart to get his army into motion sooner than he did. But the space of time which the circumstances of the case allowed for the prosecution of the campaign was not long enough to permit of this fully achieving its object.<sup>22</sup>

The early withdrawal from Tirah due to climatic conditions can be seen to mirror the evacuation of Northern Russia before winter conditions could set in at the end of 1919.

The terrain offered challenges for all branches of the armed forces, not least in communication, as the area of operations was over six times the size of England.<sup>23</sup> The combination of vast distances and thick foliage also presented particular problems for the use of artillery. Major Delayhaye of the Royal Field Artillery informed the War Office that:

Observation has been very difficult owing to the flatness of the country and to its being heavily wooded, and also to the breadth of front to be covered. Hence it is essential that the infantry should have the training and facilities to enable them to assist in observation and to communicate promptly with the artillery, and also that every possible means should be employed to perfect co-operation between R.A.F. and artillery. Ground observers, either infantry or artillery, must also co-operate with the Royal Navy, whose experience of land shooting is limited, particularly.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Callwell, *Tirah*, 140.

<sup>23</sup> Silverlight, *Dilemma*, 74.

<sup>24</sup> Report on Operations Covering Period 1 Oct. 1918 to 26 May 1919. Appendix C Report on the Employment of Artillery in North Russia. Major T.V. Delayhaye, 18 June, 1919. The National Archives, Kew. War Office (hereafter WO) 106/1164 16.

The nature of the terrain had rendered close cooperation between all of the armed force branches in Northern Russia imperative. Delayhaye also noted that the terrain and climate had a limiting effect on the ammunition which could be employed by the artillery, as smoke shells for aerial observation were difficult to observe against the snow or in forests, and gas shells were ineffective outside of the summer months.<sup>25</sup>

These were further compounded by the debilitating effects of the region's Arctic climate. Extreme temperatures had always been a factor in colonial 'Small Wars' but previous British forces in theatres such as Sudan, South Africa and Burma had been struggling against extreme heat; the extreme cold that was faced in Northern Russia was more alien to the British. This is evident from Ironside's observation that warfare in Arctic conditions was a glaring omission from British military manuals. Ironside wrote that:

It was difficult to form any idea of what could or could not be done in a severe northern climate, and literature on the subject was almost non-existent, though I was able to procure and read some Norwegian training manuals for snow and forest work, together with accounts of winter manoeuvres.<sup>26</sup>

The Northern Russian winter presented the British with a logistical nightmare as their entire method of communications had to be adapted to compensate for the White Sea freezing over, which rendered Archangel inaccessible to maritime traffic. The seasonal drop in temperature also played a decisive role in influencing overall British interventionist strategy in Northern Russia. Ironside reflected in his memoirs that:

The fall of the North Russian winter coincided almost to a day with the Armistice of the 11th November 1918. The major portion of the little army found itself in the northern region of Archangel, cut off from Europe by the frozen sea. They were inextricably involved in the mighty struggle between the Whites and the Reds in the Russian Civil War.<sup>27</sup>

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25 Report on Operations Covering Period 1 Oct. 1918 to 26 May 1919. Appendix C Report on the Employment of Artillery in North Russia. Major T.V. Delayhaye, 18 June 1919. WO 106/1164 17.

26 Report on Operations Covering Period 1 Oct. 1918 to 26 May 1919. Appendix C Notes on Operations from 1 Oct. 1918 to 26 May 1919. Major-General Ironside, 17 June, 1919. WO 106/1164 11.

27 Edmund Ironside, *Archangel 1918–1919* (London, 1953), 5.

Nor were the weapons issued to troops reliable in the North Russian cold as Ironside reported that “water-cooled machine guns could only be used in heated blockhouses, and non-freezing mixture made little difference in the open.”<sup>28</sup> Meticulous maintenance of fire arms was an even greater necessity in Northern Russia than in the other theatres of the Great War. The extreme weather also caused difficulty for Britain’s air force, with air superiority over Red forces often only guaranteed by the adoption of hazardous tactics. R.A.F. commander Lt.-Col. Grey noted these dangers in a report which stated that:

Bombing in the extreme cold presented many difficulties. Trouble was continually caused by the release gear freezing during flight, and in most cases 20-lb bombs had to be carried in the observer’s seat and dropped over the side by hand.<sup>29</sup>

So cold were Northern temperatures that not only did transport, kit and weaponry become unreliable but accommodation became a matter of life and death. According to Ironside:

As the campaign progressed it became more and more evident that the fighting was one of accommodation. If your accommodation was destroyed, even to the extent of breaking your windows, you had to evacuate your position. Prolonged operations in the open were an impossibility.<sup>30</sup>

Exposure to the freezing Arctic temperatures was as lethal as any Bolshevik bullet, and reinforces the notion of the environment as an enemy.

Northern Russia’s environment also had a psychological impact on the interventionist soldiers which was dangerous to morale. Major-General Maynard reflected upon these difficulties in a despatch to Winston Churchill on the 1st of March 1919. Maynard wrote that:

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28 Report on Operations Covering Period 1 Oct. 1918 to 26 May 1919. Appendix C Notes on Operations from 1 Oct. 1918 to 26 May 1919. Major-General Ironside, 17 June, 1919. WO 106/1164 12.

29 Report on Operations Covering Period 1 Oct. 1918 to 26 May 1919. Appendix C Defensive Positions in Winter in Northern Russia. Lieutenant-Colonel Robin Grey, 13 June, 1919. WO 106/1164 15.

30 Report on Operations Covering Period 1 Oct. 1918 to 26 May 1919. Appendix C Notes on Operations from 1 Oct. 1918 to 26 May 1919. Major-General Ironside, 17 June, 1919. WO 106/1164 11–12.



Taking climatic conditions into consideration, the health of my troops has been good. During the winter months, with their lack of daylight, there has been a somewhat marked tendency towards inertia and depression, resulting in loss of nerve and will-power."<sup>31</sup>

In a report to the Director of Military Operations on the 17th of June 1919, Ironside elaborated on the impact that the terrain had on the mental health of the troops under his command;

Sentry and patrol work in the forest was found a very nervy business at first. In intense frost the branches crack and fall making a noise as if a large body of men were moving over the dead undergrowth. Peering long into a forest is dangerous to those who have not stout hearts. I have interrogated many sentries on this subject and always found the same state of mind.<sup>32</sup>

It is clear from this that the British interventionist soldiers were at war as much with the North Russian environment as they were with the Germans, White Finns or Bolsheviks. It was necessary to constantly improvise methods of carrying out the most routine tasks, with the weather and terrain dictating tactics rather than the operations of the enemy and the combination of an irregular day and night cycle with the eerie silence of the boreal forest proving to be more of a challenge to morale than enemy actions.

### Guerrilla Warfare

Facing irregular enemies on a distant frontier more often than not also entailed facing irregular warfare. As regular armies had become increasingly superior in terms of technology and weaponry, guerrilla warfare had become a more common tactic of their foes. During the Boer War, the British had found themselves fighting a white foe which lacked a uniform and could melt seamlessly into the civilian population. In Northern Russia the Bolsheviks presented a similar challenge for the British as that caused by Boers.

31 Despatch No. 2, Major-General C.M. Maynard to Winston Churchill, 1 March, 1919. WO 32/5703 23.

32 Report on Operations Covering Period 1 Oct. 1918 to 26 May 1919. Appendix C Notes on Operations from 1 Oct. 1918 to 26 May 1919. Major-General Ironside, 17 June, 1919. WO 106/1164 12.

The pattern of warfare in Northern Russia closely resembled what Callwell described as 'bush warfare';

Bush warfare is essentially an affair of surprises and ambushes, and experience has shown that corps of scouts – natives of the country – are a great assistance to the disciplined troops if they can be organized.<sup>33</sup>

As Callwell noted, such terrain was suited to the conduct of guerrilla warfare by local enemies as:

Forests and jungles offer great opportunities to the foe for forming ambushes and for carrying out petty but harassing and damaging surprises. In such terrain the range of firearms is of necessity restricted, and in consequence the weapons of precision with which the regulars are supplied lose much of their efficacy.<sup>34</sup>

Keeping with Callwell's advice, one solution to part of Britain's problems was found in the recruitment of units composed of local Finnish and Karelian backwoodsmen who knew the territory as thoroughly as the opposing forces. Combatting an irregular foe, however, presented less easily solved difficulties as explained by Charles W. Gwynn in his study of imperial policing;

There is an absence of a definitive objective, and conditions are those of guerrilla warfare, in which elusive rebel bands must be hunted down, and protective measures are needed to deprive them of opportunities. The admixture of rebels with a neutral or loyal element of the population adds to the difficulties of the task. Excessive severity may antagonise this element, add to the number of rebels, and leave a lasting feeling of resentment and bitterness. On the other hand, the power and resolution of the Government forces must be displayed. Anything which can be interpreted as weakness encourages those who are sitting on the fence to keep on good terms with the rebels.<sup>35</sup>

These issues have been reflected in the accounts left behind by the soldiers who served as part of the interventionist forces.

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33 Callwell, *Small Wars*, 350.

34 Callwell, *Small Wars*, 349–350.

35 Charles W. Gwynn, *Imperial Policing* (London, 1934), 4–5.

Corporal V.F. King provides us with a vivid account of the disconcerting confusion faced by British soldiers fighting against an enemy which could seamlessly melt back into the civilian populace:

When you got into a village you had to clear the village out as soon as you ever came across any men. They weren't Bolsheviks. They were loyal Russians they used to tell you but as soon as your back was turned they were Bolsheviks again. Of course, you couldn't leave any men behind to guard the village because you never had many men. You used to have to keep pushing on to wherever you were told to go like. We used to go behind the villages and come in from the back ways. Where they had guns and that and of course, we used to capture them and they used to say that the men that we caught they said that they were loyal Russians. They weren't Bolsheviks, they didn't believe in it. It was like being between 2 fires. House to house fighting but you no sooner got in the village and they were all surrendering.<sup>36</sup>

This account is reminiscent of Thomas Pakenham's description of the guerrilla phase of the Boer War when "for four months, the British had been fighting an enemy so invisible that many had never yet seen a Boer, alive or dead."<sup>37</sup> The following excerpt from the account of a soldier from the Liverpool Regiment illustrates how normal routine duties in Northern Russia could be transformed into terrifying ordeals as a result of facing an enemy which could appear and disappear almost at will:

Doing night sentry outside a blockhouse gave me a lonely and uncanny feeling [...] ever alert for the Bolsheviks whom we could not hear as they moved about in the perpetual snow of the silent forest. Compared to duty on the Flanders front this was another world ... You weren't in the company of anybody in Russia. When you were doing a duty you were alone unless you were in a party going scrapping. Even going up there with your rifle cocked it was a bit tense, because you didn't know where they were.<sup>38</sup>

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36 V.F. King, Transcript of an interview with V.F. King, August, 1974. Leeds University, Liddle Collection. GS 0897 3-4. Reproduced with the permission of Leeds University's Brotherton Library.

37 Thomas Pakenham, *The Boer War* (London, 1979), 360.

38 Clifford Kinvig, *Churchill's Crusade: The British Invasion of Russia, 1918-1920* (London, 2006), 122-123.

The guerrilla tactics utilised by the Bolsheviks evidently had a damaging effect upon the morale of British troops, and presented yet another difficulty which was a familiar feature of colonial frontier warfare rather than of the theatres of the Great War. Callwell had warned of such dangers in *Small Wars*;

It is not the custom for regular troops to undertake cutting up of isolated sentries and to prowl about at night in small parties, little would be gained by such manoeuvres; but guerrillas and Asiatics and savages practice such tactics largely, and are often extremely clever at them.<sup>39</sup>

The methods used by the British to counter such irregular guerrilla warfare in Northern Russia shall now be examined and compared to those utilised in the South African conflict.

### Blockhouses

When confronting irregular foes who refused to engage in set piece battles the British had to adapt their tactics accordingly. During the Boer War, the shift from open engagements to guerrilla warfare by the Boers led to the British adopting several counter measures which included the construction of blockhouses as a part of anti-guerrilla operations. The blockhouse strategy in an adapted form reappeared in Northern Russia to combat the Bolsheviks.

The initial blockhouses constructed to thwart the Boer commandos in South Africa were masonry structures costly in terms of both time and finances to construct, but these were soon replaced by more cost effective models.<sup>40</sup>

It was not until the invention by a Royal Engineer officer of a cheap model capable of being easily and quickly constructed that the use of blockhouses on a large scale became practicable. Two cylinders of corrugated iron 6 feet high, one 2 feet smaller in diameter than the other, were used. The smaller, 12 feet in diameter, was placed inside the larger and the gap between them filled with earth or stones. A 4-foot-square door and a dozen loopholes were punched and an overhanging pitch roof added. Placed quite close together, seldom more than a mile apart and often

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39 Callwell, *Small Wars*, 472–473.

40 Howard Bailes, "Military Aspects of The War" in *The South African War: The Anglo-Boer War 1899–1902*, ed. Peter Warwick (Harlow, 1980), 97–98.

separated by only a few hundred yards, they were surrounded by barbed wire.<sup>41</sup>

According to Thomas Pakenham, by "May 1902, there would be over eight thousand blockhouses, covering 3,700 miles, guarded by at least fifty thousand white troops and sixteen thousand African scouts."<sup>42</sup> This version of the blockhouse became the template for later constructions in Northern Russia.

In his report on the field work and administrative services of the Royal Engineers, the Chief Engineer, Colonel Stokes offered a description of how the blockhouse design imported from the South African campaign had been adapted to purpose by improvising its composition from the materials to be found in Northern Russia:

The common BLOCKHOUSE is made with double walls of 8" logs, with from 6" to 14" of earth between. Another type consists of a single log wall with earth parapet, rarely coming within a foot of the loopholes owing to settlement.<sup>43</sup>

The North Russian blockhouses reflected a shift from the defensive structures of the Western Front to those more typical of a previous colonial conflict. Stokes recognised this link in his report, stating that:

In North Russian Field Works, where difficulties of life and communication have been great as the enterprise and resources of the enemy have been small, there has been a natural reversion of type, from the complex standards of France to more normal methods and establishments of earlier campaigns.<sup>44</sup>

The construction of timber blockhouses had already been practiced during the Boer War.<sup>45</sup>

41 Byron Farwell, *The Great Boer War* (London, 1976), 350–351.

42 Pakenham, *Boer War*, 537.

43 Royal Engineers Field Work and Administrative Services (May 27 1919 to Evacuation), Colonel R. Stokes, 24 September, 1919. WO 32/5705 5.

44 Royal Engineers Field Work and Administrative Services (May 27 1919 to Evacuation), Colonel R. Stokes, 24 September, 1919. WO 32/5705 10.

45 Bill Nasson, *The South African War 1899–1902* (London, 1999), 211.

## Terror

In addition to the building of blockhouses, the use of terror was a method utilised by the British to counter their guerrilla enemies in South Africa and Northern Russia. Terror was an established feature of colonial warfare both as a method of damaging the enemy's morale and of countering enemy combat tactics. Enemy forces in colonial conflicts were perceived as lacking discipline so it was presumed that the cohesion of an enemy force could be shattered through the use of superior technology and weaponry which would terrify and overawe the enemy. Terror was also used to counter the irregular warfare utilised by enemies on colonial frontiers, with the destruction of property which could conceal the enemy and the terrorising of the civilian population complicit in this concealment. Both methods were exported to Northern Russia by the British.

The extensive use of gas as a weapon by the British in Northern Russia also serves as an example of how the British utilised the terror of superior weaponry in an effort to break the resolve of their enemy. Historians disagree over whether or not the Bolsheviks used poison gas as a weapon in Northern Russia, with Clifford Kinvig arguing that they did so twice on the Vaga Front while Michael Kettle has argued that there is no proof to substantiate such claims.<sup>46</sup> What can be verified, however, is that the British used poison gas on a substantial scale in Northern Russia despite it being a weapon unsuited to the theatre's climate and terrain. Churchill, an enthusiastic proponent of gas weaponry, sent Ironside a specialist gas team led by Major Davies along with 50,000 gas generators and 10,000 respirators.<sup>47</sup> Gas was suited to the trench warfare of the Western Front where large numbers of enemy personnel were massed in confined spaces, not Northern Russia where the British were facing small numbers of enemies widely dispersed among forests under weather conditions which were unsuited to the dispersion of gas and required improvised methods to do so. Gas merely served to terrify the Reds who lacked the ability to adequately protect themselves or respond in kind. This avowed purpose for the use of gas munitions is evident from a letter sent to Ironside on the 17th of April 1919 by Brigadier-General Turner who expressed his opinion that:

Personally I don't want to use the beastly stuff, for in case of retaliation we are not properly prepared, with the number of guns & ammunition

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46 Michael Kettle, *Russia and the Allies 1917–1920 Volume 3: Churchill and the Archangel Fiasco, November 1918–July 1919* (London, 1992) 317; Kinvig, *Crusade*, 128–129.

47 Kinvig, *Crusade*, 244.

available gas shelling can hardly be efficiently carried out on either side – but its moral effect will be enormous.<sup>48</sup>

From the beginning local conditions rendered it impractical to discharge gas by either hand or projectors and as was often the case in frontier warfare, improvisation provided the solution, with Major Davies inventing the so-called ‘M bomb’, the first gas bombs for use from aircraft.<sup>49</sup> The terrifying effects of this new weapon were swiftly seized upon and the M bomb became a common feature of air operations in Northern Russia, with an attack on Yemtsa station on the 29th of August alone involving the dropping of over 100 gas bombs by aircraft.<sup>50</sup>

Terror was also spread by aircraft through a method which was recognised as a criminal atrocity. R.A.F. pilot Eric John Furlong revealed in an interview how the anti-balloon Cooper bomb was adapted in Northern Russia to become a terrifying and devastating anti-personnel weapon. The fuses on the bombs were adapted to release the phosphorous payload against targets on the ground rather than in the air, a practice which Furlong claimed that the British interventionists were not aware was illegal internationally.<sup>51</sup> This use of phosphorous as an airborne weapon against infantry marked a definite example of recognised codes of conduct for warfare being negated in the pursuit of military goals.<sup>52</sup> Such an act was a product of the combination of the need for improvisation and the laxer central control experienced on a distant wartime frontier. It is difficult to imagine that the R.A.F. would have been able to utilise such terror tactics in the Great War’s other European theatres.

48 Part of a Letter Book kept by Brigadier-General A.J. Turner in North Russia 1919. Royal Artillery Historical Trust, Woolwich. MD 1977 RAI A/C x8709.1 2.

49 C. Dobson, and J. Miller, *The Day we Almost Bombed Moscow: The Allied War in Russia 1918–1920* (London, 1986), 204.

50 Michael Challenger, *Anzacs in Arkhangel: The Untold Story of Australia and the Invasion of Russia 1918–1* (Melbourne, 2010), 168.

51 IWM Sound Archive Interview 15, Eric John Furlong, 1973–05–15. Reel 6. Reproduced with the permission of the Imperial War Museum.

52 Article 23 of the 1907 Hague Convention (IV) prohibited signatories from using “arms, projectiles, or materials calculated to cause unnecessary suffering”. *Laws of War: Laws and Customs of War on Land* (Hague IV); Oct. 18, 1907. Available from <[http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/hague04.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/hague04.asp)>.

## Conclusion

It is clear that while Britain's intervention in Northern Russia was formulated as a part of Great War strategy, the manner in which the intervention was carried out bore more resemblance to the colonial 'Small Wars' which were a defining feature of Britain's nineteenth-century imperial history than the fighting of the Western Front. This is unsurprising considering that at least 23 of the officers representing all three branches of Britain's armed forces had prior colonial experience, including all of the top level commanding officers; this experience ranged from India to West Africa, the Boxer Rising to the Boer War, Burma to Egypt.<sup>53</sup> Consequently, the conflict in Northern Russia was characterised by elements typical of British colonial campaigning, such as the independence of action enjoyed by the man-on-the-spot, indirect rule through local middlemen, the significance of environmental factors and the need to adapt military strategy to confront an irregular foe. Thus it can be seen that by viewing the British intervention in Northern Russia within the broader context of the British Empire, it is possible to gain a greater understanding of the events which took place at Archangel and Murmansk in 1918 and 1919.

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53 Col. J.W. Carroll, Lt.Col. Robin Grey (R.A.F.), Admiral T.W. Kemp, General Rawlinson, Col. R. Crawley, Commodore R. Hyde, Major-General Poole, Brigadier-General Sadleir-Jackson, Col. J. Leckie, Major-General Maynard, Brigadier-General G. Price, Brigadier-General G. Smyth-Osbourne, Brigadier-General M. Turner, Major-General Ironside, Major P. Mackesy, Brigadier-general F. Marsh, Brigadier-General G. Grogan, Brigadier-General H. Needham, Col. P. Woods, Col. R. Stokes, Lt. Col. Guard, Lt.Col. A. Burn, Major H. Ward. *Who Was Who Volumes II-VI* (London 1929–1981), II 177–178, 437, 576, 872, III 306, 688, 1090, 1186, IV 671, 781, 937, 1079, 1173, V 571, 708, 735, VI 464, 826, 1227, VII 761; D.M. Leeson, *The Black and Tans: British Police and Auxiliaries in the Irish War of Independence, 1920–1921* (Oxford, 2011) 52; <[www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/1030009755](http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/1030009755)>. <[www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/1030012231](http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/1030012231)>.



## Fighting for the Tsar, Fighting against the Tsar: The Use of Folk Culture to Mobilize the Tatar Population during World War I and the Russian Revolution (1914–1921)

*Danielle Ross*

In his recent book, *Imperial Apocalypse*, Joshua Sanborn emphasized the Great War as a moment of decolonization for the Russian Empire. The fall of the imperial government represented not only the collapse of a state, but, in many regions, the disruption of systems of colonial or semi-colonial rule.<sup>1</sup> This observation highlights a point that continues to receive relatively little attention even as the study of the Great War in Russia has expanded over the last decades. Russia entered the Great War as a multiethnic empire inhabited by people who did not share a common language, faith, culture, or administrative-legal structure. In the course of the war, the imperial government had to find ways to mobilize many of these people for military service or support activities and integrate them into an empire-wide military-industrial complex.

On the eve of World War I, the integration and communication between the imperial government and its diverse population was uneven. In matters of taxation, law and arbitration, the distance between the government and its non-Russian communities closed over the last several decades of the empire's existence.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, state intervention into non-Russian education was patchy and often ineffective, leading at least one Ministry of Education official in Kazan to lament that the ministry had no control at all over Muslim schools in his province.<sup>3</sup> After the 1905 Revolution and the dismantling of the imperial censorship system, the government exercised little control over the

1 Joshua A. Sanborn, *Imperial Apocalypse: The Great War and the Destruction of the Russian Empire* (Oxford, 2014).

2 Stefan B. Kirmse, "Law and Empire in Late Tsarist Russia: Muslim Tatars go to Court," *Slavic Review*, 72 (2013) 778–801; Rozaliya Garipova, "The Transformation of the Ulama and the Shari'a in the Volga-Ural Muslim Community," Doctoral dissertation, defended at Princeton University, 2013, 265–316.

3 L.V. Gorokhova, ed., *Medrese Kazani XIX-XX vv.: Sbornik dokumentov i materialov*, (Kazan, 2007), 172.

non-Russian language presses in certain parts of the empire. Lacking large numbers of full-time employees versed in non-Russian languages, the Russian government continued to rely on native intermediaries to facilitate communication between the state and the individual ethnic community. Once the emperor abdicated in March of 1917, the Provisional Government and its Bolshevik successor faced precisely the same challenge and turned to the same solution. This reliance of government officials upon alliances with members of the native community to aid in monitoring and mobilizing non-Russian populations created linkages between the internal life of ethnic communities and the priorities of the imperial (and later Soviet) state. It also invested the native intermediaries with a certain power vis-à-vis both the state and the ethnic community: they became simultaneously shapers of the government's perceptions of "their" culture and at least partly they dictated the means and forms in which government agendas reached their communities as those communities were mobilized, de-colonized and absorbed into the new Soviet state.

The present chapter examines the development of folklore-based propagandistic literature in the Volga-Ural Muslim community between 1905 and 1921 as an avenue for considering both the relationship between the state and its non-Russian communities and the interaction between high and low culture in Russian Muslim communities. Recent articles by Vladimir Buldakov and Melissa Stockdale have examined the appropriation of forms and symbols from the Russian peasantry by the educated classes for the purpose of creating patriotic propaganda during the Great War and 1917 revolutions. Both scholars have linked writers' and artists' borrowing of peasant art forms and styles as part of an effort to create a wartime Russian national identity that was distinct from other European (and particularly German) national cultures.<sup>4</sup> Stockdale argues that such literature and art, together with aid societies and communal rituals, created a sense of common identity and common purpose among Russia's higher and lower orders.<sup>5</sup> Buldakov, by contrast, identifies such literature as produced and consumed primarily by an urban liberal population that had limited firsthand experience of the peasantry and limited understanding

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4 Vladimir P. Buldakov, "Mass Culture and the Culture of the Masses in Russia, 1914–1922," in *Russian Culture in War and Revolution: Book 1, Popular Culture, the Arts, and Institutions*, eds. Murray Frame et al. (Bloomington, 2014), 27.

5 Melissa K. Stockdale, "Mobilizing the Nation: Patriotic Culture in Russia's Great War and Revolution, 1914–1920," in *Russian Culture in War and Revolution, 1914–1922: Book 2. Political Culture, Identities, Mentalities, and Memory*, eds. Murray Frame et al. (Bloomington, 2014), 3–5.

of peasant tastes. As a result, the impact of such literature on peasant identities and sentiments was limited.<sup>6</sup>

The study of wartime propaganda provides one lens through which to examine the wartime and revolutionary poems and songs in Russia's Volga-Ural Muslim community. As a religious and ethnic minority in the empire, the Volga-Ural Muslim community underwent its own processes of social and cultural change in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Some of these processes were driven from within the community while others involved institutions and actors from empire's dominant linguistic and religious groups, the Orthodox Russian-speakers. For example, as Agnès Kefeli argues in her study of Christianity and apostasy among non-Russians in the nineteenth-century Volga basin, Orthodox missionaries and educators noted the way in which peasants referenced popular mystical poems and stories to explain their religious convictions. In their efforts to stop non-Russian Christians from converting to Islam, these missionaries and teachers sought to replace these stories with improved literacy and access to Christian scripture in the vernacular languages of the region.<sup>7</sup> These Orthodox teachers and missionaries were not the only ones to observe the role of folklore and mystical tales in the peasant belief system. As reformers and activists within the Volga Basin's Muslim community sought to promote a more modern, empirical approach to Islam, they transmitted their message in the form of didactic stories.<sup>8</sup>

In other words, early 20th-century propagandistic poetry in the Volga-Ural Muslim community stands at the intersection of two developments: 1) the appropriation of aspects of peasant culture to create wartime propaganda that was distinctly national and might resonate with a non-elite audience, and 2) the appropriation of peasant folk forms as a means of educating the Muslim peasantry. In the case of wartime and revolutionary poetry, these two developments came together. Already from the 1880s, both Russian Orthodox clergymen and Muslim intellectuals began to imagine the non-Russian Volga peasant as a separate cultural category most reachable (and teachable) through particular "folk" forms of literature. In the politically-charged atmosphere of 1905–1921, the need to reach out to and reshape non-Russian peasants broadened from matters of religious conversion and proper Islam to

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6 Buldakov, "Mass Culture and Culture of the Masses," 25–27.

7 Agnès Kefeli, "Constructing an Islamic Identity: The Case of Elyshevo Village in the Nineteenth Century," in *Russia's Orient: Imperial Borderlands and Peoples, 1700–1917*, ed. Daniel E. Brower and Edward J. Lazzerini (Bloomington, 1997), 284–285.

8 Agnès Nilüfer Kefeli, *Becoming Muslim in Imperial Russia: Conversion, Apostasy and Literacy* (Ithaca, 2014), 216–230.

include revolution, military mobilization, nationalism and finally socialism. The number and kind of agents engaged in producing and deploying peasant-friendly propaganda increased, as did the range of causes behind which they attempted to mobilize Muslim peasant readers and listeners.

To track the integration of Russian Muslim folklore and popular forms into the political and revolutionary propaganda is to track two other processes underway across Russia during the first two decades of the 20th century. One is the cultural impact of what Peter Holquist has called Russia's continuum of crisis that began with the First World War and spanned the 1917 Revolutions and the civil war. Though the political leadership changed in the course of this crisis, a particular set of governing and mobilization strategies emerged over of the imperial war effort and evolved across the revolutionary and early Soviet period.<sup>9</sup> One of these strategies was the creation or manipulation of folk culture to disseminate political messages among populations that were considered illiterate or politically backward. This strategy came to full flower by the 1930s and 1940s with the composition of Turkic-language ballads and oral epic poems singing the praises of Joseph Stalin, but the roots of the practice lay in the Great War period.

Secondly, a study of the use of Muslim folk literature in disseminating propaganda reveals the relationship between the state (imperial or Soviet) and its non-Russian-speaking communities. In following the trajectory of altered and manufactured folk literature from internal community discourses on culture and revolution to empire-wide wartime mobilization and early Soviet political indoctrination, one also traces the careers of a small group of Tatar-language writers, some named and some anonymous, from their ethnic communities' newspapers and local printing houses to the fledging Soviet propaganda machine. Under the rule of governments that could not speak their people's language, these writers acted not only as translators, but as cultural interpreters crafting the state's messages into forms that they believed their peasants could understand. Thus, state understandings of a non-Russian culture and taste were shaped not only by their own biases, but by the preferences and prejudices of a particular faction of that non-Russian community's educated elite.

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9 Peter Holquist, *Making War, Forging Revolution: Russia's Continuum of Crisis, 1914–1921* (Cambridge, MA, 2002), 4–6.

### The Literary World of the Early 20th-century Tatar Peasant

The roots of the oral and written culture of early 20th-century Volga Muslim peasants goes back at least to the mid-1700s.<sup>10</sup> Over the 19th century, however, falling paper prices combined with rising education levels led to an explosion of writing across the community. From the late 1700s through the 1880s, this explosion took place within the world of manuscript production. From 1880 and, even more so after the October Manifesto of 1905 dismantled the censorship system, the most popular pieces of this literature appeared increasingly in commercially printed editions. Manuscript production continued, but became an outlet for material that was either of a more personal nature or illegal to publish under the late imperial regime.

The content of this literature could be divided into two categories. The first category consisted of what might be termed core texts. These were texts that were read across the region. Most of them were the work of elite authors, usually penned by Muslim religious scholars, or at least attributed to them. Some, such as *Bādāvam* or *Akhyrzaman kitaby* (*The Book of the End Times*), offered explicit instructions to Muslim peasants as to how they should worship and conduct themselves in daily life. Others, *Qissa-i Yusuf* (*The Tale of Joseph*), *Qissas al-Anbiya* (*The Tales of the Prophets*), *Kisekbash kitaby* (*The Book of the Severed Head*), and *The Deeds of Seyyid Battal Ghazi*, related the stories of Muslim saints and heroes, but Muslim peasants looked to such works for models of proper Muslim behavior and as mediums for re-enforcing and transmitting Islamic beliefs.<sup>11</sup> Though these texts circulated in manuscript form for much of the 1800s, by the 1890s, they became available in cheap published editions issued by Kazan University Press and, after 1905, by local Muslim presses, which printed thousands of copies of them annually.

The second category of this literature was composed of texts generated and reproduced by the peasants themselves. These included prayers for various occasions, the *bāyet* or ballad, and the *mōnājāt*, a form of religious or devotional song. All of these genres probably originated as oral literature, but in the 1910s, with the growth of literacy and rural primary schooling, peasants began to transcribe these compositions into homemade notebooks. In contrast to the literature described in the previous paragraph, the ballads and devotional songs were composed by individual peasants themselves, though

10 On the development of this culture and the historical consciousness underlying it, see Allen J. Frank, *Islamic Historiography and 'Bulghar' Identity among the Tatars and Bashkirs of Russia* (Leiden, 1998), 13–20.

11 Kefeli, *Becoming Muslim in Imperial Russia*, 62–86.

they followed established formulas, and often addressed issues of local or personal interest. The untimely death of a child, the drowning of a young woman, or the misfortunes of a seminary student might all serve as thematic material for a ballad or *bäyet*. The events described in the *bäyet* might be narrated in the third person (in the case of a death) or in the first person by the individual who had endured particular hardships. The *bäyet* also often carried religious or spiritual overtones. In the course of relating his or her story, the peasant narrator often portrayed himself or herself as faced with circumstances beyond his/her control and attributed his or her survival or good fortune to divine grace. In this way, the *bäyets* reconfirmed the message of core popular religious texts: the power of God over human affairs.<sup>12</sup>

### Intellectuals' Subversion of the Folk Tradition

The literary culture of 19th and early 20th-century Muslim peasants did not go unnoticed by the Volga Basin's Muslim religious and cultural reformers. In the second half of the nineteenth century, reformers capitalized on what they believed to be the peasants' love of parables and stories, penning their own stories to teach peasants to think about their religion in new ways, embrace scientific and empirical modes of thought, and move toward a more anthropocentric view of the universe.<sup>13</sup> By the early 1900s, however, a younger generation of reformist writers began to engage with the folk traditions in much more inventive and varied ways. Many of these young writers had grown up in rural households and folk literature had played a key role in their early education. One of these writers, Mäjät Gafuri, described in his memoirs how these texts were read in his household. Several times a week, his parents would gather the children as well as some of the neighboring families and Gafuri's father would begin to read a text such as *The Book of the End Times* (*Akhyrzaman kitaby*) aloud, stopping every few lines so that one of the adults in the room could explain the text to the children. These sessions of communal reading and explication left a deep impression on young Gafuri, who mapped the ideological world of these poetic texts onto the everyday world of his native village:

12 F.V. Äkhmätova, I.N. Nadirov, and R.F. Iagfärov, "Tatar khalqynnyng bäyetäre häm monäjätläre," in *Tatar khalyq ijaty: Bäyetläär* (Kazan, 1983), 5–22.

13 Kefeli, *Becoming Muslim in Imperial Russia*, 216–230.

In those days, I became really afraid. But the mill at the other end of our street made me glad. [According to his elders' explication of *The Book of End Times*, one could take shelter from the Dejjal (the Muslim equivalent of the anti-Christ) in a mosque or a mill]. As soon as I heard the words "The Dejjal is coming," I would run to hide in the mill. [...] In my opinion, the Dejjal did not live on our street, but on the big street, on the street of the Bahau elders. Believing this, I considered the people and the boys of that street to be very unlucky.<sup>14</sup>

As Gafuri grew up, his exposure to reformed education led him to reject the mystical brand of Islam of his native village in favor of a more secular outlook. Nonetheless, the readings of Islamic mystical literature and the atmosphere of communally shared joy, awe and terror that accompanied them loomed large in his memory and was inextricably intertwined with his recollection of family, home, and security. For Gafuri, *The Book of the End Times* was simultaneously a relic of a culturally backward, pre-modern past and a text through which he first came to perceive the world and his place in it.

Post-1905 writers' complex relationship with the peasant literary canon shaped the way in which they integrated traditional and folk texts into their reformist and political writings. These writings often mocked peasant ignorance, clerical corruption, self-interested merchants, and poor adherence to Islam, but they rarely took aim at the traditional literary works themselves. On the contrary, they took advantage of mass familiarity with particular literary works, forms and genres to disseminate their own messages about modernity vs. backwardness, social justice, democracy and service to the community and nation. Two early examples of such work were 19-year-old Gabdulla Tukai's "On Unity," published in late 1905 and *The New Bādāvam*, a pamphlet issued in early 1906. Both works borrowed from the popular Muslim poem *Bādāvam*, a work read among peasants in the sort of context described in Gafuri's memoir. Tukai's "On Unity" borrowed wholesale the structure of *Bādāvam* and retained the refrain "*bādāvam*" (a Persian word meaning forever or without end), but replaced the Muslim content of the original poem with a call for unity among Russian Muslims in the face of a Russia altered by revolution:

Come together in union,  
Let the hypocrisy come to an end,  
Though our bodies are separate,

14 Mäjät Gafuri, "Tärjemä-i khal," *Mäjät Gafuri: Äsärlär dürt tomda*, 4 vols., ed. Fatyima Ibrahimova (Kazan, 1981) 4:357.

Let us be of one soul, *bădăvam* [...]  
 As long as Tatars,  
 Lie asleep  
 And keep shooting at one another  
 They will be disunited, *bădăvam* [...]<sup>15</sup>

The second poem, *The New Bădăvam*, borrowed its title from the same Muslim didactic poem, but its opening lines, which bid greeting to the readers/listeners and beg their attention, were drawn from a different source: the personal ballads composed and performed by peasants. As with Tukai's "On Unity," the content of the poem, however, was anything but traditional. It attacked the *bais*, the wealthy Muslims merchants, emphasizing the immense luxury that they enjoyed while their poorer co-religionists worked and starved.<sup>16</sup>

Far from mocking an old form, "On Unity" and *The New Bădăvam* rode on the coattails of the existing and well-entrenched local Islamic mystical literature. For Muslim readers, the original *Bădăvam* was a didactic text meant to teach and remind believers of their obligations as Muslims. By associating his poem with this text, Tukai and the anonymous author of *The New Bădăvam* effectively cued readers that their work was also didactic (meant to awaken readers to the new, post-1905 socio-economic and political realities), and was meant to be read and internalized in the same manner.

The young writers who began their careers in the wake of the 1905 Revolution were keenly aware of their society's folk and traditional literatures. As they matured, their re-workings became more self-conscious and complex. For example, in 1908, Tukai published "The Haymarket, or the New Severed Head", a re-working of a popular mystical poem *The Book of the Severed Head*. In the original poem, a faithful Muslim and his family were attacked by a demon. The family was devoured and the man himself was reduced to a talking severed head. This severed head called upon the Prophet Muhammad for aid and the Prophet sent 'Ali to slay the demon and restore the man's family. Tukai's version preserved the basic plot of a severed head seeking aid against the demon that had devoured its family, but instead of calling upon God and the Prophet for aid, the severed head in Tukai's poem appealed to the Muslim merchants and townsmen of Kazan's Haymarket. After debating which secular power (the Russian army, the State Duma, local politicians) to call upon, these "devout" Muslims decide to send a circus wrestler to confront the demon on their

15 Gabdulla Tukai, "Ittifaq khaqynda," *Gabdulla Tukai: Āsărlăr bish tomda*, 5 vols., ed. Rashat Gainanov (Kazan, 1985), 1:44–45.

16 "Ianga bădăvam kitaby," *Ianga bădăvam* (Orenburg, 1906), 2–10.



behalf.<sup>17</sup> The original *Book of the Severed Head* emphasized the need for steadfast belief and the submission of human beings to divine power; a Muslim in desperate need prayed for help and was answered with miracles. Tukai's new version fulfilled multiple functions simultaneously. On one level, it mocked the more fantastic aspects of the original poem by placing them in the very familiar and mundane milieu of Kazan's Haymarket Square. While 'Ali, the hero of the original poem, rides a horse, Qarakhmat the wrestler must ride the city trolley on his "long" journey (about a five-minute walk) to the demon's lair.<sup>18</sup> The combination of elevated, archaic language and prosaic situations lent the work a distinctly comic tone. At the same time Tukai used the poem to ridicule the hypocrisy of Kazan's Muslim population, who put themselves forward as genuine Muslims and upstanding members of their community, but shrank from taking on any responsibility. When faced with a crisis, only Qarakhmat is able to act in a productive manner. The other members of the Muslim community lose themselves in debate as they tried to find someone to solve their problems for them. Once the problem was resolved (the demon slain and the severed head restored to human form), they showed the insincerity of their gratitude by cutting corners on Qarakhmat's reward: they bought him a golden pocket watch without a chain or fob.<sup>19</sup>

"The Haymarket, or the New Severed Head" was but one of a number of poems in which Muslim writers either urged their readers to political action or tried to acquaint them with the political and social issues of the day, but couched their appeals in forms that assumed their audience's deep knowledge of the folk literary canon. These allusions were not meant to ridicule the traditional literature so much as to meet potential readers and listeners on familiar ground and to use that familiarity as a starting point for indoctrinating the peasants into new ways of thinking about their society. Ultimately, though, their success in this venture hinged upon the peasants reading and responding to the texts in the way that reformist poets intended them to.

### Mobilization and Peasant Culture in the Great War

In August of 1914, Russia declared war on Germany. The mobilization of the Muslim men of Russia's Volga Basin, Ural Mountains and Siberia began in

17 Gabdulla Tukai, "Pechän bazary, iakhud ianga kisekbash," *Gabdulla Tukai: Āsārlār bish tom̄da*, 1:260–266.

18 Tukai, "Pechän bazary," 1:267.

19 Tukai, Pechän bazary," 1:277.

October 1914, around the same time as the Muslim holiday Eid al-Adha (Tatar: Qurban-ait), a fact that was recalled in the ballads composed by peasants recruited into the Russian army. According to some estimates, between 800,000 and 1.5 million Muslims were drafted into the army between 1914 and 1917. Volga-Ural Muslims made up a significant percentage of this number. Some of these were assigned to the reserves, but many were sent to the German and Romanian fronts.

Mobilization for war and partings and risks associated with it had long been a favorite subject of Volga Muslim peasant *bäyets*. Since at least the Napoleonic wars, peasant soldiers had used this genre to respond to their wartime experiences and convey them to others.<sup>20</sup> From the Caucasian Wars (1817–1864) to the Great War, a growing number of these ballads were written down by their authors or listeners, and a relatively set formula emerged. The war *bäyet* began with the soldier-author's mobilization and departure from his native village. It then related his experiences at the front. It might end with the resolution of a particular battle or with his return home. The focus of the *bäyet* was on the soldier's internal world: his sorrow at being parted from his family, the perpetual fear he experienced on the battlefield, his revulsion and anxiety about having to commit violence, and the belief that only divine grace kept him alive.<sup>21</sup>

Prior to the February Revolution, political remarks occasionally slipped into the *bäyets*, but the *bäyets* themselves were not deliberately political texts. In the *bäyets* composed by Great War soldiers, the focus was upon the Muslim soldier fighting to survive in a brutal, incomprehensible terrifying environment in which bullets and mortars fell like rain and the ground was covered with severed heads and armless, legless screaming men.<sup>22</sup> They did not dwell at length upon who had created that environment and they did not prescribe any political solution to escape it. In the *bäyets* of the peasant-soldiers, war was

20 See, for example "Rus-Frantsiuz sugyshy bäyetläre, berenche bäyet," *Tatar khalyq ijaty: Bäyetläär*, eds. F.V. Äkmätova, I.N. Nadirova and K.B. Jamaletdinova, (Kazan, 1983), 39–40.

21 Some examples of *bäyets* from the Caucasian Wars, the Russo-Turkish War (1877–1878) and the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905) can be found in *Tatar khalyq ijaty: Bäyetläär*, 40–72; For more detail on the content and structure of the Muslim soldiers' ballads of the Great War, see Danielle Ross, "Gog, Magog, i aeroplan: Tatarskaia narodnaia literature kak otvet na pervuiu mirovuiu voynu (1914–1917)," in *Malen'kii chelovek i bol'shaia voina v istorii Rossii: seredina XIX-seredina XX v. Materialy mezhdunarodnogo kollokviuma* (St. Petersburg, 2014).

22 Flora Vagapovna Akhmetova-Urmanche, ed., *Tatar eposy: Bäyetläär*, (Kazan, 2001), 308, 318; "Jidenche bäyet," *Tatar khalyq ijaty: Bäyetläär*, 88; Mõhåmmådzarif ibn Mõhåmmådjån, "Bu bäyet," 7.

a calamity comparable to earthquake, famine or plague, and, once one was “cursed” with it, one trusted in God and did what was necessary to survive.<sup>23</sup>

### The Fight for the Soul of the Tatar Peasant, Part I: The Tsar

The mobilization of Russian Muslims from the Volga Basin and the Ural Mountains into the war in 1914 sparked the production of war *bäyets* by individual soldiers. Most of these *bäyets* remained personal, private productions, preserved only in manuscript form. By 1915 and 1916, however, war *bäyets* began to appear in print. Among these was a work entitled *A Soldier's Letter: An Illustrated War Ballad*, published in Kazan in 1915. Though published under a pseudonym, at first glance, it bore close resemblance to other published and unpublished *bäyets* of the 1914–1917 period. It began with the first-person-narrated tale of Biktimer the soldier, a peasant mobilized in 1914 and parted from his wife and children.<sup>24</sup> The *bäyet* described in verse his experiences in the trenches, including his encounters with mortars, barbed wire and airplanes, and expressed Biktimer's distress at losing his friends in battle and being in constant peril.<sup>25</sup>

In the second issue of the serialized ballad, however, the tone changed. Here, Biktimer's letter was answered by an elder from his village. The old man explained that he, too, had once been mobilized into the army (in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878), had seen battle, and so he understood Biktimer's distress. However, he had prevailed and returned, and Biktimer would do the same.<sup>26</sup> He reminded Biktimer and the readers that it was important to keep in mind that the soldiers were serving His Highness the Emperor and fighting for the glory of his empire. With this in mind, he advised Biktimer to be brave and fight hard and try to win a St. George's cross.<sup>27</sup>

This sudden shift in tone and style was a complete departure from the genuine soldier *bäyets*. First, the mixing of genres (*bäyet* and epistolary) betrayed a level of sophistication beyond the typical peasant ballad. The presentation of multiple voices in dialogue (Biktimer, his wife, his father) also contrasted sharply with the single-voice personal narratives of the traditional *bäyets*. But

23 Hidäyetullah Nabiev, *Ranenyi Soldat' Bäyete* (Belebei, 1916), 3.

24 Iazuchy “Biktimer,” *Soldat' khaty: räsemle sugysh bäyete, awwälge khat*, (Kazan, 1915), 4–5.

25 Iazuchy “Biktimer,” *awwälge khat*, 6–7.

26 Iazuchy “Biktimer,” *Soldat' khaty: räsemle sugysh bäyete, “Biktimer” soldatynyng ikenche khaty* (Kazan, 1915), 5–6.

27 Iazuchy “Biktimer,” *ikenche khaty*, 7.

the most glaring difference between *A Soldier's Letter* and the peasant-composed soldiers' *bäyets* was the patriotic rhetoric of the former. The prevailing theme of the peasant-authored *bäyets* of the Great War was the soldier's misfortune in being sent to the war. He did not go to the war out of desire to defend his empire or his emperor, but because he had the bad luck to have been mobilized.<sup>28</sup> Once he found himself at the front, he relied on luck and divine grace to bring him home. He took no definitive actions, except, perhaps, to save his own life or to return to his loved ones. If the emperor figured at all in these *bäyets*, it was only as the distant and indifferent author of the soldier's misery.<sup>29</sup> For a *bäyet* author to call upon himself or his comrades to undertake heroic feats in the service of the empire is entirely uncharacteristic of the soldier *bäyet* genre as it had evolved by the time of the Great War.

And this odd note in *A Soldier's Letter* calls attention to other, more subtle inconsistencies in the text. For example, in those portions of the ballad that adhered more faithfully to the traditional *bäyet* formula, the author makes repeated allusions to the popular or folk Islamic literary tradition. The German soldiers are compared to the followers of Gog and Magog.<sup>30</sup> The airplanes are compared to fire-breathing dragons.<sup>31</sup> Such imagery would have been familiar to peasant readers and listeners, but it almost never appeared in the actual peasant-soldier *bäyets*, where descriptions of trench warfare were usually very naturalistic. Rather, it would appear that the author of *A Soldier's Letter* consciously tried to describe a war in terms that he imagined a "backward" peasant steeped in Islamic mystical literature would use. In doing so, he unmasked himself as someone who was decidedly not a semi-literate peasant and most probably not a veteran of the trenches.

The political agenda of *A Soldier's Letter* again came to the fore in the fourth issue of the ballad. Here, Biktimer falls prisoner and is sent away to a prisoner of war camp in Germany. The narrator describes all of the misfortunes that have befallen the soldiers separated from the homeland. Repeated contrasts are drawn between the comfort and nourishment of the soldiers' homeland and the cruelty and loneliness of Germany. The Germans are described as cold people who speak a strange language and beat the prisoners. Food and water,

28 "Sugysh bäyete," 53 (Manuscript held in the personal library of the article's author); "Bäyet-i soldat-i sugysh," From the notebook of Khamza Bashiruly of Ianga Sala village, Tatarstan, Russian Federation, 20 (Manuscript held by the article's author).

29 Flora Vagapovna Akhemtova-Urmanche, ed., *Tatar eposy*, 304, 315–316; "Sugysh bäyete" 53; Nabiev, *Ranenyi soldat' bäyete*, 13.

30 Iazuchy "Biktimer," *awwälge khat*, 6.

31 Iazuchy "Biktimer," *awwälge khat*, 7.

when available, do not taste as good as they did in Biktimer's homeland. All Biktimer can do is to be a loyal soldier, endure his exile and wait to be rescued.<sup>32</sup>

It is difficult to determine the precise origin of *A Soldier's Letter*. All parts of the work were published anonymously. It was printed through one of a number of private Muslim publishing houses rather than through any state organization. Rather than a peasant production, it appears to be a Tatar-language example of the patriotic literature and art that was produced by urban liberal authors during the war. This latter fact suggests that the work falls into the category of privately-produced patriotic literature and artwork circulated in Russia during the war.<sup>33</sup> Like his Russian fellow-subjects, the author of *A Soldier's Letter*, adopted what he imagined to be peasant forms and symbols as a means of conveying a message of support for the Russian war effort. This suggests that Volga-Ural Muslim writers and publishers took part in the same wartime culture as their Russian-speaking fellow subjects.

Buldakov's assertion that educated authors turned to peasant culture as a source of authentically Russian national symbols does not work as well, however, for the Tatar Muslim case. For a creator of Tatar-language pro-war propaganda, the target of patriotic adoration would have been the Russian emperor and empire, not Muslim culture or Tatar national culture. On the eve of the Great War, the imperial government often expressed suspicion toward national movements among its subjects as something that could lead to separatism. One potential reading of *A Soldier's Letter* is as a reconciliation of imperial and Muslim identity. Its author manages to evoke Tatar-Muslim culture while simultaneously encouraging loyalty to the empire. Alternately, the text may be read as a continuation of the pre-war re-working of well-known mystical and folk works to educate peasant readers on politics, religion and social-cultural reform. The lack of information relating to reception or distribution of *A Soldier's Letter* makes it difficult to determine either its intended audience or its impact.

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32 Iazuchy "Biktimer," *Biktimer soldatynyng nemets qubyna äsir töshkän iazgan öchenche khaty* (Kazan, 1916), 1–3.

33 Hubertus F. Jahn, *Patriotic Culture in Russia during World War I* (Ithaca, 1995); Buldakov, "Mass Culture and Culture of the Masses".

## The Fight for the Soul of the Tatar Peasant, Part 11: The Ottoman Sultan

The reasons for the strident denouncement of Germany and German POW camps in *A Soldier's Letter* become clear when one turns to another body of literature directed at Russian Muslim soldiers during the war. From 1914, Germany and the Ottoman Empire had used various strategies to draw the support of Muslim British, French and Russian subjects away from their respective colonial governments. In late 1914, Sultan Mehmed V had declared a jihad against these powers. By 1915–1916, Muslim prisoners of war were sent to separate camps, in which, on one hand, they would be allowed to practice their religion, but, on the other, they were subjected to subtle and not so subtle pressure to defect to the Ottoman side. Russian Muslim intellectuals and clergy who had left Russia for political reasons became the front line in this effort, working directly with soldiers and organizing the distribution of pro-Ottoman publications.<sup>34</sup> Here again, poetry and song were adopted media for promoting positive feelings toward the Ottoman Empire. Some of these songs exploited the commonalities in language and culture between the Russian Turkic-speakers and the Ottoman Turks.<sup>35</sup> Others emphasized shared Islamic faith and the duty of Muslims to serve the sultan-caliph:

We are going away to lands of Islam  
 We are departing for those lands.  
 Oh, Padishah, you are a true lord,  
 We will serve you.  
 We will protect ourselves from the kafirs,  
 We will part ways from what came before.  
 Oh, Padishah, you are a true lord,

34 On the prisoner of war camps constructed for Russian Muslim prisoners and the effort to convince these prisoners to defect to the Ottoman army, see M.S. Mähdiev, "German jire – iäshel ülän," in *Idel 7* (1990); Iskander Giliázov, *Legion Idel-Ural* (Kazan, 2005); Abdel-Raouf Sinno, "The Role of Islam in German Propaganda in the Arab East during the First World War: Aims, Means, Results and Local Reactions," in *The First World War as Remembered in the Countries of the Eastern Mediterranean*, ed. Olaf Farschid, Manfred Kropp, Stephen Dähne (Beirut, 2006); Gerhard Höpp, "Die Wünsdorfer Moschee: Eine Episode islamischen Lebens in Deutschland, 1915–1930," in *Die Welt des Islams*, 36/2 (1996) 204–218; Gerard Clauson, "Tatar Poets of the Great War," in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, 2 (1969), 151–160.

35 Ziya Gökalp, "Turan" & 'Ali Janip, "Turang iuly," [from a book of poetry and political news printed for Russian Turkic POWs, title page missing] (Berlin, 1917), 71–73.

Our generous Sultan.  
 Let us offer up our lives,  
 May our blood be a sacrifice.  
 Oh, Padishah, you are a true lord,  
 Our generous Sultan.  
 May our fathers be a sacrifice  
 May our mothers be a sacrifice.  
 May our children be a sacrifice,  
 Oh, Padishah, you are a true lord [...]<sup>36</sup>

Like *A Soldier's Letter*, "We are Going Away to the Lands of the Islam" told the singer and the listener how they were to feel about the war and soldiering and who they were to side with. Both built upon the existing tradition of soldier ballads and devotional songs, as their authors sought to take advantage of peasants' familiarity with these cultural forms, but in both cases, the authors also violated the basic rules of the genres and subverted them for a new purpose: in this case, rallying support for Russian or Ottoman war efforts. In this sense, the wartime creation of propagandistic folklore continued the pre-war efforts of the modernizing and nationalist intellectuals, but it also forged a link between cultural elites of the ethnic communities and the imperial governments, something that had not existed before the war.

### The Fight for the Soul of the Tatar Peasant, Part III: The Bolsheviks

As the Bolsheviks fought for control of the fallen empire, they, too, quickly came to view Turkic soldier ballads, mystical poems and devotional songs as potential vehicle for the dissemination of wartime propaganda. They were aided in this task by the presence in their ranks of some of the same Muslim intellectuals who had re-written and toyed with traditional literary works before the war, but they were also adopting a practice that the Russian and Ottoman governments had already been using for at least two years. By 1918 and 1919, fledgling Bolshevik presses began to turn out "red" versions of literature popular among the Muslim peasants.

Some adopted the *bäyet* formula and aimed at discrediting the Bolshevik's political rivals. "The Speculator's *Bäyet*" is an example of such a text. It begins with a long critique of wartime traders, detailing how these men move through

36 From the notebook of Khänäfi Gibadullin (b. 1881) of Göberchäk village, Tatarstan, Russian Federation, 21. (Manuscript held in the personal library of the article's author).

the worn-torn empire from central Russia to Turkestan trading in food and other high-demand goods, eating in fine restaurants and purchasing women. “They call us speculators,” the unnamed narrator of the poem informs his readers, “we call ourselves merchants.”<sup>37</sup> The text additionally accused these traders of accepting money from the Germans and paying bribes to the old tsarist police.<sup>38</sup>

Commerce had been a significant part of the economy of the Volga-Ural Muslim community, from lowly travelling peddlers to urban-based merchants with enough capital to earn places in Russia’s first and second merchant guilds. Members of the latter category had played a critical role in funding schools and religious institutions during the 1800s and early 1900s. Pre-1917 reformist rhetoric had derided the wealthy Muslim merchant, who spent his wealth for his personal pleasure (on food, drink and women) rather than on educating and improving the community. “The Speculator’s *Bäyet*,” however, singled out traders as a class criminalized not only by their excessive and exploitative consumption, but by their political behavior, particularly their collusion with the old and new enemies of the revolutionary order and their willingness to profit from wartime hardships.

The *bäyet*’s political edge grows sharper as its narrator returns to Kazan, the center of the Turko-Tatar nationalist movement from summer 1917 until the Bolshevik-dominated Soviet seized control of the city in March 1918. The merchant narrator makes appearances at various well-known locations in the city, including the Bolgar Hotel, which had served as a cultural center for the local Muslim community and housed the administrative offices of several of the city’s Muslim newspapers. He is welcomed by the city’s Muslim elite and encounters the Maksudi brothers, Akhmat-Hadi and Sadreddin (the latter served as president of the short-lived Idel-Ural Autonomy), as well as Galimjan Barudi, who was Mufti of the Orenburg Spiritual Assembly in 1917–1918 and took a prominent role in the rituals establishing an autonomous Muslim republic in the Volga Basin.<sup>39</sup>

By the end of 1917, the old imperial infrastructure of the Volga Basin had collapsed. The Turkic-language newspapers were some of the few sources available to local Muslims on political events, and most of these papers were shut down after the Bolshevik seizure of Kazan in March. The Bolsheviks in turn, lost the city to white Czechs in the summer of 1918 and only regained it in August. In other words, for the inhabitants of Kazan Province, 1918 was a year

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37 *Ispekulant Bäyety* (Ufa, 1919), 3.

38 *Ispekulant Bäyety*, 3–4.

39 *Ispekulant Bäyety*, 6.



of successive changes in leadership combined with a dearth of information. Once the Bolsheviks regained control of the region in late 1918 and 1919, it became necessary not only to inform the population of the new status quo, but to help them to process the events of the past year in an ideologically acceptable manner. Works like the “The Speculator’s Bāyet” fulfilled both of these functions. It referenced a recent past that readers and listeners would have possessed at least fragmentary knowledge of, but by relating it from the point of view of a corrupt war-profiteer, it implied that all of the non-Bolshevik authority figures of the previous years (the merchant sponsors, the urban educated Muslim elite, the members of the Idel-Ural Autonomy’s government) were enemies and exploiters of the intended readers, the Muslim peasants.

The Russian civil war era (1918–1921) witnessed a further production of poetry that borrowed titles and forms from the peasant literary canon, but used them as vehicles to indoctrinate readers into the new Soviet political order and value system. Galiāskar Kāmal, a rural-born publicist and playwright who had begun his writing career in Kazan in the early 1900s, published an entire volume of such works entitled *Declamations* in 1921. These same poems were originally published and circulated in the Bolshevik periodical *Esh* (*Labor*) in 1918 and 1919. Among Kāmal’s poems was “The Book of Eternity” (“Bādāvam Kitaby”), yet another re-working of the popular Muslim didactic poem “Bādāvam Kitaby.” Kāmal’s version introduced readers to the ideology of the newly-instated Soviet government:

Get acquainted with the Soviet Union,  
 The fullness of hearts,  
 By making the beams strong  
 We have laid the foundation, bādāvam.  
 Now, wealth has no value,  
 And the bourgeoisie no longer command respect,  
 No one suffers from thirst anymore  
 Everyone is equal, bādāvam ...<sup>40</sup>

Other poems in the collections included “The Brand New Severed Head,” “The Book of the Red Apple,” and “The New ‘There are more such marvels,’” all of which fused the structure of well-known mystical and didactic poems with Soviet ideology. It is difficult to read these poems as purely humorous or mocking of the pre-revolutionary belief system, because once past their titles, they consist of quite humorless recitations of the new Soviet worldview. The old

40 Galiāskar Kāmal, “Bādāvam kitaby,” *Deklamatsiialār* (Kazan, 1921), 16.

political, cultural and economic authorities (the tsar, the clergy, the wealthy merchants) are repeatedly decried as exploiters and class enemies; the readers are repeatedly reminded that Soviet power has brought them freedom and an end to oppression and poverty; now all men would be equal.<sup>41</sup> And as with *A Soldier's Letter* or "The Speculator's Bāyet," they were packaged in a form that could easily be read out loud and communally to gatherings of mixed age and education in the same way that religious poems and peasant ballads were performed. The peasants would learn the values in the same way that they learned the old ones. The Volga Muslim writers of the new Soviet order were confident in this assumption because like Gafuri, many of them had been born into rural families and socialized in this very manner.

### Conclusion

From the late 1800s, modernist clergy, education reformers and liberal and socialist activists in the Volga-Ural Muslim community appropriated, re-wrote and subverted popular Islamic literature and folk genres as a means of inculcating Russian Muslim peasants with new sets of values. During the Great War and Russian revolutions, this practice was expanded from internal community discussions of Islam and morality to empire-wide political topics, including loyalty to the empire and the construction of a new Soviet order. In some respects, this transformation mirrored the production of Russian-language propaganda during the same period. At the same time, however, the processes of creating folklore and attempting to speak the language of the peasant as they unfolded in the Volga-Ural Muslim community were also shaped by the internal culture of that community and by its peculiar position as a linguistically alien minority within the empire. In times of war and revolution, the imperial and Soviet governments relied on educated elites within the ethnic community to translate messages into language and form comprehensible to the non-Russian masses. The upbringing and education of these elites, in turn, shaped the way that they conceived of their own community's peasants and lower orders and the forms through which they chose to communicate with them. The result, in the Volga-Ural Muslim (or Tatar) case, was the creation of a literature the structure of which was borrowed from below while the content came from above (from the imperial Russian, Ottoman or Soviet governments), and which was generated primarily by members of the community.

41 Galiāskar Kāmal, "Tanga Tāqyi gājāp," *Deklamatsiialār*, 3–7; Galiāskar Kāmal, "Qyzyl alma kitaby," *Deklamatsiialār*, 9–10; Galiāskar Kāmal, "Aq' shōkr kitaby," *Deklamatsiialār*, 10–12.

The multiple deconstructions and re-constructions of Russian society that occurred between 1905 and 1921 caused successive re-orderings of the political, social and ideological landscapes. Across this period, however, the ruling governments and their native intermediaries relied upon the same strategies to inform Muslims peasants of these changes. There was not only a continuity in propaganda strategies and writing personnel across the revolutionary divide (and, indeed, across imperial borders, in the case of the German-Ottoman propaganda effort), but also a continuity of understanding of how a particular non-Russian peasant society consumed text and internalized information. Thus, while in some ways the Great War and the Russian Revolutions precipitated a decolonization of the Russian Empire, these events also refined and expanded practices of government-minority relations that were born under the old regime but were retained under the new one.

# Continuing the Great Game: Turkestan as a German Objective in World War I

*David X. Noack*

Until this day, historiography has neglected the Great War in Turkestan – despite its significance for both the post-World War I and post-World War II order in this strategically important region. The term “Turkestan” roughly describes the area between the Caspian Sea in the West and the Gobi desert in the East. It is also common to define Turkestan as the region where the Turkic peoples live, which, however, comprises a much broader area. In the course of this article, Turkestan is defined as the area of the modern day states of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan – so called Western Turkestan – and the Chinese autonomous province of Xinjiang, which is in the original documents often called Sinkiang or Eastern Turkestan. Today, this is a common definition and is broadly used in academic and journalistic literature.

This chapter is based on research undertaken in the Political Archive of the German Foreign Ministry (*Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes, PA-AA*). It focuses on the German plans for Turkestan and the perception in Berlin of what the other main powers were aiming for in Central Asia or of what nature their undertakings were in the region. Other researchers have focused on the British and Russian archives, trying to establish the interaction of these powers in the area.

## State of Research

So far, little research has been devoted to Turkestan during the First World War and especially to German politics concerning Turkestan. Some articles have dealt with specific aspects of the Great War in this territory, like the British intervention in 1918/1919.<sup>1</sup> There are several works depicting the “Great Game” (also known as the “Tournament of Shadows” in Russia) in the ante-War years

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<sup>1</sup> Werner Zürrer, “Die britische Intervention in Transkaspien 1918/1919,” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 23 (1975), 344–80.

from 1856 to 1914. The most recent of these works are Rudolf A. Mark's professorial dissertation<sup>2</sup> and Evgeny Sergeev's book about the Tournament of Shadows until the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907.<sup>3</sup>

In Germany and Sweden, three books have been published which concentrate on several aspects of the First World War and the years following it in Turkestan. The historiographical approaches taken by all three books mirror the borders drawn by the colonial powers. Rudolf Mark made research on Russian and Soviet Turkestan and Afghanistan<sup>4</sup>, Franziska Torma concentrated her research on Russian and Soviet Turkestan<sup>5</sup> and the Swedish historian Lars-Erik Nyman focused exclusively on Eastern/Chinese Turkestan.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, Jörn Happel examined the insurrection of 1916 in Russian Turkestan.<sup>7</sup> In his research Nyman relied on British, German, and Swedish archives. Mark and Happel on the other hand used German and Russian sources. Torma focused exclusively on the German archives. So far, no research has connected Western and Eastern Turkestan as a broader area by using archives from all great powers involved in the area – Germany, Britain and Russia.

### The History of Turkestan until the Great War

In the middle of the 19th century the term "Great Game" became a popular shorthand in the English-speaking world, describing the rivalries of the colonial powers in Central Asia. Russia's Foreign Minister and Chancellor Karl Nesselrode, on the other hand, labelled the specific conflict between Britain and Russia over influence in the region the "Tournament of Shadows". Once the Crimean War (1853–1856) stalemated Russia's ambitions in Eastern Europe, the politics of the Tsarist empire focused increasingly on Central and Eastern Asia. After several set-backs within his own empire, like the Polish January-Uprising

2 Rudolf A. Mark, *Im Schatten des Great Game: Deutsche "Weltpolitik" und russischer Imperialismus in Zentralasien 1871–1914* (Paderborn, 2012).

3 Evgeny Sergeev, *The Great Game, 1856–1907: Russo-British Relations in Central and East Asia* (Baltimore, 2013).

4 Rudolf A. Mark, *Krieg an fernen Fronten: Die Deutschen in Zentralasien und am Hindukusch 1914–1914* (Paderborn, 2013).

5 Franziska Torma, *Turkestan-Expeditionen: Zur Kulturgeschichte deutscher Forschungsreisen nach Mittelasien (1890–1930)* (Bielefeld, 2011).

6 Lars-Erik Nyman, *Great Britain and Chinese, Russian and Japanese Interests in Sinkiang, 1918–1934* (Malmö, 1977).

7 Jörn Happel, *Nomadische Lebenswelten und zarische Politik – Der Aufstand in Zentralasien 1916* (Stuttgart, 2010).

of 1863/1864, Tsar Alexander II was longing for a prestigious success in his foreign policies.<sup>8</sup>

In the two British-Afghan Wars (1839–42 and 1878–80), the British-Indian army tried to turn Afghanistan into a buffer state against Russian expansionism. The British concept foresaw that the land on the Hindu Kush should be put under Delhi's tutelage. The Russian Army, on the other side, conquered vast territories of Central Asia with several great military expeditions from the 1860s to the 1880s. But after the conquests of the two European powers Central Asia became a region of territories with precarious statehoods under indirect control of the colonial powers.

The Tsarist Empire defeated the two Khanates of Chiva and Bukhara and first conquered and then dissolved the Khanate of Khoqand.<sup>9</sup> In the remaining protectorates Russia ensured trade privileges and was granted the navigation on the Amu Darya river, which was often called Oxus at the time. The Amu Darya basin, also known as the "Duab of Turkestan", was one of the most productive agricultural areas of Central Asia. Within several decades, the Russians increased the production of cotton in this region in order to become independent from North American cotton imports. In 1914, Central Asia was only second to the United States in world cotton production. Throughout the pre-War era, cotton remained of key military importance: it was a major component in the explosive charge for propulsive ammunition.

Russian political supervisors controlled the politics of the Khans of Chiva and Bukhara. In the latter protectorate, there were also several large Russian garrisons.<sup>10</sup> One of the main instruments for the integration of these territories into Russia's colonial periphery was the Transcaspian railroad. Construction began in 1880 and ended in 1905. It made massive military reinforcements possible, brought the region closer to the Russian homeland, and transported goods in both directions.<sup>11</sup>

In the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, the British and Russian governments defined their spheres of interest in Persia, China and Central Asia. This agreement constituted – after decades of intense rivalry – a new and hitherto unthinkable alliance between London and Moscow. The reason for this was

8 Milan Hauner, *What is Asia to us? Russia's Asian Heartland Yesterday and Today* (New York and London, 1992), 44.

9 Alexander Morrison, "Russia, Khoqand, and the search for a natural frontier, 1863–1865," *Ab Imperio* 15 (2014), 166–192; Sergei Abashin, "The 'fierce fight' at Oshoba: a microhistory of the conquest of the Khoqand Khanate," *Central Asian Survey* 33 (2014), 215–231.

10 Mark, *Im Schatten des Great Game*, 44.

11 David MacKenzie, "Turkestan's Significance to Russia (1850–1917)," *Russian Review* 33 (1974), 179–80.

the appearance of a new player in the region: the German Reich. Starting at the end of the 19th century, German business interests focused on the “pénétration pacifique” down the Danube and into the Ottoman Empire and towards Persia.<sup>12</sup> The engagement of German military advisers in Constantinople<sup>13</sup> and Swedish military personnel in Teheran<sup>14</sup> added a military dimension to Germany’s economic advance. Sweden was a close ally of Germany since the foundation of the German Empire in 1871.<sup>15</sup> The close cooperation with the Swedes enabled the *Kaiserreich* to extend its influence right up to Central Asia and British India.

Already in 1906, the Russian government allowed a journey of two German military observers through Russian Turkestan. One year later, the German Foreign Ministry (*Auswärtiges Amt*, AA) received a detailed report about the situation in Russia’s southern periphery.<sup>16</sup> This first report of Russian Central Asia already included proposals to incite an armed insurrection there. The military observer proposed that this aspect should be part of a strategy for decomposing Russia. This strategy was indeed enacted from 1914 onwards.

### The First World War

In the second half of 1914 German politicians and economic leaders defined their objectives in the Great War. Back then, Turkestan remained almost insignificant. Yet, during the first three years of the war several elements of German foreign policy turned out to be influential for Central Asia: the encouragement of the Jihad, the strategy of decomposing Russia, and the campaign in Persia. After the Ottoman Empire had entered the war on the side of the axis powers, Germany began to support the Jihad in Russian, French, and British controlled territories.<sup>17</sup> Additionally, a strategy of decomposing Russia was enforced early

12 Friedrich Scherer, *Adler und Halbmond: Bismarck und der Orient 1878–1890* (Paderborn, 2001).

13 Hans Werner Neulen, *Feldgrau in Jerusalem* (Munich, 1991), 16.

14 Nils Palmstierna, “Swedish Army Officers as Instructors in African and Asian Countries,” *Revue Internationale d’Histoire Militaire* 7 (1967), 51–57.

15 Klaus-Richard Böhme, “Deutsch-schwedische Militärbeziehungen 1918–1932,” in *Nicht nur Strindberg – Kulturelle und literarische Beziehungen zwischen Schweden und Deutschland 1870–1933*, ed. Helmut Müssener (Stockholm, 1979), pp. 160–172.

16 PA AA: R11070: St. Petersburg, 8 Nov. 1907.

17 For example: Donald M. McKale, “Germany and the Arab Question in the First World War,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 29 (1993), 236–253.





into the war – but which scared British and Russian diplomats in the area.<sup>21</sup> Afterwards, von Hentig travelled to Chinese Turkestan and tried to instigate an armed insurrection in this province of neutral China. But due to British interventions he was captured and detained by the Chinese. Several months later, von Hentig travelled back to Germany. Even though these operations failed, they had taught several important psychological lessons: With only a handful of men, the Germans had been able to meddle in Central Asian affairs and to provoke fear and uneasiness amongst Russian and British diplomats and officers.

But for a long time Central Asia was unreachable for further German encroachments. For an instant this situation seemed to change: In November 1916, Johann Heinrich von Bernstorff (1862–1939), the German ambassador to the United States, wired to the AA that an armed insurrection had started in Russian Turkestan. The information only arrived in Germany after several months.<sup>22</sup> In Turkestan, the conscription of Muslim men for unarmed purposes, an extremely high level of corruption in public services, and high taxes had led to a massive armed rebellion.<sup>23</sup> Due to this, Russian control in this colonial periphery almost collapsed. Nevertheless, the Germans did not initiate any plans for Russian Central Asia, because Turkestan still seemed to be a region too far away for any serious operation.

After several decades of Russian colonial policy in the area, 1916 proved to be the first time that local inhabitants were needed for military purposes. The reasons for this necessity lay thousands of kilometres to the West. During the “Great Retreat“ on Russia’s southern front in present-day Ukraine, the Tsarist Army had lost about 2,4 million men in the course of 1915.<sup>24</sup> Afterwards, the Tsarist army was in dire need of reinforcements. Moscow therefore planned to use Muslims from Central Asia for non-armed services behind the front. For good reasons, the colonisers from Russia remained hesitant, however, to arm the people under their rule.

The October Revolution in late 1917 changed the scenery for the meddling of the Great Powers dramatically. As one of the consequences of the revolution Russian statehood in Central Asia totally fell apart. The Bolsheviks rose to power in Central Russia and in some former provinces of the Tsarist empire

21 Thomas L. Hughes, “The German Mission to Afghanistan, 1915–1916,” *German Studies Review* 25 (2002), 447–476.

22 PA AA: R11071: Rye, 15 Sept. 1916.

23 Happel, *Nomadische Lebenswelten und zarische Politik*.

24 1,410,000 killed or wounded and 976,000 prisoners, see: Richard L. DiNardo, *Breakthrough: The Gorlice-Tarnów Campaign, 1915* (Westport, 2010), 132–133.

like Tashkent and Khoqand. But the Bolshevik's grasp on Turkestan was shaky at best. In the Central Asian territories new powers emerged.

Due to the political fragmentation in Turkestan, the region no longer seemed to be out of reach of German great power politics. Otto Günther von Wesendonk (1885–1933), who worked for the semi-official Intelligence Bureau of the East (*Nachrichtenstelle für den Orient, NfO*<sup>25</sup>), wrote to von Hentig several months after the revolution that Kashgar had now risen above the German political horizon.<sup>26</sup> The peace treaties of Brest-Litovsk gave the members of the Central Powers – especially Germany – a new scope for their Eastern policy. Their first step was to be the Caucasus – but the drive for eastward expansion would not end in the oil metropolis of Baku.

A new scope of possibilities for political interference arose also for the powers of the Entente, above all the United Kingdom. The strategists in London and Delhi reacted to the new situation with several instruments. The importance of the region for the defence of the “Jewel in the Crown” of the British Empire, British India, was described by Henry Wilson (1864–1922). The Chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS) said at a meeting of the War Cabinet in March 1918: “We run a grave risk of permitting the Germans to establish themselves in a position which will eventually lead to the downfall of our Eastern Empire.”<sup>27</sup> The plans about how the British forces should react to the new situation in Central Asia were likely initiated at this point.

In addition to the newly established Soviet power in some cities, several autonomy and independence seeking governments were founded in former Russian Central Asia. Furthermore, the Khanates of Bukhara and Chiva declared that they had regained their independence. Allegedly Lenin (1870–1924) accepted this independence.<sup>28</sup> But this seems unrealistic. Georgy Chicherin (1872–1936), who was then the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the Russian SFSR, later told the German representative in Moscow

25 The *NfO* was used for propaganda and intelligence purposes and acted as a de facto branch of the AA. See: Maren Bragulla, *Die Nachrichtenstelle für den Orient – Fallstudie einer Propagandaorganisation im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Saarbrücken, 2007).

26 PA AA: R11072: Von Wesendonk to von Hentig, Berlin, 24 April 1918.

27 ‘General Staff reply to Foreign Office Note no. T21169, dated 7 March 1918’, 11 March 1918, National Archives, W[ar] O[ffice] Records] 106/314, quoted in: Sean Kelly, “How far West?: Lord Curzon's Transcaucasian (Mis)Adventure and the Defence of British India, 1918–23,” *The International History Review* 35 (2013), 275.

28 Glenda Fraser, “Alim Kahn and the Fall of the Bokharan Emirate in 1920,” *Central Asian Survey* 7 (1988), 47–61.

that there was no declaration of independence by the two Khanates, but they were acting autonomously.<sup>29</sup>

One of the new governments with the widest influence throughout Western Turkestan resided in Khoqand. It was dominated by Muslim liberals and conservatives who wanted to achieve a certain degree of autonomy within a Russian federation. But the administration in this city in the Fergana valley suffered from the disadvantage of controlling no military forces at all. In Tsarist times, Central Asian Muslims were spared military conscription and only a few inhabitants of former Russian Turkestan had military experience. Due to the lack of alternatives, the liberal and conservative politicians hired armed bandits of the region to defend the city.<sup>30</sup>

After tensions between the Armenian quarter of Khoqand and the autonomist government, the Red Army started an operation in order to gain control of the town. In the course of the conquest armed Armenians and Red Guards destroyed the Old Town of Khoqand and killed almost every member of the autonomist government. On the basis of these atrocities, the Soviets established their supremacy in Western Turkestan.<sup>31</sup> But the Bolsheviks merely controlled the larger cities and received virtually no support in rural areas.

An attempt to expand the Soviet influence failed in spring 1918. The Red Army had started a military operation against the Emirate of Bukhara, but was repelled.<sup>32</sup> After a de facto ceasefire, Bukhara stayed independent until 1920. The Emir wanted to establish permanent independence with the help of Afghanistan and Great Britain but was facing several difficulties.<sup>33</sup> The independent Bukharan state was to play an important role in German and British plans for Central Asia.

Because of the lack of any information at all from Western Turkestan, the British-Indian Army started two reconnaissance operations. One began in the Chinese town of Kashgar and another one in Meshed in Northern Persia. On 21 March 1918, the British government acknowledged these missions into the vast areas of Turkestan. Additionally, the British military attaché in the Northern Persian Khorasan received the order to establish a network of agents along the railway from Krasnovodsk to Ashgabat. These spies had to monitor possible

29 PA AA: R11072: Riezler to AA, Moscow, 26 July 1918.

30 Richard Lorenz, "Die Basmatschen-Bewegung," in *Die Muslime in der Sowjetunion und in Jugoslawien – Identität, Politik, Widerstand*, ed. Andreas Kappeler (Cologne, 1989), pp. 235–256.

31 Seymour Becker, *Russia's Protectorates in Central Asia: Bukhara and Khiva, 1865–1924* (London, 2009), 270–271.

32 PA AA: R11072: *Nach Mitteilung des Chefs des Verkehrswesens in Kiew*, Berlin, 13 May 1918.

33 Fraser, "Alim Kahn and the Fall of the Bokharan Emirate in 1920," 49.

movements of troops along this vital railroad.<sup>34</sup> If the Germans had landed in the Caspian Sea port of Krasnovodsk, they could have moved troops directly to the Afghan frontier and then menaced British India.

Besides these precautionary measures, there were also experts on the ground who favoured an expansion of the British sphere of influence in Central Asia. The attaché in Meshed for example sent a message to London that the Bolsheviks might be driven out of Turkestan by a force of only 10,000 men equipped with modern artillery. But London called for patience, because it was expected that the Germans and the Ottomans were not capable of such an operation across the Caspian Sea. Due to the German advancements in 1918, the British concluded that the Central Powers would be able to cross the Caspian Sea only in spring 1919 at the earliest. The British envoys on the spot also received the order not to interfere in the Russian Civil War north of the Amu-Darya (Oxus).<sup>35</sup> This narrowed the area of possible operations down to the sparsely populated Turkmenistan, which was until then the South-Western part of the Russian Turkestan province.

In May 1918 in Central Europe, the new possibilities after the Brest-Litovsk treaties inspired the former Afghanistan traveller Niedermayer to write a memorandum outlining a strategy for Persia and Central Asia. He noted that after “the destruction of Russia”, the Germans should aspire a leading role in Central Asia.<sup>36</sup> Based on these writings, General Ludendorff (1865–1937), the “silent dictator of the German High Command”<sup>37</sup>, wrote to Chancellor Georg Freiherr von Hertling (1843–1919), demanding that Germany should once again focus on Afghanistan.<sup>38</sup> After the failure of pursuing a Southern route through Persia 1915/1916, Ludendorff now planned another attempt to attack “the pearl of the British Empire” via the Northern route through Turkestan.

But until the summer of 1918, the Germans only received very little information from Turkestan. To improve the level of information, the German Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs Hilmar von dem Bussche-Haddenhausen (1867–1939) asked the *NfO* to send a representative to Turkestan. Based on this idea, members of the *AA* and the *NfO* discussed the so-called “Consul Operation”. They planned to establish a network of agents (“consuls”) in

34 Zürrer, “Die britische Intervention in Transkaspien 1918/1919,” 349.

35 Zürrer, “Die britische Intervention in Transkaspien 1918/1919,” 349.

36 PA AA: R11071: Oskar von Niedermayer: A 26765, [Spa], 10 May 1918.

37 Martin Kitchen, *The Silent Dictatorship – The politics of the German High Command under Hindenburg and Ludendorff, 1916–1918* (London, 1976), 272.

38 Hans-Ulrich Seidt, “From Palestine to the Caucasus – Oskar Niedermayer and Germany’s Middle Eastern Strategy in 1918,” *German Studies Review* 24 (2001), 10).

Western Turkestan<sup>39</sup> and a “neutral person” in Kashgar, the westernmost city of Sinkiang.

These agents would have to travel there as fast as possible. The purpose of the operation was to prevent the British from obtaining a decisive advantage on the spot.<sup>40</sup> In August 1918, Paul von Hindenburg (1847–1934), Germany’s Chief of the General Staff, agreed to the “Consul Operation”.<sup>41</sup> In contrast to the German approaches to Ukraine, Finland and the Caucasus, the military leadership opted against the support of separatist movements or governments. The envisaged network of “consuls” would have been similar to the situation in Persia 1914–1916, where a small number of German officers and diplomats could extend German influence as far as the South Eastern city of Kerman.<sup>42</sup>

The plans for the “Consul Operation” initiated a wave of proposals about which policy the Central Powers could pursue in Turkestan. The German embassy in Stockholm sent a cable to Chancellor von Hertling saying that the diplomatic representation was in contact with an Indian independence activist who was eager to establish a centre for Indian nationalist propaganda in Turkestan.<sup>43</sup> This incident is only one example which shows the reliance on other factors as the geography constituting the decisive one. The Germans focused instead on trade and transportation routes, lines of communication, and even exiled communities.

In June or July 1918, von Hentig, who had plenty of experience in Afghanistan and Chinese Turkestan, proposed to send the famous tibetologist Professor Albert Tafel (1877–1935) to Khoqand. According to von Hentig, a German representative on the spot could try to strengthen the Muslim autonomist government and start an attempt to establish direct communication with the Emir of Afghanistan. Von Hentig did not know about the destruction of the government there although news of these events had reached Berlin already on 30 March 1918. Von Hentig was also convinced that the British advance to Meshed barred a possible German access to the precious cotton of Turkestan.<sup>44</sup>

39 The envisaged towns were Krasnovodsk, Ashgabat, Bukhara, Khiva, Tashkent, and Andishan.

40 PA AA: R11072: *Unterredung mit Herrn Epp und seinem Begleiter am 22.07.1918*, [place not given], [received on 24 July 1918].

41 PA AA: R11073: Chef des Generalstabes des Feldheeres to AA, Großes Hauptquartier [in Spa], 27 Aug. 1918.

42 Ulrich Gehrke, *Persien in der Deutschen Orientpolitik während des Ersten Weltkrieges* (Stuttgart, 1960), 225–229.

43 PA AA: R11073: Message to Graf von Hertling, Stockholm, 3 Aug. 1918.

44 PA AA: R11072: A27158, [date and place not given].

At the end of June 1918, two British agents crossed the former Persian-Russian frontier. They constructed depots for explosives close to railway lines and sent reports to their superior officers. The British agent who was sent to Ashgabat thought that the increasing pressure of the Bolsheviks against Mensheviks and Dashnaks in Tashkent would be the prélude of a German-Ottoman assault on Central Asia. But these alarming reports did not alter the opinion of the responsible actors in London.<sup>45</sup> Instead, several experts of the British Foreign Office in London pleaded for a policy of non-intervention in Russian-Turkestan.

On the other side, there were also influential voices favouring an intervention in Western Turkestan. The Director of Military Intelligence at the War Office, George Macdonogh (1865–1942), pleaded for a British military intervention. He expected that the arrival of British troops in former Russian Central Asia would be highly anticipated by the local population. In support of this he quoted reports that especially the Turkmens and Sarts<sup>46</sup> would welcome the British troops.<sup>47</sup>

In July 1918 in the Turkmen-populated areas of Turkestan, the Russian Mensheviks established a government with control over a territory stretching from Merv in the East to Krasnovodsk in the West. This newly established centre of power soon became an ally for the Entente. In August 1918, a British military intervention started in Menshevik-controlled Turkmenistan. The British artillery officer Wilfrid Malleson (1866–1946) led a British Indian Army force from the Persian city of Khorasan into Turkestan and dispatched his troops in Krasnovodsk and Merv. He concentrated his troops on the coastal town of Krasnovodsk at the Caspian Sea to prevent a possible German landing there. His mission was to strengthen the anti-Bolshevik forces without supporting any separatist tendencies in the region – just as the Germans did.<sup>48</sup> Interestingly, this was a different approach than pursued by British politics in the Caucasus and in Southern Russia several months later.<sup>49</sup>

Around the same time, the German chargé d'affaires in Moscow wired to Berlin that Isfandiyar Jurji Bahadur (1871–1918), the Khan of Khiva, had sent a

45 Zürrer, "Die britische Intervention in Transkaspien 1918/1919," 353.

46 Sart was the then often used name for the settled urban inhabitants of Turkestan. See: Bert G. Fragner, "Probleme der Nationswerdung der Usbeken und Tadshiken," in *Die Muslime in der Sowjetunion und in Jugoslawien – Identität, Politik, Widerstand*, ed. Andreas Kappeler (Cologne, 1989), 19–34.

47 Zürrer, "Die britische Intervention in Transkaspien 1918/1919," 351.

48 Zürrer, "Die britische Intervention in Transkaspien 1918/1919," 355.

49 B.W. Blouet, "Sir Halford Mackinder As British High Commissioner to South Russia, 1919–1920," *The Geographical Journal* 142 (1976), 228–236.

request for German assistance. The Khan submitted a message stating that his population was on friendly terms with Germany and offered sending a minister for negotiations to Europe.<sup>50</sup> Isfandiyar, who was the Khan since 1910, also requested German military assistance.<sup>51</sup> But this option was not even discussed in Berlin and Isfandiyar was soon murdered after internal struggles in his country.<sup>52</sup> Even though small operations like the “Consul Operation” were already considered possible, a large military intervention seemed highly unrealistic for the AA and *NfO* diplomats and politicians.

In the same month, two emissaries of the Reich’s Office for Fruits and Vegetables (*Reichsstelle für Obst und Gemüse*) started an expedition to Tashkent, Samarkand, Bukhara and Afghanistan. The anticipated length of the expedition was six months. Their goal was to evaluate the possibilities of exporting fruits, vegetables, animal skins and fur to Germany.<sup>53</sup> Central Asia – like Eastern Europe before – was considered to be economically exploitable by the Germans in order to counter the effects of the Allied blockade. Unfortunately, no reports or conclusions of this undertaking could be located.

On 7 September 1918, the German Foreign Office received word that the Ottoman head of government Talaat Pasha (1872–1921) planned to militarily organize Turkestan. He aimed to lure Muslim Central Asia into the war. For this purpose Pasha asked for German officers and non-commissioned officers. The head of the Ottoman government wanted to create a vassal state like the Germans did with Georgia in the Caucasus.<sup>54</sup> The German military attaché in Constantinople General von Lossow (1868–1938) agreed with him. But one of the leading experts regarding the Southern Russian periphery in the German AA, Rudolf Nadolny (1873–1953), disagreed strongly. According to Nadolny, Russia – in whatever form – would re-conquer the Central Asian territories.<sup>55</sup> Nadolny added two days later that the military organisation of these territories would not be necessary.<sup>56</sup> The Germans wanted to stick to their policy of

50 PA AA: R11072: Rietzler to AA, Moscow, 13 July 1918.

51 PA AA: R11072: Rietzler to AA, Moscow, 19 July 1918.

52 Dov. B. Yaroshevski, “The Central Government and Peripheral Opposition in Khiva, 1910–24,” in *The USSR and the Muslim World – Issues in Domestic and Foreign Policy*, ed. Yaacov Ro’I (London, 1984), 16–39.

53 PA AA: R11073: Staatssekretär des Kriegsernährungsamts an den Staatssekretär des AA, Berlin, 3 Aug. 1918.

54 PA AA: R11073: von Hintze: 1. *Aufzeichnung*, [place not given], 7 Sept. 1918.

55 PA AA: R11073: Nadolny: *Stellungnahme zu den Erklärungen an General von Lossow*, Berlin, 9 Sept. 1918.

56 PA AA: R11073: Nadolny: *Stellungnahme des Russischen Referats zum Aide mémoire der Türkischen Botschaft vom 10. d. M.*, Berlin, 11 Sept. 1918.

non-separation of Turkestan and also aimed to prevent the Ottoman Empire having a larger influence in these areas. German-Ottoman discrepancies grew stronger and stronger with the permanent presence of German troops in Georgia – against Constantinople’s interests.<sup>57</sup>

In early September 1918, the “Consul Operation” was again discussed in the German General Staff. The participants agreed that a small mission was not sufficient for the objectives under discussion. If the Central Powers would intervene, they had to bring in a larger force of troops. The majority of these soldiers would not be German, but Ottoman, due to religious reasons. It was also added that not many German troops were available at the moment. The troops would therefore be reinforced in the field by former prisoners of war stuck in the region.<sup>58</sup> Large numbers of them had been released after the peace treaties of Brest-Litovsk, but often had no chance of getting home. Some had been enlisted in the Red Army and others worked as craftsmen.

The envisaged new plan of the General Staff was to firstly take Baku, the centre of the Caucasian oil industry, and secondly to land on the other side of the Caspian Sea with captured ships. As a first step, a German civilian would be sent to Tashkent for reconnaissance reasons.<sup>59</sup> But Ludendorff intervened at the end of September 1918: “I’ve never planned on sending German troops to Turkestan.”<sup>60</sup> The First World War in Russian Central Asia ended without any German soldier setting foot in the region. But the plans had been laid out.

The last file in the German archives on World War One in the area dealt with the proposal of the Ukrainian Hetmanate from 1918 that Kiev would send consuls to Turkestan. Ukraine was a German puppet state established after the “Peace for Bread” prior to the Peace of Brest-Litovsk with the Russian Soviet Republic.<sup>61</sup> Sending of Ukrainian diplomatic representatives to Turkestan could be justified with the need for consular protection of Ukrainian colonists in Central Asia. Turkestan was of the “highest economic and political importance” for Ukraine and had a large ethnic Ukrainian minority.<sup>62</sup> If successful,

57 Winfried Baumgart, *Deutsche Ostpolitik 1918 – Von Brest-Litowsk bis zum Ende des Ersten Weltkrieges* (Vienna and Munich 1966), 174–206.

58 PA AA: R11073: von Hülsen: *Notiz über die am 5.9.1918 in Berlin abgehaltene Besprechung betreffend Turkestan und die tatarischen Gebiete nördlich und nordwestlich Turkestans*, Berlin, 5 Sept. 1918.

59 PA AA: R11073: von Hülsen: *Notiz über die am 5.9.1918 in Berlin abgehaltene Besprechung betreffend Turkestan und die tatarischen Gebiete nördlich und nordwestlich Turkestans*, Berlin, 5 Sept. 1918.

60 PA AA: R11073: Freiherr von Lersner to AA, Großes Hauptquartier [in Spa], 25 Sept. 1918.

61 Golczewski, *Deutsche und Ukrainer, 1918–1939*, 240–326.

62 PA AA: R11073: Telegramm an Reichskanzler von Baden, Kiev, 10 Oct. 1918.



this diplomatic move might have served as an example of Ukraine functioning as a bridge into Central Asia – as projected by some German officers and diplomats during the course of the war. But in mid-November 1918, German troops retreated from Ukraine and the Entente gained influence in this country.<sup>63</sup> The option of Ukraine as a German bridge further eastwards diminished.

Meanwhile in Menshevik-controlled Turkmenistan, the situation of the British expeditionary force under Malleeson changed substantially. The British role changed from being an occupying power to integrating Turkmenistan into its colonial sphere. In November 1918, General Malleeson started to pay subsidies to the government of Ashgabat.<sup>64</sup> Thus, the British could influence the internal and external politics of the Menshevik government according to their needs.

But after the ceasefires in Western Europe, the British Cabinet ordered the halt of any offensive actions in Turkestan. This meant a change for Malleeson who commanded 450 British Indian soldiers in October 1918. The British Indian government even proposed to withdraw the Malleeson expeditionary force immediately – but Malleeson stayed further for a while with his troops. The artillery officer began to directly interfere into Menshevik domestic policies by dismissing the Menshevik government in Ashgabat in January 1919.

Malleeson replaced the government there with a committee of Tsarist generals, because he favoured the re-establishment of Russia's ancien régime.<sup>65</sup> But only a few weeks later, the British High Command in Constantinople ordered Malleeson to withdraw his troops from Turkmenistan all together.<sup>66</sup> The new focus of British military engagement was to maintain British influence in Persia. Finally, on 9 March 1919, Malleeson informed the Ashgabat committee that he would withdraw his troops.<sup>67</sup>

The Emir of Bukhara tried to establish contact with Malleeson in the hope of British political and military support in his anti-Soviet struggle. But the British withdrew to Persia in the South and not to Bukhara, which lay in the East.<sup>68</sup> Bukhara had to fight the Soviet supremacy all on its own.

Several influential British officers and politicians had planned that the units of General Anton Denikin (1872–1947) should take over Menshevik

63 Golczewski, *Deutsche und Ukrainer, 1918–1939*, 340.

64 Zürrer, "Die britische Intervention in Transkaspien 1918/1919," 365.

65 Zürrer, "Die britische Intervention in Transkaspien 1918/1919," 368–369.

66 Zürrer, "Die britische Intervention in Transkaspien 1918/1919," 368.

67 Zürrer, "Die britische Intervention in Transkaspien 1918/1919," 371.

68 Fraser, "Alim Kahn and the Fall of the Bokharan Emirate in 1920," 49.

Turkmenistan. But the army of the White General was concentrated on Ukrainian territory and in Southern Russia.<sup>69</sup> Soon after these proposals, the British Indian troops withdrew from the region. In the course of 1919, the Ashgabat committee fell and the Soviets conquered the whole territory of former Russian Turkestan.

With the end of the Ashgabat committee and the conquest of Turkestan by the Red Army, the window of opportunity for the British and German armies in Western Turkestan closed. The means available to those two powers to influence the region changed. Germany relied primarily on economic help and scientific expeditions. Great Britain also used trade as a means of influence and allegedly supported local insurgents (“Basmachi”) secretly. The geographical focus of the Tournament of Shadows changed as well. Afghanistan and Chinese Turkestan now emerged as the main areas where German, British, and Soviet interests competed for influence.<sup>70</sup>

### Conclusion

At no point did a comprehensive German strategy for Central Asia ever exist. Wilson’s fear of a German intervention in Turkestan did not translate into a real threat for British India. Nevertheless, German foreign policy planners continued to regard Eastern and Western Turkestan as a contiguous area, with important cross-border trade and communication lines. They even attempted to enlist Indian nationalists for their plans. But the spatial perception of Turkestan in the German Foreign Ministry was very limited. The diplomats of the Reich planned their missions without paying adequate attention to geographic conditions and particularly the distances which had to be mastered. The main problem of the Germans was to obtain an adequate level of information. The German foreign ministry only received general assessments of the wider region of Turkestan or specific information about the few urban areas, like Kashgar, Tashkent or the city of Bukhara. Thus the plans and preparations of the small circle of officials in Berlin dealing with Turkestan relied on rather isolated bits of information, focusing on the few urban spots of the area – while the vast distances between these cities as well as between Turkestan and Europe seemed blurred and faded.

69 Zürrer, “Die britische Intervention in Transkaspien 1918/1919,” 364–365.

70 Ludwig W. Adamec, *Afghanistan’s Foreign Affairs to the Mid-twentieth Century – Relations with the USSR, Germany, and Britain* (Tucson, 1974); Nyman, *Great Britain and Chinese, Russian and Japanese Interests in Sinkiang, 1918–1934*.

## Paths Not Taken: Mukhtar Al-Ayari and Alternative Voices in Post-War Tunisia<sup>1</sup>

*Chris Rominger*

Were we to follow the narrative told by the records of the French Protectorate, Tunisia's colonial government in place since 1881, Mukhtar al-Ayari would appear a caricature: a cantankerous Tunisian veteran of the First World War who became a communist propagandist, a frequent customer to Tunis' red light district, and a poorly-read man prone to violent outbursts.<sup>2</sup> Such reports reveal to us that, as a tramway worker in the spring of 1921, he is alleged to have slapped a Jewish Tunisian passenger simply for asking the price of a ticket.<sup>3</sup> *La Tunisie Française*, a conservative newspaper representing the view of *colons* (French settlers) was almost giddy in reporting that this "rude illiterate" would be spending a short stint in prison.<sup>4</sup>

Were we to consult the bulk of Tunisian nationalist historians' work, however, we might not learn very much at all about al-Ayari, who was overshadowed by such towering nationalist figures as Abdelaziz Thaalbi and Habib Bourguiba. Al-Ayari has been a "pariah" to nationalist historians, in Stuart Schaar's words, thanks to his communist associations and rather short-lived

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1 I extend my gratitude to Beth Baron, Thomas DeGeorges, M'hamed Oualdi, and Stuart Schaar for their constant support and feedback. Mustafa Aksakal, Elizabeth Thompson, and the fellows of 2014's "World War I in the Middle East and North Africa" NEH Seminar provided invaluable comments, as did participants of the June 2014 "Small Nations and Colonial Peripheries in World War I" conference at National University of Ireland, Galway. Finally, my appreciation goes to the Centre d'Études Maghrébines à Tunis (CEMAT) for their assistance. Translations from Arabic or French are my own unless otherwise noted.

2 Stuart Schaar, "Mukhtar al-Ayari, a Radical Tunisian in the 1920s, and His Place in Labour History," *Maghreb Review: Majallat al-Maghrib* 36:1 (2011), 6, citing Archives Générales, Archives de Premier Ministre (Tunis), série Histoire du mouvement national, Feb. 12, 1921, carton 15, dossier 1–13. I have used the spelling "Mukhtar al-Ayari" throughout, but note that the alternatives "Mokhtar" or "Moktar" are often found in French-language documents.

3 Schaar, "Mukhtar al-Ayari," 7; "In the French court," *Tunis Socialiste*, 2 Jan. 1921, 2.

4 Archives Nationales de Tunisie [henceforth "ANT"], Série Histoire du mouvement national: Série E Carton 550 Dossier 30/15 (1921–1924), Services Divers, gens à surveiller: Moktar B. Haj Belgacem Ayari. Clipping from *La Tunisie Française*, 6 July, 1922.

political career.<sup>5</sup> In his youth, he attended a French-Arabic school in Tunis and held a series of small jobs, hoping to one day become a police officer. He volunteered for service in the First World War in France, earning a *Croix de Guerre* for distinguished service, and upon returning to Tunis, he began work as a tramway operator and a union organizer.<sup>6</sup> He would eventually become an influential and controversial figure in communist and labor movements in the early 1920s, calling for social reforms and an end to French colonial rule until his exile in 1925.

Al-Ayari was one of nearly 70,000 Tunisians recruited (most of them forcibly) to work and fight in France during the First World War; over 11,000 of them died, and many more were disabled, yet few received more recognition than an inadequate pension. These workers and *tirailleurs* (colonial soldiers), and indeed Tunisian society as a whole during the war years, have until very recently been largely overlooked by historians. Al-Ayari's story encourages us to reexamine this period.

Prior to the First World War, the bulk of intellectual and political activity was led by the Young Tunisians, a group which generally called for loyalty to France while seeking limited reforms, such as legal equality between Tunisian and French subjects.<sup>7</sup> In the immediate aftermath of the war, however, Tunisia witnessed an explosion of radical political activism and demands for independence. What events during the war and its aftermath would transform an aspiring police officer and volunteer soldier like Mukhtar al-Ayari into an anti-colonial activist? The answer may suggest approaches to a larger question: how did the experience of the First World War open up space for the emergence of new, diverse, and often radical visions for Tunisia's future?

In what follows, we will trace al-Ayari's career until his exile in 1925, visiting its various intersections with larger Tunisian political and social struggles during and immediately following the First World War. While it is tempting to draw a causal line from the mistreatment of colonial subjects at war to the rise of the nationalist movement in the 1920s, al-Ayari's case will point to a much more complicated horizon of political possibilities on the part of Tunisians in the wake of the war. Such an approach might help us understand this post-war "moment" as one in which spaces were carved out for the emergence of a variety of overlapping, contradicting, and complementary voices which did not

5 Schaar, "Mukhtar al-Ayari," 5.

6 Thomas DeGeorges, "A Bitter Homecoming: Tunisian Veterans of the First and Second World Wars" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2006), 82.

7 Béatrice Hibou, "Tunisie: d'un réformisme à l'autre," *FASOPO, Legs Colonial et gouvernance européenne* 1 (2006): 229.

always fit the categories traditionally employed to describe nationalism or its detractors.

### Inequities at War

The Tunisian historian Béchir Tlili led something of a golden age of nationalist scholarship in the 1970s and early 1980s, conducting extensive research on Tunisia's political history in the colonial period.<sup>8</sup> He and his contemporaries offered much-needed analysis of the post-war period, focusing mostly on large labor syndicates and elite nationalist politicians of the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>9</sup> Indeed the 1970s and 1980s would see the publication of a number of texts on the subject with funding and support from the *Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail* (UGTT) and its government allies. The quality of the documentary research in this period is quite strong, but needless to say the preponderance of studies conducted in a framework friendly to the postcolonial regime (and with targeted state funding), and one which favored the legacy of elite nationalists and labor movements as the issue *par excellence*, left some areas overlooked.

The state of emergency imposed by the French Protectorate administration in Tunisia from 1912 to 1920 effectively stifled reformist journals and political associations, while dissenters were dismissed in official accounts as exceptions to an otherwise loyal and submissive colonial populace. As a result, most Tunisian nationalist historians characterized the war years as a period of political "lethargy," an ill-defined gap in an otherwise heroic and well-documented march towards national liberation.<sup>10</sup> To circumvent such ideological and teleological assumptions, one might, following James McDougall's work on nationalist cultures in Algeria, cast a wide net aiming to appreciate diversity and uncertainty, rather than uniformity, when examining such movements. Much of what he has observed rings true for the study of our Tunisian case – without such a nuanced approach, we are left with a "unified and unifying

8 Béchir Tlili's pioneering work also drew from earlier works like Leon Carl Brown et al., *Tunisia. The Politics of Modernization* (New York, 1964); and Nicola Ziadeh, *Origins of nationalism in Tunisia* (Beirut, 1969).

9 For example, see: Béchir Tlili, *Nationalismes, socialisme et syndicalisme dans le Maghreb des années 1919–1934* (Tunis, 1984); Mustapha Kraiem, *Nationalisme et syndicalisme en Tunisie, 1918–1929* (Tunis, 1976); Mohamed Salah Lejri, *L'évolution du mouvement national Tunisien* (Tunis, 1974); Nouredine Sraieb, "Note sur les dirigeants politiques et syndicalistes tunisiens de 1920 à 1934," *Revue de l'Occident Musulman et de la Méditerranée* 9 (1971): 91–118.

10 Ali Mahjoubi, *Les Origines du mouvement national en Tunisie, 1904–1934* (Tunis, 1982), 147.

‘national movement,’ in terms of whose single, coherent story every other aspect of Algerian history and each constituent part of society are judged according to what might be reckoned as their ‘contribution’ to the eventual and predestined freedom of the nation.”<sup>11</sup> In Tunisian historiography, a similar phenomenon skews the study of the war years and the early 1920s: most actors’ actions are evaluated based on their ultimate impact on the *Dustur* and later the *Neo-Dustur*, whose leaders would hold power well into Tunisia’s post-independence period. Such an approach makes it easy to discount or even ignore the voices which, however potent at a particular moment of uncertainty, would fade from mainstream consciousness in later years.

With this in mind, the post-war explosion of the popular reformist press in Tunisia points to anything but submission and lethargy. The tolls of conscription, economic instability, and Ottoman and German propaganda may well have contributed to the radicalization of political demands. On the battlefields of Western Europe, moreover, Tunisians grew more dissatisfied. While the French hoped for an unquestioned loyalty among colonial troops to their “adopted fatherland,” or at least fraternal solidarity in the face of a common enemy, such a possibility would likely require a level of equality among soldiers that simply did not exist. Historians have argued that North Africans were deployed disproportionately as shock troops, justified by French conceptions of their “warlike mentality” and “savage ardor” – yet they earned less than half the salary of French soldiers of equal rank, and were rarely considered for promotion.<sup>12</sup> Revealing similar racist assumptions, the French held that behind the lines, North and West Africans, biologically and culturally unable to resist the corrupting influences of metropolitan society, constituted a threat to the gendered and racial hierarchies underpinning the French *mission civilisatrice*. Hospitals were specially built to contain the potentially damaging presence of colonial soldiers on French soil and became the sites of further racial differentiation. Hospitals at Moisselles and Carrières-sous-Bois, for example, hosted a variety of reeducation activities deemed to be culturally appropriate for North Africans, such as propaganda film screenings, French language instruction, and agricultural training.<sup>13</sup>

11 James McDougall, *History and the Culture of Nationalism in Algeria* (New York, 2006), 15.

12 DeGeorges, “A Bitter Homecoming,” 26, citing Anthony Clayton, *Paths of Glory: The French Army 1914–1918* (London, 2003), 89.

13 DeGeorges, “A Bitter Homecoming,” 58–60. See also: Gregory Mann, “Locating Colonial Histories: Between France and West Africa,” *The American Historical Review* 110:2 (2005), 414–416; Mann, *Native Sons: West African Veterans and France in the Twentieth Century* (Durham, 2006), 166–168.

Given the treatment of *tirailleurs* in these spaces of coercion and racial distinction, one can understand Mukhtar al-Ayari's dissatisfaction with his experience at war. According to police reports, he accused French officers of discrimination for refusing to promote him despite eight years of dedicated volunteer service.<sup>14</sup> Instead, he claims to have been punished by officers for alleged dereliction of duty, after which he "urged his fellow soldiers to revolt against their leaders."<sup>15</sup> This invites further questioning: given that al-Ayari was an experienced volunteer, and one who was far more literate than most other *tirailleurs*, why was he not offered promotion?

We may only speculate here. Certainly his medals and wounds attest to his battlefield experience. Perhaps his grasp of French – good enough to "express himself" – was not sufficient to make him eligible for a higher rank.<sup>16</sup> More likely, however, was the threat represented by such a colonial subject rising above his civilian social standing. The French preferred to recruit officers from among the indigenous elite, who were assumed to prefer and respect the status quo of French hierarchies.<sup>17</sup> Al-Ayari, despite his education and middle-class upbringing in the Tunisian capital, maintained no such deference to colonial rule. He reasonably concluded in a 1922 speech to his communist colleagues that his promotion had been denied because to do otherwise would have eliminated the distinction between French and Muslim soldiers.<sup>18</sup> Tunisian *tirailleurs*, despite their battlefield achievements, would fare no better in the army's hierarchy than they did as subjects under the Protectorate administration.<sup>19</sup> Thus any brotherhood that may have emerged in the fight against a common enemy was undercut by the paternalistic inequalities of colonial rule.

### Post-war Possibilities and the Communist Option

France's promises to "remember and reward" its veterans would make Tunisian veterans' homecoming much more painful when the economy crumbled in

14 Juliette Bessis, *Les Fondateurs: Index biographique des cadres syndicales de la Tunisie coloniale (1920–1956)* (Paris, 1985), 68–69.

15 DeGeorges, "A Bitter Homecoming," 82–83.

16 Schaar, "Mukhtar al-Ayari," 6.

17 Richard Fogarty, *Race and War in France: Colonial Subjects in the French Army, 1914–1918* (Baltimore, 2008), 116–117.

18 Centre des archives diplomatiques de Nantes [henceforth "CADN"] -Tun. 1er vers. 1700: Rapport 53 de Clapier, Le Commissaire Spécial, 21 Jan. 1922. See also: Schaar, "Mukhtar al-Ayari," 6.

19 Fogarty, *Race and War in France*, 122.

1919 and 1920, crushed under the weight of returning French settlers and fluctuating consumer prices.<sup>20</sup> The demobilization of soldiers was chaotic, and the bureaucracy was unable to sustain programs providing monetary, educational, and psychological support for Tunisian veterans.<sup>21</sup> Some never received any such benefits, as they could not be tracked down after demobilization – French Army authorities did not consult local authorities enough to know that many Tunisian homes, particularly in the rural areas where most conscripts had come from, did not have physical mailing addresses.<sup>22</sup>

While veterans faced particularly difficult circumstances upon their return home, the reality was no better for most other Tunisians, a fact which contributed to the numerous strikes and protests which sprung up throughout 1919 and 1920. Perhaps it is no surprise, then, that organized political activity exploded following the armistice and the lifting of the state of emergency in 1920, with several political parties and dozens of journals being founded or reborn.<sup>23</sup> What was different from pre-war activism in Tunisia, however, was the popular and radicalized nature of these new movements – a product of years of pent-up grievances and underground activity, compounded by the economic and social costs of the war, finally released.

1919 saw the return of Abdelaziz Thaalbi and other formerly silenced Young Tunisians, now reunited. Despite a failed bid to secure support for North African self-determination at the Versailles Peace Conference, they went on to found the *Dustur* (“Constitution”) party in March 1920, demanding the promulgation of a constitution and other significant reforms.<sup>24</sup> One cannot deny the importance of the *Dustur* as a political force – the party and its successors would dominate Tunisian politics for at least the next half century. Yet the *Dustur*’s success rested upon Tunisians’ increasing engagement with mass politics. Backed by labor unions which found their power in massive strikes, boycotts, and demonstrations, Tunisians could press the Protectorate for their demands more effectively than ever before.

It is within this context of labor mobilization, rather than within the elite nationalist sphere of the *Dustur*, that Mukhtar al-Ayari returns to our story. Al-Ayari’s first job after demobilization was with the Tramway Company of

20 Kenneth Perkins, *A History of Modern Tunisia* (New York, 2004), 75.

21 Commandant R. Drevet, *L’armée Tunisienne* (Tunis, 1922), 364. By Sept. 1919, nearly a year after the armistice, only 23,500 out of 42,500 Tunisian soldiers scheduled for demobilization had reached North African shores.

22 Drevet, *L’armée Tunisienne*, 363–364.

23 Mahjoubi, *Les Origines du Mouvement National*, 254.

24 Mahjoubi, *Les Origines du Mouvement National*, 215; Mary Dewhurst Lewis, *Divided Rule: Sovereignty and Empire in French Tunisia, 1881–1938* (Berkeley, 2014), 117–118.



Tunis, where he worked as both a streetcar operator and the Secretary General of the tramway's union. By 1921 he had become an active member of the newly-founded Communist Party in Tunisia, which enjoyed growing political influence thanks to its close ties with labor unions. At party meetings, he frequently delivered speeches attacking the Protectorate authorities, particularly for their raids on the homes and offices of party members. He called for mass protests, a refusal to pay taxes, and the destruction of public property like streetlamps.<sup>25</sup> Police offered a 1,000 franc reward for al-Ayari's arrest, to which he replied that he would, on the day that Tunisians rose up to seize their independence, seek out the director of police and break his neck.<sup>26</sup>

For al-Ayari, uniquely positioned as a literate veteran who had witnessed firsthand the realities of war as a colonial subject, and one who was increasingly connected to a large network of activists, the turn to politics in the aftermath of the war could have taken a few different directions. Communism, despite its connections with his tramway union, presented challenges and contradictions. In the early 1920s, with the dust still settling in the wake of Russia's 1917 revolution, it remained unclear to the world what implications the rise of a communist power would have for anti-colonial movements around the world. For many, especially subjects of Western colonial powers, the example was inspiring: one did not have to be a communist to appreciate the overthrowing of an autocratic tsar whose rule had come to be seen as one of the world's most oppressive. Yet many questions remained for Tunisians like al-Ayari. Firstly, how would a Western colonial power like France respond to the rise of the Bolsheviks? Would a crackdown on communist organizations in its colonies soon follow? Secondly, what was to be the relationship between the Communist International and the Communist Party of Tunisia? Would those striving for independence from French rule find willing allies in Russia and beyond? Thirdly, what was the stance of the growing Communist Party of France towards Tunisian and other North African communists? Finally, would pacifist and anti-militarist communists accept a call for the violent overthrow of colonialist regimes?

Dampening any unrestrained hopes for liberation from colonial rule, Russia, the French Communist Party, and the Communist International in general all remained Eurocentric in their outlook, with anti-colonial movements rele-

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25 Schaar, "Mukhtar al-Ayari," 8.

26 CADN-Tun. 1er vers. 1697: Rapport de Clavier, Le Commissaire Spécial, "Parti Communiste Section Indigène," 8 April 1922. See also: Schaar, "Mukhtar al-Ayari," 8–9.

gated to the back burner of communist agendas.<sup>27</sup> While the Soviet Union occasionally found common ground with anti-colonial activists' struggles against imperialism, one suspects that they primarily saw in these movements a chance to undermine their Western European rivals. The Bolsheviks were less enthusiastic about the virtues of independence movements themselves; Tunisians were aware that the Soviet Union itself continued to maintain a colonial empire in its vast territories, which included Muslims embroiled in their own struggles for autonomy and independence.<sup>28</sup>

More pressing was the uncertain nature of the relationship between Tunisian communists and their counterparts in France. Were they to raise criticisms of French imperialism, the increasingly influential French Communist Party could have proven to be powerful allies of Tunisian anti-colonial activists. Perhaps realizing this, al-Ayari worked to forge connections with sympathetic politicians in the metropole in an attempt to demonstrate the progress communists had achieved in Tunisia.<sup>29</sup> He was instrumental in arranging a March 1922 visit from communist parliamentary deputy Paul Vaillant-Couturier, who arrived in Tunis to find an earnestly prepared reception hosted by local communists.<sup>30</sup> Vaillant-Couturier, a veteran like al-Ayari, held four conferences over the next few days, drawing several hundred attendees at each. He highlighted, among other topics, the "scourge" of global capitalism and its wars, as well as the mission of his *Association Républicaine des Anciens Combattants*.

Yet the communist deputy's visit seems to have been marked largely by disappointment. Though al-Ayari had worked hard to spread the word in Tunisian coffee houses, police agents noted the scant presence of indigenous attendees at the conferences.<sup>31</sup> Vaillant-Couturier's public talks were, moreover, marred by sharp opposition, not least from the conservative *colon* press. Some attendees boldly questioned what he, as a deputy, would do to ensure that the Protectorate best served French settlers' interests.<sup>32</sup> Others asked about the

27 Martin Thomas, "Albert Sarraut, French Colonial Development, and the Communist Threat, 1919–1930," *The Journal of Modern History* 77:4 (2005), 938. See also: Mustapha Kraïem, *Le Parti Communiste Tunisien pendant la période coloniale* (Tunis, 1997), 111–112.

28 Kraïem, *Le Parti Communiste Tunisien*, 112.

29 CADN-Tun. 1er vers. 1697: Rapport 261 du Police spéciale des chemins de fer et des portes (Clapier), 20 March 1922.

30 CADN-Tun. 1er vers. 1700: Rapport 200 de Clapier, "Renseignements fournis sur la réunion du Parti communiste," 4 March 1922.

31 CADN-Tun. 1er vers. 1697: Rapport de Boireau, "Conférences Vaillant-Couturier," 29 March 1922.

32 CADN-Tun. 1er vers. 1697: Rapport du Contrôleur Civil de Bizerte à Résident Général Lucien Saint, 30 March 1922.

ongoing famine in Russia, which the deputy blamed on drought rather than Soviet policy, quipping, “In the Tunisian south, this year’s harvest has been irreversibly ruined – are the communists to blame for this too? Of course not.”<sup>33</sup> European affairs seemed to dominate his lectures, with praise heaped on the Bolsheviks for their perseverance despite widespread condemnation (including that of his own government). One attendee, identified as a Russian refugee and employee of the Popular Bank of Bizerte, challenged this view, claiming that his personal experience had better informed him of the suffering that Soviet rule caused.<sup>34</sup> In their final analysis, Protectorate authorities found little danger in Vaillant-Couturier’s conferences, noting that his written publications, rather than his speeches, posed the greatest threat.<sup>35</sup> If the deputy was as disappointed as police reports suggest, one can imagine that al-Ayari too had been frustrated as he and a small cadre of supporters saw the deputy to his port of departure on 1 April 1922.<sup>36</sup> Wrapped up in debates surrounding the Bolsheviks’ shocking rise to power, there is little evidence to suggest that Vaillant-Couturier ever questioned France’s colonial hold over Tunisia during his weeklong visit.

Considering the political chaos and uncertainty faced by France in the early 1920s, it is perhaps not surprising that communists like Vaillant-Couturier were overwhelmingly consumed with affairs in Europe. Moreover, French communists’ views on colonialism were fraught with ambiguities. Despite an avowed opposition to imperialist exploitation, French communist leaders in the early 1920s were still heavily influenced by ideas of assimilation, generally believing that colonial working classes stood to benefit from European tutelage, which would help to push them progressively towards the necessary stage of proletarian unity.<sup>37</sup> Notably, in response to the Communist International’s appeal for the liberation of Algeria and Tunisia (among other colonial holdings), French communists convening at Sidi-Bel-Abbès, Algeria, expressed their reluctance to support liberation in Arab lands, which they claimed would simply replace

33 CADN-Tun. 1er vers. 1697: Rapport de Farfal, “Conférence de député Vaillant-Couturier,” 1 April 1922.

34 CADN-Tun. 1er vers. 1697: Rapport de Boireau, “Conférences Vaillant-Couturier,” 29 March 1922.

35 CADN-Tun. 1er vers. 1697: Rapport du Contrôleur Civil de Bizerte à Résident Général Lucien Saint, 30 March 1922.

36 CADN-Tun. 1er vers. 1697: Rapport de Farfal, “Départ pour la France du député Vaillant-Couturier,” 1 April 1922.

37 Kraiem, *Le Parti Communiste Tunisien*, 113.

French rule with an exploitative Islamic oligarchy.<sup>38</sup> Indeed, through much of the 1920s and 1930s, French communists, in their evolutionary and sometimes racist views, saw anti-colonial liberation movements as an impediment rather than an asset to the working-class struggle.<sup>39</sup> Thus while al-Ayari built important political networks and capacities through his work with European communists, his outright rejection of French rule in Tunisia did not find many allies across the Mediterranean.<sup>40</sup>

The Tunisian Communist Party was itself troubled by contradictions and complexities.<sup>41</sup> The still-young party, founded in 1921, was quite diverse in its early years, with Tunisian Muslims and Jews working side-by-side with Italian and French settlers and their descendants. While they generally shared an interest in improving the situation of the working classes, it should be noted that most European members of the party in the early and mid-1920s came from middle-class professions and served as shopkeepers, clerks, crafts producers, and the like; few came from strictly working-class backgrounds. Some French and Italian communists in Tunisia were small landowners or business owners, while others were bureaucrats or civil servants in the Protectorate administration; many of these Europeans would have owed some amount of their privilege and economic well-being to the colonial hierarchy. Thus while they may have supported Tunisian communists' calls for higher wages or similar protections for workers, few called for complete liberation from colonial rule. Fewer still called for violence against the French Protectorate administration, most communists having declared anti-militarism "a pillar of [their] colonial program" in the early 1920s.<sup>42</sup>

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38 Kraiem, *Le Parti Communiste Tunisien*, 115. See also: Robert Wohl, *French Communism in the Making, 1914–1922* (Stanford, 1966), 408. On the tensions between French communists and North African liberation movements, see: David H. Slavin, "The French Left and the Rif War, 1924–25: Racism and the Limits of Internationalism," *Journal of Contemporary History* 26:1 (1991): 5–32, and Thomas, "Albert Sarraut, French Colonial Development, and the Communist Threat, 1919–1930."

39 Kraiem, *Le Parti Communiste Tunisien*, 119.

40 Thomas, "Albert Sarraut," 949–950. Thomas demonstrates similar tensions between the French Communist Party and the Algerian nationalist movement *Étoile Nord Africaine* (North African Star) in the second half of the 1920s.

41 Kraiem, *Le Parti Communiste Tunisien*, 113.

42 Schaar, "Mukhtar al-Ayari," 10, citing CADN-Tun. 1er vers. 1701–3, folio 395–401, "Programme Colonial," August 23, 1924.

### Habib al-Umma and Social Grievances

These complications would bring much uncertainty to Mukhtar al-Ayari's political activism. Working to "Tunisify" political and labor organizations, al-Ayari was able to get a number of short-lived periodicals off the ground, the longest-running of which was *Habib al-Umma* (lover of the nation), which ran at least two dozen issues in late 1921. Although its lifespan was cut short by order of the Resident General, it had made an impact: as Tunisia's first popular Arabic-language communist journal, *Habib al-Umma* paved the way for a number of later newspapers like *Al-Umma* and *Le Moudhek*.<sup>43</sup>

In the first issue of *Habib al-Umma*, al-Ayari positions the journal in relation to the nationalist mainstream, writing, "Without entering into any of the infighting which one can find amongst the different groups of the Tunisian nationalist movement, *Habib al-Umma* supports the efforts of all those who demand the expansion of the rights, freedom, justice and education of the Tunisian people."<sup>44</sup> From the outset, al-Ayari envisioned himself, through the words of his journal, to be transcending the limitations of nationalist politics, which to him appeared clear as early as 1921. Later issues of *Habib al-Umma* grew more outspoken in their rhetoric, as Al-Ayari's grievances matured from vague manifestos into targeted attacks on the French Protectorate and its policies. A 29 October 1921 issue began with an article entitled "A Social Grievance," in which he attacked the Protectorate's lack of concern for the orphans and widows of Muslim soldiers killed in Europe. Al-Ayari writes:

The issue of widows and children of the Muslim soldiers who quickly answered France's call to war has slowly been fading from our attention. The soldiers were thrown into the fiery oven by Marshal Lyautey, falling prey to the emotions stirred up at the Academy in Paris. They committed themselves to a covenant with the French, who promised to recognize and protect the rights and interests of these soldiers, both in life and after death... but the soldiers died, and the French broke their promise!

Let there be no question about the unfortunate situation that afflicts the survivors of those heroes who gave their lives, and everything they have, only to see their widows and children facing starvation...<sup>45</sup>

43 Kraiem, *Le Parti Communiste Tunisien*, 76–77.

44 Mukhtar Al-Ayari, "Ilā al-Shaab al-Tūnisi" [To the Tunisian People], *Habib al-Umma*, 23 Oct. 1921, 1.

45 Mukhtar Al-Ayari, "Muḏlima Ijtamāā" [A Social Grievance], *Habib al-Umma*, 29 Oct. 1921, 1. Al-Ayari refers to Marshal Hubert Lyautey, Resident-General of Morocco from 1912 to 1925, who served as France's Minister of War for part of 1917.

Al-Ayari then directs criticism at the Protectorate's favoritism towards French settlers, alleging that the French-run Municipal Council allocated 240,000 Francs to support European acting and theatre initiatives in Tunis. In *La Tunisie Martyre*, Thaalbi attacked a similar decision, claiming that in 1919, despite the economic devastation of the war, the Municipal Council managed to find 150,000 Francs to support four months of French theatrical works at the Municipal Theatre in Tunis, compared with the paltry 5,000 Francs granted to a Tunisian theatrical society in 1913.<sup>46</sup> Al-Ayari writes:

What does the spread of theatre matter to the orphan and the widow, when they have starving bellies? ... Does it please a man to leave behind such weak offspring, children who cannot find even a piece of bread or a spoonful of olive oil, while the market of entertainers and dancers rises in leaps and bounds, thanks to the government and its supporters? Is this not, my people, a clear and blatant injustice, whose shame will be inked in history?<sup>47</sup>

His disappointment shows through, and the sting would have been particularly sharp for a veteran like al-Ayari, who had volunteered for the French army, believing at some level that the cause (or at least the career) was important enough. He, like many, had discovered by 1921 that a colonial "fatherland" which did not take sufficient care of its veteran "sons" was not one worth fighting for, and certainly not worth jeopardizing the future of one's family for. To al-Ayari, these soldiers had been exploited and left to die. One illustration accompanying the above article depicts a large mound of skulls watched closely by circling vultures with the caption, "War and its Horrors." The sketch appears to be a reproduction of realist Russian artist Vasily Vereshchagin's 1871 painting *The Apotheosis of War: Dedicated to All Conquerors Past, Present, and to Come*.<sup>48</sup> The choice is salient, given the original subject of Vereshchagin's work, which starkly depicts the brutal aftermath of the Russian colonial conquest of the Muslim region of Turkestan in 1867–68.

46 Abdelaziz Thaalbi, *La Tunisie Martyre: Ses Revendications*, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Dar al-Gharb al-Islami, 1985), 157.

47 Al-Ayari, "Muẓlima ljtamāāi," 1.

48 Vasily Vereshchagin, *The Apotheosis of War*, 1871, oil on canvas, The State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, <[http://www.tretyakovgallery.ru/en/collection/\\_show/image/\\_id/183](http://www.tretyakovgallery.ru/en/collection/_show/image/_id/183)>

### Veterans and Anti-colonial Politics

To date, we know little of how the Tunisian post-war public received veterans and conceived of their experiences. The Moroccan case might be suggestive here: Driss Maghraoui has demonstrated the conflicted place of colonial soldiers in Moroccan historical memory, particularly as the problematic dichotomy of “resister” and “collaborator” was (and often still is) upheld in both colonial and nationalist narratives. France hailed the sacrifices of its loyal North African “sons” in the First World War, later leading Moroccan nationalists to dismiss them as collaborators with the colonial regime. Yet in the Second World War, Sultan Mohamed v gave his official approval of the Allied war effort, paving the way for Moroccan soldiers to be accepted as “an appropriate and usable national symbol.”<sup>49</sup> Even as late as 1998, when Maghraoui was writing, the nationalist narrative generally ignored the fact that many of these soldiers had been widely used in the French interwar military campaigns to “pacify” Morocco.

In the first few years after the end of the First World War, would Tunisian *tirailleurs* be considered “war heroes,” or simply “collaborators” with the colonial regime, unfit for the new incarnation of anti-colonial politics? Abdelaziz Thaalbi, in his influential nationalist treatise *La Tunisie Martyre* (1920), asserted that:

The illiterate [Tunisian conscripts] were easy to recruit for imperialist expeditions, as they were inhabited by the souls of mercenaries. Once their mentality was shaped by their slave drivers [French recruiters], they sailed without fear of betraying their morals, poisoned as they were by conquests void of ideals or morality.<sup>50</sup>

To some post-war nationalists, then, veterans were not exactly reduced to either collaborators or heroes – they were empty vessels to be filled, in this case, by the false promises of the French Empire.

Actual veterans’ voices are conspicuously absent from these discussions, making al-Ayari’s writings, preserved in police reports and his journal *Habib al-Umma*, so rare. He expressed a profound sense of betrayal not just at the

49 Driss Maghraoui, “Moroccan Colonial Soldiers: Between Selective Memory and Collective Memory,” *Arab Studies Quarterly* 20:2 (1998), 33.

50 Habib Abdelmoula, *L'impôt du Sang: La Tunisie, le Maghreb et le panislamisme pendant la Grande Guerre* (Tunis, 2007), 52, citing Thaalbi, *La Tunisie Martyre*, 145.

hands of the French, but also by his more moderate reformist countrymen, writing:

Perhaps some wise people thought this disparity [between Tunisian and French subjects] would disappear with gradual improvements in education, and from the lessons learned from the Great War about fraternity and equality. Supporters of the war effort claimed that we needed to part with the grudges and hatred which had served as the rallying cries for various nationalist or other beliefs. They believed France, in particular, had learned from this war that differences of nationality and belief did not prevent us from joining together as one in order to counter the threat of the attacker.<sup>51</sup>

At a glance, one can understand how a Tunisian veteran might once have held such views; after all, al-Ayari himself had been a willing volunteer at the start of his military career. Here, these “wise people,” the moderate elites who continued to call for cooperation with France throughout the war, held on to hopes of gradually securing their rights in recognition of Tunisia’s wartime loyalty. To al-Ayari, such an approach had by 1921 proven hopeless. But if *tirailleurs*’ sacrifices had been for naught, how might he otherwise conceive of their experience?

Perhaps as a result of his engagement with European communism, and despite his distrust of the nationalist mainstream, al-Ayari largely echoed Thaalbi’s sentiments about the rural peasants who were recruited to serve in the French Army. On at least one instance, in a January 1922 meeting documented by French police agents, he revealed his sympathy for the *fellahin*:

*Tunisois* [residents of the Tunisian capital] were exempt from military service because they were educated in the study of social matters, and knew how to distinguish between what is useful and what is not, whereas the *fellahin*, completely ignorant and having no knowledge of real life, submitted easily to the demands of the rulers.

[Local sheikhs with recruitment quotas] roamed their sectors, dragging behind them the poor wretches, leashed like beasts who they then penned into the caravansaries with little concern for the retinue of poor parents who trailed behind them. These Bedouins, under threat of imprisonment and other tortures, were scared and gave in blindly.<sup>52</sup>

51 Al-Ayari, “Masalat al-Murtabāt” [The Issue of Salaries], 1.

52 CADN-Tun. 1er vers. 1700 : Rapport 53 de Clavier, Le Commissaire Spécial, 21 Jan. 1922.



The animalistic imagery used to depict the very conscripts who would fight alongside al-Ayari in the trenches of the Western Front is striking. Perhaps frustrated with his own struggles with the French military hierarchy, he points to the ignorance of most soldiers:

The authorities knew well who to decorate with medals: that is to say, a Bedouin who, for the most part, does not even understand why he is in the barracks. These Bedouins were always scared, and showed more consideration for a Frenchman than for his coreligionist non-commissioned officers. All this was a result of his ignorance.<sup>53</sup>

Even if al-Ayari did not literally carry out “directives from Moscow or Paris,” it is clear that he had come to share some of the same convictions French communists held with regard to North Africans’ stage of revolutionary advancement.<sup>54</sup> His posture somewhere closer to contempt than compassion, al-Ayari is less equivocal in his proposed solution: “*Tunisois* should inculcate in the minds of their ignorant coreligionists the benefits of communism, which would give them equality and their rights.”<sup>55</sup>

Thoroughly convinced of the transformative power of knowledge – in this case, of communism – al-Ayari paints a picture not unlike Thaalbi’s portrayal of the rural conscripts. To both urban reformers, these pitiful masses, without the convictions of either a French collaborator or a nationalist resister, were utterly lacking in the tools needed to resist complicity in their own exploitation. It is not surprising, then, that al-Ayari called for “intensive proselytizing” within the army, venturing that soldiers, “chafed by the military’s rules and the arrogance of their superiors, could make invaluable auxiliaries” for the communist cause.<sup>56</sup> While it is difficult to tell whether anyone heeded his advice, in at least one meeting of the Communist Party in March 1922 (at which al-Ayari was present), a soldier of the Beylical Guard, dressed in civilian clothes, agreed to spread communist materials amongst his colleagues.<sup>57</sup>

Considering these pretensions about his rural countrymen, it would be easy to dismiss al-Ayari’s views as naïve mimicry, a product of the confluence of

53 CADN-Tun. 1er vers. 1700 : Rapport 53 de Clapier, Le Commissaire Spécial, 21 Jan. 1922.

54 Kraiem, *Le Parti Communiste Tunisien*, 114. Kraiem claims that al-Ayari refused the influence of French and Russian communists, “particularly when these directives were not harmonious with [his] convictions.”

55 CADN-Tun. 1er vers. 1700 : Rapport 53 de Clapier, Le Commissaire Spécial, 21 Jan. 1922.

56 CADN-Tun. 1er vers. 1700 : Rapport du Commissaire Central, Sureté publique, 15 April 1922.

57 CADN-Tun. 1er vers. 1697: Rapport 261 du Police spéciale des chemins de fer et des portes (Clapier), 20 March 1922.

colonial inequities and his exposure to French communists' evolutionary telos. If this were the case, however, he might have enjoyed a longer political career rather than being sidelined by Protectorate repression. Perhaps what set al-Ayari apart from a larger network of would-be allies was his refusal to renounce violence as a means to achieve his revolutionary goals. It appears, moreover, that al-Ayari made no attempt to hide his belief in violent revolt. At a Communist Party meeting in Tunis in January 1922, he told a story which he claimed to have read in a book:

There was once a king who, while sitting on his sofa, ordered his servant to fight his enemies. The servant obeyed, but asked his sovereign to give him some provisions, including four roasted chickens, some eggs and some bread – which was granted to him. The servant then departed for the field of battle, and soon came upon an enemy who wanted to chop off his head. Stopping the arm of his adversary, the servant asked his adversary why he wanted to kill him. His adversary responded that he harbored no animosity towards him, but that he had been sent by *his* master to kill his enemies. The servant then asked his adversary if he was hungry, and if he wanted to share the provisions which he was carrying... The adversary accepted and, over the course of the meal, they both agreed to return and kill their respective masters, who had not been hesitant to make them kill each other while they rested in their palaces.<sup>58</sup>

Al-Ayari suggested that his story could “serve as a lesson and show that with agreement and unity, we can live happily. Let us save the unfortunate man whose land has been taken from him, and oppose those who want to leave us in ignorance by wiping away our thoughts and ideas.”<sup>59</sup> The allegory's call, drawing perhaps from the veteran's now-wasted experience on the Western Front, is anything but subtle: unity amongst oppressed people, whether Tunisian or otherwise, must be forged to bring about the end – even if a violent one – of capitalist colonial regimes.

### A Path Not Taken

By 1924, al-Ayari's advocacy of violence and leading role in the Communist Party had attracted plenty of attention from Protectorate authorities. A rift

<sup>58</sup> CADN-Tun. 1er vers. 1700: Note 35 de Clapier, 14 Jan. 1922.

<sup>59</sup> Kraiem, *Le Parti Communiste Tunisien*, 68.

between European and Tunisian communists in the *Confédération Générale des Travailleurs* (CGT) had led to Tunisians' establishment of a nationalist offshoot, the CGTT.<sup>60</sup> At the same time, the *Dustur* began to distance itself from al-Ayari and other radical communist and labor leaders, turning instead to moderate socialists with whom they signed a pact.<sup>61</sup> Thus alienated from their most powerful allies, Tunisian communists found themselves vulnerable to Protectorate police who, having condemned al-Ayari and others as threats to the state of security the year before, moved to strike a "fatal blow" to the party's "key agitators."<sup>62</sup> Protectorate police arrested and deported al-Ayari along with colleagues M'hamed Ali and J.P. Finidori on 5 February 1925. Little is known about al-Ayari's life in exile, much of which appears to have been spent in Egypt.<sup>63</sup> In the absence of al-Ayari and his allies, Tunisian communism was severely weakened and would fade from the forefront of the anti-colonial movement. It was Habib Bourguiba who, with the rise of the *Neo-Dustur* party in the 1930s, would dominate Tunisian nationalist politics through to independence in 1956 and serve as Tunisia's first president from 1957 to 1987.

Mukhtar al-Ayari's career, however short-lived, helps us understand the experience of Tunisians in the crucial turning point of the First World War and its immediate aftermath. His vision for Tunisia's post-war future did not fit any singular categorization of nationalism, socialism, or even communism. Yet while he was unique in many ways, his experiences were not all exceptional: Tunisians of all backgrounds endured some aspect of the war's strains, from death and discrimination at the front to economic struggles and the chaos of demobilization at home. In the aggregate, these factors served to stretch the limits of both the practice of French colonial rule, on the one hand, and of moderate Tunisian reformism, on the other. The result of such stretching was the opening up of a momentous window of opportunity for activists like al-Ayari, whose views presented, however briefly, alternative paths for Tunisia's future.

If we only work backwards to trace the roots of the political movements which would ultimately rise to prominence in the mid-20th century, we risk misreading or overlooking particular moments of uncertainty and contingency. Such moments – the First World War being a particularly potent one

60 Confédération Générale des Travailleurs Tunisiens. See Eqbal Ahmad and Stuart Schaar, "M'Hamed Ali: Tunisian Labor Organizer," in *Struggle and Survival in the Modern Middle East*, ed. Edmund Burke III et al. (Berkeley, 2006), 169.

61 DeGeorges, "A Bitter Homecoming," 84; Kraiem, *Le Parti Communiste Tunisien*, 102.

62 Kraiem, *Le Parti Communiste Tunisien*, 103–104.

63 Schaar, "Mukhtar al-Ayari," 11.

– produced the conditions of possibility for the emergence of a variety of prospects and opportunities, in Tunisia and around the world. That these visions emerged, competed, overlapped, succeeded, or even failed (as one might view al-Ayari's case) can often reveal more to us about a people in crisis than can any linear retrospective.

## Defining Imperial Citizenship in the Shadow of World War I: Equality and Difference in the Debates around Post-War Colonial Reform in Algeria

*Dónal Hassett*

In the early hours of August 4th 1914 the port cities of Bône and Philippeville in the French colony of Algeria came under heavy shelling from the German cruisers the *Goeben* and the *Breslau*.<sup>1</sup> Although this would be the only direct attack on Algeria throughout the war, it is striking to note that this, the first non-aerial German assault on French soil, came not in the fields of Flanders or in the foothills of the Vosges but on the Mediterranean coast of France's most prized colony. From the very outset, Algeria would play an important role in the defence of the *Patrie*. The mass participation of troops from Algeria, whether they were settlers of European origin who fought as French citizens or indigenous Algerians who served as imperial subjects,<sup>2</sup> would have major implications for the post-war colonial state. While the experience of the war saw the acceleration of processes of urbanisation and industrialisation that were to have a transformative effect on the country in the interwar period, it is the political repercussions of Algeria's wartime contribution that will form the focus of this chapter. The thousands of men from both communities who fell on the battlefields of Northern France and South-Eastern Europe<sup>3</sup> left a legacy that extended beyond individual and familial tragedy to the radical

1 For more details see Gilbert Meynier, *L'Algérie Révélée : la guerre de 1914–1918 et le premier quart du xx<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Geneva, 1981), 264–264.

2 Circa 73000 of Algeria's European population saw combat in the war while some 173000 indigenous soldiers had served in French forces by the end of war, with slightly more than half of these enlisting as "volunteers", though this term is questionable given the recruitment practices employed by colonial administrators. See Jacques Frémeaux, *Les Colonies dans la Grande Guerre: Combats et Epreuves des Peuples d'Outre-Mer*, (Paris, 2006), 55 and Benjamin Stora, *Algeria 1830–2000: A Short History*, (Ithaca, 2001), p.18. For a detailed account of the abuses involved in the recruitment process see Meynier, *L'Algérie Révélée*, 393–404.

3 Estimates for European dead range between 12000 and 22000 while the number of indigenous dead is normally put somewhere around 26000. See Frémeaux, *Les colonies dans la Grande Guerre*, 202 and Stora, *Algeria 1830–2000*, 18.

reconfiguration of the language of politics in the colony. The mass sacrifice, which defined the war, gave rise to competing notions of a 'blood debt' between colony and metropole that were multiple in meaning and in intent but common across the colonial political spectrum.

This chapter considers how the Great War became a key point of reference in the debate around a new form of imperial citizenship in Algeria in the immediate aftermath of the Great War. It will focus on the strategic use by political actors of all ethnic and ideological backgrounds of notions of both equality and difference emerging from the experience of the war in order to renegotiate the relationship between the metropole, the colonial citizen and/or the colonial subject. It argues that while ethnicity and its corollary, political status, continued to shape both the terms of debate and the practice of politics, the Great War served as a common rhetorical source of legitimacy, competed over but also shared by political actors of different ethnic and/or ideological backgrounds. For both the proponents of indigenous reform and the advocates of reinforced European hegemony, the use of the war to simultaneously define and delineate difference and underline and promote equality was an essential strategy to legitimise their particular models for a post-war Algeria.

### Conceptualising Colonial Reform

As in France, the end of the war in the colonies was marked not only by celebration and commemoration but also by contestation and claims-making.<sup>4</sup> Drawing heavily on the promises made during the war by political and military leaders, political actors across ethnic boundaries and the ideological spectrum called for some form of compensation for the horrors endured for the defence of the *Patrie*. In the colonial metropolises, the demand for recompense came mainly in the form of social claims, the hope for better living standards and working conditions.<sup>5</sup> These concerns were by no means absent in the colonies. However, in the Empire, it was the nature of the relationship between colony and metropole that proved the key issue for political actors of all ethnic and ideological backgrounds.<sup>6</sup>

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4 Frémeaux, *Les Colonies dans la Grande Guerre*, 276.

5 See for example John Horne's account of the metropolitan labour movements. John Horne, *Labour at War: France and Britain, 1914–1918* (Oxford, 1991).

6 Frémeaux, *Les Colonies dans la Grande Guerre*, 277.

Efforts to redefine this relationship would inevitably centre on notions of equality and difference. In their seminal work *Tensions of Empire*, Ann Laura Stoler and Fred Cooper provided an analysis of the colonial system in which the definition and maintenance of difference between coloniser and colonised underpinned the skewed power relations at the heart of colonial rule. They recognised that the coloniser-colonised dichotomy was a construct of colonial rule, 'the most basic tension of Empire... the otherness of colonised persons was neither inherent nor static... it had to be defined and maintained'.<sup>7</sup> In a settler colony like Algeria, the triangular nature of the relationship between the colonial metropole, the subject and the colonial citizen further complicated the fluid boundaries of difference. In concrete terms, the system of colonial rule in Algeria reproduced notions of equality and difference in the way it dealt with both its subjects, the indigenous Algerians, and its citizens, the European community. The indigenous were legally French nationals but their personal legal status as Muslims subject to an officialised version of Koranic Law precluded them from citizenship. The European community were full citizens of the Republic, yet the institutions that governed them and the laws that regulated their interaction with the state were often quite different from those in place in the metropole. For both the colonial subject and the colonial citizen, the post-war desire to conquer more rights and capture more control of their destiny required alternately, even simultaneously, evoking difference and equality. In this regard, the Great War was a perfect rhetorical reference point: the kaleidoscope of experiences, personal, political and economic, that had characterised the war offered fertile ground for those seeking to mobilise its legitimacy in defence of both equality and difference.

Over the course of the war, the colonial system had adopted egalitarian rhetoric, and in some cases egalitarian policies, that diluted difference and sought to 'seduce' the indigenous to ensure their contribution to the war effort.<sup>8</sup> This gave rise to what Gregory Mann has called 'idioms of mutual if uneven obligation' between the colonial state and the subjects.<sup>9</sup> Political actors from both sides of the colonial divide recognised the new relationship forged by the war and sought to advance their claims in a common language born of the war. However, the use of a shared system of references did not necessarily result

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7 Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper "Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda" in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, eds., Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper (Berkeley, 1997), 7.

8 Gilbert Meynier, *L'Algérie Révélée*, 563.

9 Gregory Mann, *Native Sons: West African Veterans and France in the Twentieth Century* (London, 2006), 4.

in mutual intelligibility between different political actors with their competing claims. As Mann correctly points out the 'language of mutual obligation and interdependence is and has always been fraught with misunderstandings, *malentendus* and moments of false confidence, in which one group or another believes that it is finally being heard and understood'.<sup>10</sup> The debates around colonial reform in interwar Algeria bear witness to this fundamental ambiguity.

However, Mann's analysis is the product of the study of the French Soudan (modern-day Mali), a sub-Saharan African colony with an almost non-existent European population and a social, political, economic and cultural history radically different from that of Algeria. How then are we to apply his concept to a settler colony such as Algeria? Undoubtedly, the participation of indigenous Algerians in the war gave rise to a similar 'uneven idiom of mutual obligation' between subject and colonial state, but what of the citizen-soldiers of the European community? Surely, their status as citizens fighting for the Nation of which they were full members excluded them from the kind of specific colonial 'blood debt' evoked by Mann?<sup>11</sup> And yet, the debates recounted in this chapter seem to suggest that for many in the European community it was quite the contrary. That large swathes of the European community felt that metropolitan politicians and bureaucrats cared little for their interests meant that they too would articulate post-war claims in 'a contentious political language of mutual obligation'.<sup>12</sup> Undoubtedly, the disparity in power relations that underpinned the unevenness of the mutual obligation between the indigenous and the colonial state was far greater than that which characterised the European community's relationship with the metropole. Nevertheless, the fact that the power to shape Algeria's present and future lay in the hands of the officials and representatives of metropolitan institutions (and not with the European community) gave a sense of asymmetry to the relationship between colonial citizen and state. Questions of asymmetries of power, interwoven with notions of equality and difference, would be central to the debates around reform in the immediate aftermath of the war.

The provisions of the colonial reform instituted by the post-war government in an attempt to recognise the new bonds of mutual obligation forged in the war were also rife with the tensions between equality and difference. While Clemenceau had been a strong advocate of naturalisation within the personal status during the war, the reforms pursued by his Governor General, Charles Jonnart, were nowhere near as radical. The principal provision of the *Loi*

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<sup>10</sup> Mann, *Native Sons*, 4.

<sup>11</sup> Mann, *Native Sons*, 3.

<sup>12</sup> Mann, *Native Sons*, 2.



*Jonnart* of February 4th 1919 extended a limited franchise to certain specified categories – veterans, the educated, civil servants – in local and departmental elections. A related measure abolished the punitive taxes, the *impôts arabes*, paid by the indigenous population. The law did not, however, remove the requirement to renounce the right to be judged by Koranic Law, a feature known as the personal status, in order to accede to French citizenship, effectively limiting citizenship to the tiny minority willing to reject Islamic culture and tradition. While *Jonnart* himself presented the project in a language that sought to blur the boundary between citizen and subject, suggesting that it created an ‘intermediary status’,<sup>13</sup> the all-important legal distinction between citizen and subject was left intact. Legally, in Algeria, the personal status remained incompatible with the rights of citizenship.

### The Personal Status: Separate but Equal?

The personal status lay at the very heart of debate around colonial reform in the interwar period. In his masterful exploration of Islamic cultural nationalism in interwar Algeria, James McDougall highlights the fundamental paradox that underlay the position of the status in the colonial system. He conceptualises this legal category as both the ‘site in which the colonial oppression of Algerian Muslims was organised and exercised’ and ‘a strictly sacred space whose limits for most Algerians marked the boundary between apostasy and belief’.<sup>14</sup> What had originally been intended as an exclusionary category embodying the notion that Algerian difference rendered the indigenous incapable and/or unworthy of exercising the rights of citizenship, was co-opted by indigenous political leaders who recast it as the essential guarantor of the integrity of some form of Algerian “identity” to be preserved in any future assimilation to the Republic. In the debates around post-war reform, both the partisans and the opponents of naturalisation within the status would mobilise languages of equality and difference rooted in the experience of the war to promote their vision of the central issue at stake: the compatibility of the status with citizenship rights.

No figure is more indicative of the importance of the war as a reference point in this debate than the principal leader of the pro-indigenous camp on the ground in Algeria, the Emir Khaled. Grandson of the Algerian resistance

13 Richard S. Fogarty, *Race and War in France: Colonial Subjects in the French Army, 1914–1918* (Baltimore, 2008), 258.

14 James McDougall, *History and the Culture of Nationalism in Algeria* (Cambridge, 2006), 91.

leader Abdelkader, the Emir was a graduate of the prestigious St. Cyr military school and a decorated officer who had served at the front during the war. In the years immediately following the war, Khaled became the charismatic figurehead for a campaign that gathered the support of intellectuals and established political figures, both local indigenous actors and European/metropolitan supporters of indigenous reform known as *indigénophiles*. His personal history, and particularly his impressive war record, made him the ideal advocate for naturalisation within the status. While the Emir's place in the historiography of Algerian nationalism is much debated,<sup>15</sup> the content of his programme was relatively clear: an extension of the rights of citizenship without any alteration to the Muslim personal status. In concrete terms, this translated into support for the election of indigenous representatives to the *Assemblée Nationale* from an indigenous-only electoral college, the full institutional integration of the three Algerian *départements* into the metropole and the protection of Islamic culture.<sup>16</sup> In the period immediately following the war, the Emir and his supporters would wage a campaign for the realisation of these reforms, particularly in the pages of their newspaper *L'Ikdam* founded in 1919. In the *khalédiste* campaign to promote this programme the war served as a particularly important reference point and the range of experiences that characterised indigenous participation offered fertile ground to those seeking to employ arguments of both difference and equality.

The Emir's political philosophy centred on what Gilbert Meynier has called 'equality in difference',<sup>17</sup> a form of egalitarian association in which the granting of citizenship rights is an act of equality, justice and collaboration that should not necessitate the renunciation of Islamic traditions and practices.<sup>18</sup> In June 1919, the Emir defended this vision of an Algeria that simultaneously recognised the rights and respected the traditions of the indigenous population in terms of the communal contribution to the war:

The solution sought is easy to achieve: it can be found in the terrain of association.

15 See Ahmed Koulakssis and Gilbert Meynier, *L'Emir Khaled: premier za'ïm?* (Paris, 1987), Gilbert Meynier, "L'Emir Khaled, « premier nationaliste algérien »?" in *Histoire de l'Algérie à la période coloniale : 1830–1962*, eds. Abderrahmane Bouchène, Jean Pierre Peyroulou, Ounassa Siari Tengour and Sylvie Thénault (Paris, 2012), 439–442 and Mahfoud Kaddache, *Histoire du nationalisme algérien Tome 1 1919–1939* (Algiers, 2003).

16 Meynier, "L'Emir Khaled, « premier nationaliste algérien »?", 439–442

17 Koulakssis and Meynier, *L'Emir Khaled : premier za'ïm?*, 198.

18 Koulakssis and Meynier, *L'Emir Khaled : premier za'ïm?*, 205.

Side by side with your soldiers, indigenous Algerians fought with a bravery and a loyalism that you are happy to recognise. By spilling their blood, they have acquired indisputable rights, contested only by the privileged of Algeria.<sup>19</sup>

This was followed by a list of the reforms promoted by the *khalédistes*, culminating in the demand for the ‘accession of the indigenous to citizenship in the personal status’.<sup>20</sup>

The link between military service and citizenship, embodied in the French republican notion of the *impôt du sang* (blood tax),<sup>21</sup> had been present in Algerian political discourse since the introduction of conscription for indigenous subjects (1912)<sup>22</sup> and the supporters of further indigenous reform would often employ it in the debates around post-war reform. The Emir’s assertion that the ‘spilling of blood’ necessarily implied ‘indisputable rights’ is a clear reference to this. However, the prospect of naturalisation through military service did not necessarily entail the preservation of the personal status. Thus, while references to the *impôt du sang* did appear in the discourse of the Emir and his followers, they evoked the image of indigenous and French troops fighting ‘side by side’ in the trenches far more frequently, underlining the indigenous contribution to the common struggle while also maintaining the delineation between the two groups.<sup>23</sup> Evocations of the shared experience of indigenous and French troops stopped short of the total assimilation of these experiences. Here a vision of a society that respects difference while recognising equal political rights is legitimised by reference to the equality before death of all soldiers who had served France.

For two of the principal *indigénophile* defenders of naturalisation in the personal status, the particularism that had defined indigenous service during the war served to justify a vision of equality in difference for the post-war era. They argued that the personal status had by no means precluded the indigenous from fulfilling the most basic duty of the citizen, defending the *Patrie*. In his

19 Emir Khaled “Réponse à M. Jean Mélià” *L’ikdam*, 21–28 June 1919.

20 Emir Khaled “Réponse à M. Jean Mélià” *L’ikdam*, 21–28 June 1919.

21 John Horne, “L’impôt du sang: Republican rhetoric and industrial warfare in France, 1914–1918”, *Social History* 14 (1989), 201–23.

22 See Meyenir, *L’Algérie Révélée*, 88–104.

23 Throughout the period 1919–1923 some variation of this image appears at least ten times in the pages of *L’ikdam*.

ardently pro-association newspaper *L'Akhbar*, Victor Barrucand<sup>24</sup> mounted a defence of personal status by evoking indigenous wartime service:

We can recognise that the Muslim preserves his personal status when he fights the enemy and does his military service. "Why can I not keep the *chéchia* I wore when I was injured fighting the Germans when in the company of Frenchmen?" This response was made in front of us. It refutes, in one sentence, an objection that was supposedly very strong.<sup>25</sup>

Here, the *chéchia*, a traditional cap similar to the fez, is evoked as a symbol of the Muslim tradition and culture which Barrucand argues is compatible with French citizenship. Six months later, he would repeat this argument in one simple but effective phrase: "Called to serve as Muslims, the indigenous were to be compensated as Muslims and naturalised as Muslims."<sup>26</sup>

Writing in *L'Ikdam*, the *colon* turned *indigénophile* Victor Speilmann also condemned the colonial system's double standard when it came to the personal status:

Did not the indigenous *poilus* offer their bodies to be riddled with bullets at the same time as the French and the naturalised *poilus*, for the same cause, for the defence of French interests? Were they made to renounce their personal status so they could be sent to be riddled with bullets before us and for us? <sup>27</sup>

The reference to military service as a justification, if not a model, for a society that simultaneously respected equality and difference chimed with existing narratives of indigenous participation in the war, which had long stressed the relative equality of the Army and its attempts to respect indigenous culture and customs.<sup>28</sup> Above all, it sought to counter any notion that the personal status was incompatible with republican citizenship, so closely tied historically to military service.

Outright demands for equality also had their place in the discourse of those who supported naturalisation in the status. The general principle of equality

24 For more details on Barrucand see Céline Keller "Victor Barrucand, défenseur des « indigènes » après Margueritte" *Histoire de l'Algérie*, 296–299.

25 Victor Barrucand 'Français Musulmans' *L'Akhbar*, 27 Feb. 1919.

26 Victor Barrucand, 'Vers la Justice- Coup d'œil rétrospectif' *L'Akhbar*, 31 Aug. 1919.

27 Victor Speilmann 'La Question Indigène au Conseil Supérieur' *L'Ikdam*, 6 Jan. 1922.

28 Fogarty, *Race and War*, 7.

was invoked in cases where difference served to minimise indigenous gains from the war and where the personal status was not called into question. The most specific examples can be found in cases of financial discrimination. *L'Ikdam* condemned the lower rates of compensation paid out to indigenous officers in strongly egalitarian terms, highlighting the equality of danger that had faced all soldiers regardless of race.<sup>29</sup> Similarly, the equality of the war experience was evoked on behalf of indigenous civil servants. In condemning the treatment of indigenous employees of the state as 'second-class' workers, *L'Ikdam* once more contrasted the fraternity of the battlefields with the realities of colonial rule in Algeria:

It seems as though it will have been of no use at all to Algerian Muslims to have fought, with a bravery that we all recognise, for France. If they were, during the war, mixed in with the mass of our soldiers and if they gave the same example of sacrifice as all the *poilus* of the metropole, today the ungrateful *Patrie* establishes a regrettable distinction between them and other Frenchmen. Equal to all citizens when it comes to fulfilling their duties, they are no longer equal when they seek the same rights.<sup>30</sup>

This rhetoric was also applied, in more general terms, to key issues that did not call into question the personal status. In an interview for his newspaper in December 1922, the Emir Khaled employed the language of equality in an attack on the legal, military and educational discriminations that defined the colonial system. He evoked the indigenous 'fulfilment of all the duties of the French citizens, including the sacrifice of their blood' to demand the suppression of the *Indigénat*<sup>31</sup> and other laws of exception that applied to the indigenous, while also calling for total equality of military service and the teaching of Arabic alongside French in the state education system.<sup>32</sup> As long as the personal status was not at stake, the language of equality between indigenous and Frenchman could be used effectively.

29 'Les officiers indigènes et l'indemnité pour charges de famille', *L'Ikdam*, 2 Aug. 1919.

30 'Une injustice à réparer' *L'Ikdam*, 1 Apr. 1921.

31 The Code de l'Indigénat was a repressive legal code that applied only to indigenous subjects in Algeria. For more details, see Isabelle Merle "De la « légalisation » de la violence en contexte colonial. Le régime de l'indigénat en question". *Politix*.17 (2004), 137–162 and Sylvie Thénault, *Violence ordinaire en Algérie coloniale. Camps, internements, assignations à résidence* (Paris, 2012).

32 'Problèmes Musulmans d'Algérie, une conversation avec l'Emir Khaled' *L'Ikdam*, 22 Dec. 1922.

When it came to debates specifically concerning the status, those who defended its compatibility with citizenship rights evoked a very particular form of equality. Their point of reference lay not in the metropole but elsewhere in the Empire. The precedent set in Senegal, and to a lesser extent French India, for naturalisation within the personal status became a favoured trope of the language of the proponents of indigenous reform. In particular, the fact that the African Deputy Blaise Diagne's campaign to extend citizenship to the inhabitants of Senegal's Four Communes (the *originaires*)<sup>33</sup> successfully won naturalisation within the status by evoking the connection between military service and citizenship facilitated the use of an egalitarian language arising from the war by Algerian supporters of reform. In June 1922, the Emir himself highlighted the connection between participation in the war and some form of imperial citizenship:

By spilling our most pure blood in the ranks of the Army for the defence of law and justice, I believe we have shown ourselves to be sufficiently worthy of this honour already accorded to black and yellow people.<sup>34</sup>

A month later, a supporter of Khaled would reiterate this argument in terms that once more stressed the link between military service and citizenship rights:

After the war of 14–18, we respectfully remind democratic and republican France of her multiple promises. We do not ask any favour of her: we ask of her only what justice dictates, equal treatment with our fellow Muslims in Senegal.<sup>35</sup>

In the rhetoric of the defenders of the personal status, service in the war entitled the indigenous of Algeria to a form of differentiated equality that equated them not with metropolitan or European citizens but rather with some form of embryonic imperial citizenship.

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33 The Four Communes of Senegal, St. Louis, Gorée, Dakar and Rufisque, were the first areas settled by the French in Africa and thus had a special legal status. The government of the Second Republic had extended a limited form of citizenship, including parliamentary representation to the African inhabitants in 1848. Deputy Blaise Diagne used the recruitment campaign during to push through legislation recognising the full citizenship rights of the so-called *originaires*. For more details on Diagne's campaign see Joe Lunn, *Memoirs of the Maelstrom: A Senegalese Oral History of the First World War* (Oxford, 1999).

34 'Riposte de l'Emir Khaled au journal 'L'Algérie' *L'Ikdam*, 9 June 1922.

35 Zouaoui 'L'ère Nouvelle' *L'Ikdam*, 4 Aug. 1922.

In this regard, it is perhaps not surprising that the naturalisation of 5000 Maltese settlers in Tunisia in November 1921 provoked outrage in the ranks of the proponents of reform within the status. Over the course of 1922, *L'Ikdam* condemned this mass naturalisation on at least nine occasions, always with reference to the lack of contribution of the Maltese community to the war. The paper's masthead, which often featured short slogans attacking injustices in the colonial system, did not hold its fire in its condemnation of this perceived injustice:

The indigenous fought in the war. The Maltese of Tunisia stayed at home. To whom do we give the right to vote? ... To the Maltese.<sup>36</sup>

M. Clemenceau said of the veterans "they have rights over us". We, indigenous Algerians, veterans, we must say: "The Maltese of Tunisia, they have rights over us".<sup>37</sup>

The Maltese of Tunisia, who have not served France, are now French citizens while the indigenous Algerians are the first in the line of fire and the last everywhere else.<sup>38</sup>

The colonial authorities' choice to expand imperial citizenship in the direction of a European community whose contribution to the war had been minimal was seen as incompatible with the mutual obligation between the colonial state and its subjects born of participation in the war. Here, the *khalédistes* did not seek to draw parallels between their community and the Maltese, but rather denigrated their claim on the French nation. The evocation of equality that was omnipresent in references to the Senegalese case is notably absent from the attacks on the Maltese community, as the language of mutual obligation proved more effective in encompassing demands for differentiated equality.

If the maintenance of the personal status precluded outright demands for total equality with metropolitan citizens, the metropole did offer a precedent for particular status within the Republic, a precedent deeply imbued with the mystique of the war: Alsace-Lorraine. The unique status granted to the returned provinces, most notably the exemption from strict Republican secularism, was conflated with the personal status of the indigenous, both linked by the sacred bond of the war.<sup>39</sup> In his address to the Senatorial Commission charged with

36 *L'Ikdam*, 6 Jan. 1922.

37 *L'Ikdam*, 20 Jan. 1922.

38 *L'Ikdam*, 3 Feb. 1922.

39 'Notre politique coloniale' *L'Ikdam*, 6 Jan. 1922.

examining reforms in Algeria, Ahmed Balloul, a long time defender of naturalisation within the status, used indigenous participation in the campaign to recuperate Alsace-Lorraine to enhance their claim to enjoy a similar special status to that bestowed upon the recovered territories:

Indigenous Algerians helping France to recover Alsace and Lorraine, following the example of their forefathers who, in 1870, fell in defence of the provinces... this personal status is not simply a civil law for them, but as it comes from the Koran, it is considered a religious obligation. They cling to it just as Alsatians remain attached to their institutions.<sup>40</sup>

Evoking the two provinces, so deeply engrained in French national narratives, simultaneously reinforced the indigenous communal contribution to the war and promoted the notion that the Republic could tolerate a form of equality in difference.

Thus we can see that the proponents of indigenous reform alternated and even combined evocations of the equality and difference that characterised their experience of the war to serve a political agenda that itself blended elements of equality and difference. For Khaled and his followers, the preservation of the personal status and all that it implied meant that any demand for equality in the political sphere would always have to be tempered by a defence of difference. This did not mean that equality in the financial sphere could not be defended tooth and nail, nor did it exclude demands for equality with pre-existing forms of differentiated imperial citizenship. It did, however, mean that any reform that would satisfy the *khalédistes* would have to vastly expand the possibility of a separate legal existence within the “universal” equality of French citizenship.

### Algerian Autonomy: Equal but Separate?

The alternative vision for the future of Algeria, promoted by those who consistently opposed radical indigenous reform, was also articulated in a political language shaped by the evocation of both equality and difference. The unique political status of Algeria, as an integral part of the indivisible Republic subject to metropolitan law yet governed by special institutions, meant that the

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40 ‘Représentation des Indigènes Algériens au Parlement : Exposé présenté par M. Ahmed Balloul devant la Commission sénatoriale chargée d’étudier le projet des réformes algériennes le 23 décembre 1921’ *L’Ikdam*, 13 Jan. 1922.



political rhetoric surrounding this unique colony had always been riven with political paradoxes. For those living in Algeria, the tensions between rhetorics of equality and difference did not necessarily breed contradictions. French Algerian political actors had a long tradition of evoking Jacobin centralism and Algerian exceptionalism in the one breath, solidifying both their membership of the French nation and their right to shape policy in the colony. This double discourse was present in the concrete demands of the opponents of indigenous reform, reflecting the tension, which we have already seen in the pro-indigenous reform camp, between the aspiration to enjoy the full rights accorded to metropolitan citizens and the desire to maintain a form of Algerian particularism. In the interwar period, the experience of the Great War would offer a new point of reference for the use of both equality and difference as a framing strategy for these demands.

For many in the coalition of interests that opposed indigenous reform, rejection of the *Loi Jonnart* went hand in hand with support for Algerian autonomy, a policy that would maintain the position of Europeans as full citizens of the Republic while granting them complete control over Algeria's future. As was the case for their indigenous opponents, the defenders of Algerian autonomy looked to other imperial precedents to make their case for Algerian autonomy in the aftermath of the war. In February 1919, an article in the *Echo d'Alger*, a paper founded in 1912 to promote the interests of the political and economic elite of Algiers, called for Algerian representation at the Paris Peace Conference, citing the example of the participation of the British dominions and invoking the contribution to the war. The author asked if Algeria's 'sacrifices in men and in money were less... than in the Dominions of England?' before asserting that Algerian particularities made representation at Versailles a necessity.<sup>41</sup> Interestingly, in yet another indication of the common political language of the period, the Emir Khaled had also cited British imperial precedent in his campaign for Algerian representation at the conference, though in his case it was not the white Dominions but rather India that provided both his justification and his model.<sup>42</sup> In its defence of Algerian autonomy, the settler newspaper *L'Evolution Nord-Africaine* also evoked the war contribution when contrasting the self-rule granted to the British dominions with metropolitan control in Algeria:

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41 'M.R. Les problèmes économiques et la politique : La représentation de l'Algérie à la conférence de la paix' *L'Echo d'Alger*, 6 Feb. 1919.

42 Kaddache *Histoire du nationalisme algérien Tome 1*, 94–95.

We saw the enthusiastic response of Australia and Canada to the call of their Motherland. The freedoms these English Dominions enjoy, have they turned them into separatists? And yet, it is these freedoms, this autonomy that we demand for Algeria, who has, in the course of this war, proved herself to have matured with dignity.<sup>43</sup>

Nevertheless, the British dominion remained a minor trope throughout the debate on autonomy, never attaining the sort of importance that the Senegalese precedent held for the proponents of indigenous reform. In the debate to define a form of imperial citizenship, it is undoubtedly the case that the naturalisation of the *originaires*, a development internal to the Empire and steeped in the Republican language of equality, was a more powerful reference point for the proponents of indigenous reform than the example of the British dominions, drawn from the imperial rival could ever be for those who defended autonomy.

For the partisans of autonomy, it would not be the political implications of military service but rather the economic experience and legacies of the war that would justify their post-war project for Algeria. The concept of *mise en valeur*<sup>44</sup> or realising the potential of the colonies was adopted by the proponents of autonomy and employed as the central legitimising discourse for a vision of the French Empire in which the power to shape policy lay not with the bureaucrats of the state but rather with the settler communities on the ground. Here it was the idea of Algerian difference, economic, geographic and social, that was mobilised to support the idea of autonomy. The European community, it was argued, were best placed to turn Algeria into a productive and flourishing part of the Empire, contributing not only to the reconstruction of France<sup>45</sup> but also to her future defence and prosperity. Autonomy was to be understood not as an Algerian attempt to grab power from the metropole but rather as the most effective way of building a modern and thriving colonial economy. As the editor of the *Echo d'Alger* put it: "A free Algeria in a free France is not a separatist conception: it is a regionalist formula based on modern economic science."<sup>46</sup>

43 "Libertés Algériennes : L'Autonomie' *L'Evolution Nord-Africaine*, 5 Jul. 1919.

44 The concept of *mise en valeur* of the colonies was most famously defended by the Radical-Socialist politician Albert Sarraut in his book *La mise en valeur des colonies françaises*, (Paris, 1923). For information on the presence of this concept in post-war colonial planning see Frémeaux, *Les Colonies dans la Grande Guerre*, 288–294.

45 'Algérie, Tunisie, Maroc' *La Dépêche Algérienne*, 14 Jan. 1919.

46 E. Bailac 'L'Algérie libre' *L'Echo d'Alger*, 22 Apr. 1919.

Crucially, the experience of the war had shown both Algeria's importance to France as a source of raw materials and finished goods and the inefficiencies in her economy, a product of ill-suited metropolitan policies. In his defence of autonomy M. Giraud, President of the *Délégations Financières*, a representative assembly that oversaw Algeria's budget, listed the colony's contribution to the war, mentioning not only the thousands of soldiers and workers but also the '28 million hectolitres of wine, the 3.7 million cattle, fruit, eggs etc.'<sup>47</sup> He then argued that if France wanted to reap the full future potential of Algeria she would have to recognise the 'new spirit' which sought to transform 'institutions that hamper' Algerian expansion and cause 'a loss of trade to the *Mère-Patrie*'.<sup>48</sup> For the partisans of autonomy, attempts to shape a new imperial citizenship were not expressed in the egalitarian language of the war sacrifice, nor were they premised on the kind of cultural, ethnic and legal differences that shaped visions of indigenous reform. Instead, an economic vision of Algerian particularism, shaped by the experience of the war, was employed to justify a fundamentally political project to reorder the empire in a manner that offered those who were already French citizens the possibility of special status.

However, this special status would only be welcome if it was shaped by the European community themselves. In the immediate aftermath of the war, leaders of the European community had constant recourse to the language of equality in cases of specific grievances where metropolitan laws, potentially beneficial to the European community, were not applied in Algeria. The failure to include the Algerian *départements* in an electoral reform introducing a list based electoral system and potentially increasing the number of deputies was condemned in a language heavily imbued with notions of the equality of sacrifice. The motions adopted by the *Conseil Général d'Oran* in May 1919 reflect the egalitarian bent of the condemnation of this perceived discrimination:

The *Conseil Général*, considering that the French population of Algeria have proven, during the war, by the devotion and spirit of sacrifice of their children mobilised in the regiments of *zouaves* and *tirailleurs*, their attachment to the fatherland and to the Republic, demand to enjoy the same rights and prerogatives as the French of the metropole.... Demand unanimously that the list system be declared applicable in Algeria.<sup>49</sup>

47 'Discours de M. Giraud, Président des Délégations Financières' *La Dépêche Algérienne*, 7 Mar. 1920.

48 'Discours de M. Giraud, Président des Délégations Financières' *La Dépêche Algérienne*, 7 Mar. 1920.

49 'Réunion du Conseil Général d'Oran' *La Dépêche Algérienne*, 1–2 May 1919.

The editor of *L'Echo d'Alger*, Etienne Bailac, cited the exclusion of Algeria from this reform as the latest in a litany of discriminations, claiming, that the European community were only considered French when it came to fulfilling the duties of the Frenchman, not when claiming his rights:

The electoral reform, is, indeed, voted for France, but it is formally notified that this measure, so desired by public opinion, will not be applicable to Algeria... When it comes to imposing charges, demanding we fulfil our duties, calling for our support and even asking us to sacrifice our lives, then we are considered Frenchmen. But as soon as there are advantages to be claimed or simply rights to be conceded, we are, in the eyes of Parliament, nothing more than colonials.<sup>50</sup>

Bailac's condemnation of the French government employed an egalitarian rhetoric that almost directly mirrored that mobilised by his bitter political enemies in the pro-indigenous reform camp. However, the equality sought by Bailac, the *Conseil Général d'Oran* and much of the rest of the political European leadership was predicated on the maintenance of the legal and racial boundaries that underpinned the colonial system.

Perhaps the most interesting use of egalitarian language by the opponents of indigenous reform came from Jules Rouanet's column in July 1922. Entitled '*Les Tranchées*', the article employed the metaphor of the trench to express the extent to which the equality that had characterised wartime service had disappeared in the post-war era. Whereas once the trench had represented the site of shared suffering, common endeavour and triumphant heroism for *Français de métropole* and *Français d'Algérie* alike, now it symbolised the ever-widening gap between the metropole and Algeria:

Algerian troops distinguished themselves throughout the war.... Wherever deep trenches had to be crossed the Army of Africa overcame the difficulties, surmounted the obstacles and conquered for themselves a celebrity which the greatest soldiers in history would envy. The peace is signed and yet other trenches, numerous and scarred with lines of barbed wire, are emerging, trenches that will require from those of the Army of Africa greater efforts than those they enthusiastically expended for France on the fronts of Belgium, the Artois and Champagne. These trenches, they are of an incredible length, 1600 kilometres, the distance which separates

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50 E. Bailac 'L'Algérie libre' *L'Echo d'Alger*, 22 Apr. 1919.

Algiers from Paris, our seafront from the Palais Bourbon<sup>51</sup> and the Palais du Luxembourg<sup>52</sup>... their depths surpasses the deepest reaches of the Mediterranean because they stem from an unfathomable problem: indifference when it is not hostility, ignorance when it is not bias and conscious error.<sup>53</sup>

Here we see a powerful and emotive denunciation of the inequalities between metropole and colony as a betrayal of the shared sacrifice of the war. Yet this author, and indeed all those cited above who railed against the metropole's exclusion of Algeria from certain legal and financial reforms, was a staunch advocate of autonomy. Like their opponents in the pro-indigenous reform camp, the defenders of autonomy were not afraid to employ the language of equality, in this case a form of equality restricted to citizens of the Republic, when it best served their cause.

### Conclusion

In the immediate aftermath of the Great War, political actors of all ethnic and ideological backgrounds in Algeria recognised the potential to negotiate a new form of imperial citizenship. For the indigenous community, this would be based on a form of equality in difference that would respect their personal status while also granting them the rights conferred by citizenship. For the political leaders of the European community, post-war reform offered the prospect of autonomy, a restructuring of the imperial order to allow the colonial citizen to shape his own future without the interference of the metropole, a prospect one might call difference in equality. The semantic distinction between equality in difference and difference in equality may seem laboured, but the practical implications for political actors were crucial. Where the pro-autonomy campaign sought to readjust the structures of rule from within, defending the egalitarian concept of citizenship while evoking economic particularism, the supporters of naturalisation within the status were forced to seek change from without, searching for a breach in the legal boundary between subject and citizen. Although both campaigns would ultimately prove unsuccessful, the European community would continue to enjoy the hegemony conferred

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51 The Palais Bourbon is the seat of the French National Assembly.

52 The Palais du Luxembourg is the seat of the French Senate.

53 Jules Rouanet, 'Les Tranchées' *La Dépêche Algérienne*, 3 July 1919.

by citizenship and the indigenous community would continue to suffer the discriminations that came with its denial.

However, it is perhaps the commonalities and contrasts between the rhetorical strategies of the two camps that offer most insight to the colonial historian. The central place accorded to communal contributions to the Great War is hardly surprising given the historical context. In a society still mourning the loss of thousands of men on the battlefield, the experience of the war remained a living memory and a powerful source of legitimacy. The multiplicity of the experiences that characterised the war and its legacies proved a veritable goldmine for the political language of post-war reform. Actors could draw on the war to convert the abstract concepts of equality and difference into versatile reference points, used interchangeably, even simultaneously, to pursue both short-term political and economic goals and long-term visions of radical reform. While the defenders of indigenous reform and the proponents of autonomy had very different conceptions of what constituted equality, both recognised that it was the most effective framing strategy for claims that sought the application of metropolitan regulations to the colony. By evoking the equality of soldiers, whether indigenous or European, with their metropolitan brothers-in-arms before the sacrifice of the war, they could legitimise their demand for equality of treatment. The language of equality was more problematic when it came to justifying radical reforms predicated on some form of Algerian particularism. Here, the equality of sacrifice was coupled with evocations of difference drawn from the experience of the war to advocate a restructuring of the imperial order that respected Algerian exceptionalism.

Although the projects it served to legitimise were radically opposed, the potential polysemy of the Great War made it the basis for a shared language of equality and difference in the debates around colonial reform in post-war Algeria. Political actors in the colony, regardless of their position in the colonial hierarchy, recognised that the war was both a powerful and a versatile framing strategy that could resonate with metropolitan audiences. What both sides perhaps failed to understand was that even the evocation of the Great War could not place the colonial periphery centre-stage in metropolitan politics. It would take another war, forty years later and far closer to home, for that to happen.

# German East Africa: A Territory and People in World War I

*Aude Chanson*

German East Africa was the largest colony of the German colonial Empire. With a surface area of about 995,000 km<sup>2</sup> (384,172 sq mi), it represented twice the area of the German *Reich* (German Empire in Europe) at the end of the 19th century. This colony was also called the “German India in Africa”<sup>1</sup> because of its economic growth and its importance in the German colonial Empire. It was surrounded by the Allies’ colonies (British East Africa, North Rhodesia, and Zanzibar, the Belgian Congo and Portuguese Mozambique). Since German East Africa had a low population density (0.125 hab/km<sup>2</sup>) and few Europeans lived in the territory, the conquest of this colony by the Allied troops appeared easily achievable.<sup>2</sup> However, the new commander of the military forces of German East Africa, Paul Emil von Lettow-Vorbeck, surrendered just 14 days after the Armistice, which was signed in Rethondes between Germany and the Allies. His strategy was to mobilise as many Allied troops as possible in Africa employing guerilla tactics, in order to maintain Allied forces far from Europe, and thus, far from Germany. Consequently, his plan was a tremendous success.

This chapter proposes to analyze the forces involved in East Africa and the consequences of this non-standard campaign for the African population and its territory, in a four-year war that did not concern them. This colony was a mosaic of cultures with more than 120 population groups. As a result of the blockade of Great Britain and the geographic location of German East Africa, the conflict between the Allies and Germany in German East Africa entailed a significant contribution from the local populations. The entire economy and agricultural system were reshaped. The daily life of soldiers, porters, and the

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1 Arne Perras, *Carl Peters and German Imperialism 1856–1918: A Political Biography* (Oxford, 2004), 1.

2 In 1913, in German East Africa, there were 4,830 Europeans, of whom 1,292 were Germans, while there were 78,810 Africans, according to German statistics. The ratio of Europeans to Africans was higher than that in other German colonies, where it lay at 19%. Martin Eberhardt, *Zwischen Nationalsozialismus und Apartheid: die deutsche Bevölkerungsgruppe Südwestafrika 1915–1965* (Münster, 2007), 35. Gann Lewis H., Duignan Peter, *The Rulers of German Africa, 1884–1914* (Stanford, 1977), 267.

local population was deeply disrupted. Some of the aspects of the 'colonial agreement' disappeared, whereas some Africans assumed new responsibilities in order to fill the void left by the expulsion of European peoples (Germans as well as British) in specific places in East Africa, India or Germany.

### German East Africa at the Outset of the First World War

The war was declared in Europe between 28 July and 4 August 1914, but it initially did not have a significant effect on the East African colonies. Indeed, the railway between Dar es Salaam and Lake Tanganyika was just completed and an international fair was organized on 15 August in the capital city. In this context, the colony was not at all preparing for the war but rather for festivities. Thus, the German Governor Dr. Heinrich Schnee (1912–1919) requested the status of neutral country by referring to the Berlin Conference (1884–1885) Article 11<sup>3</sup>, which provided for the neutrality of the colonies (in the Basin of the Congo River) in the event of war in Europe.<sup>4</sup> In spite of Belgium's support concerning this approach, this tactical move failed when two British cruisers, H.M.S. *Pegasus* and H.M.S. *Astraea*, bombed the radio station of Dar es Salaam on 8 August 1914<sup>5</sup>. Thus, the war was declared but the colony could not benefit from the sending of special military troops, contrary to what the French press stated:

Germany was actually organizing an army in German East Africa not only capable of defending its country, but also capable of taking on a strong onslaught against the Belgian Congo, the Mozambique, and the Uganda; but it hid to its potential opponents its military power in the process of being created.<sup>6</sup>

This newspaper article adopts a certain vision of Germany at the beginning of the war, when it considered its combined territorial expansion, in Europe in the conquered areas of Belgium, Luxembourg and France for the West, in Russia for the East, and in Africa. Indeed, the German Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg (1909–1917) alluded to the creation of a German

3 See *General Act of the Berlin Conference on West Africa*, 26 February 1885.

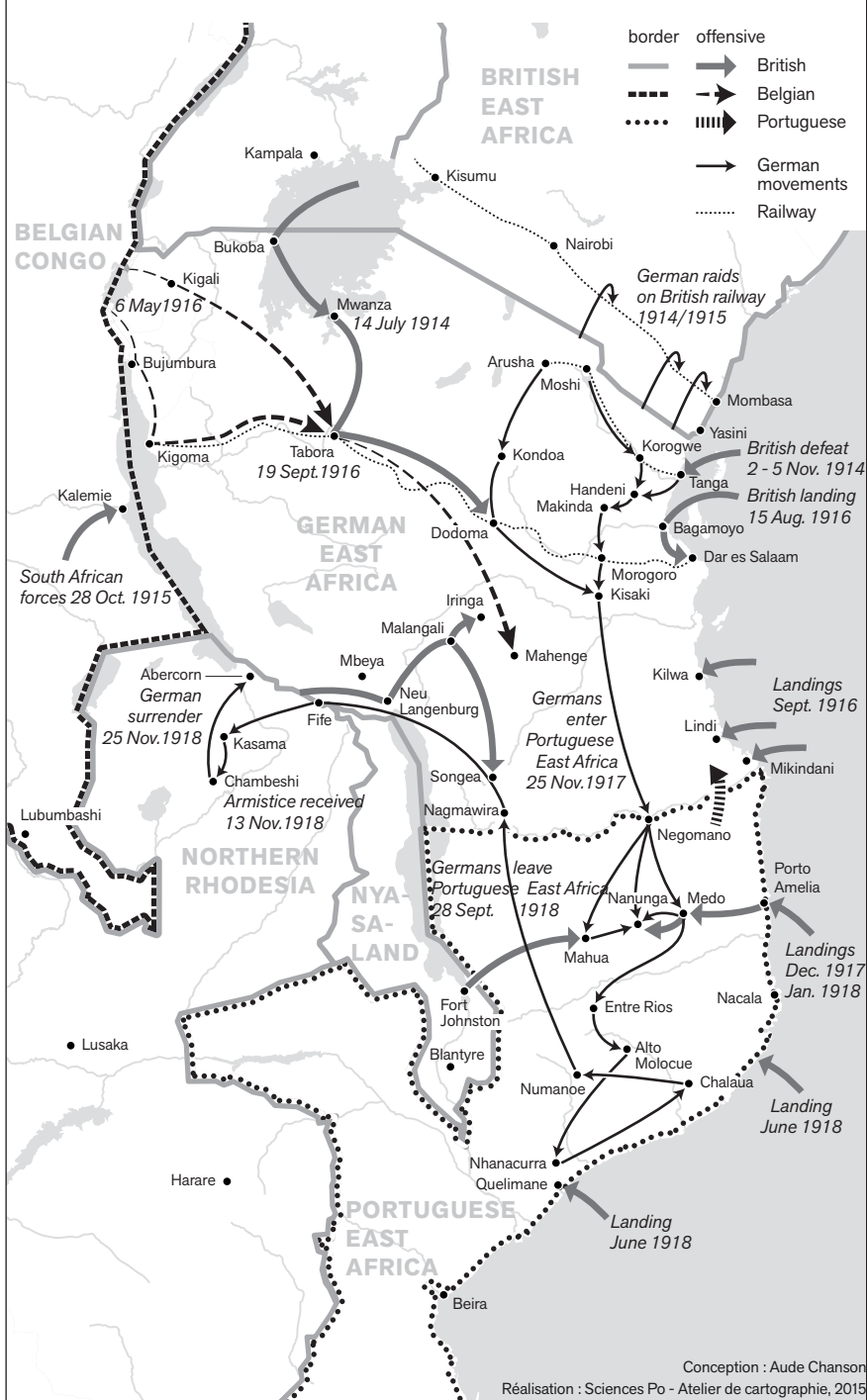
4 Heinrich Schnee, *Deutsch-Ostafrika im Weltkriege. Wie wir lebten und kämpften* (Leipzig, 1919), 28–29.

5 William Henderson, *Studies in German Colonial History* (New-York, 1976), 104.

6 Quoted in: Rémy Porte, *La conquête des colonies allemandes. Naissance et mort d'un rêve impérial* (Saint-Cloud, 2006), 284.



# German East Africa Campaign, 1914 - 1918



colonial Empire in Central Africa, thanks to the combination of the two colonies of German South-West Africa and German East Africa. This new territory would have included the Belgian and French Congo, the French and British Somaliland, Zanzibar as well as a part of Angola and Mozambique (Portuguese colonies).<sup>7</sup> The idea was to create a *Mittelafrika* (Central Africa), to match *Mitteleuropa*<sup>8</sup>, in order to have a single colonial empire, comparable to the French and British empires. The ideal German model was British India. Carl Peters (the founder of German East Africa) worked for many years in London and admired the English colonial model. However, this project never did have the resources to support its ambition due to pure military pragmatism.

In the field, from the very start of the conflict, two personalities were divided over matters of military tactics. On one hand, Governor Schnee did not want a long and costly conflict and looked to negotiate the surrender of the capital city, while on the other hand, Commander Lettow-Vorbeck wanted to take command of and organize resistance in the colony in order to mobilize the armies of the Allies in Africa.

I knew that the fate of the colonies, as of all other German possessions, would only be decided on the battlefields of Europe. To this decision every German, regardless of where he might be at the moment, must contribute his share. In the Colony also it was our duty, in case of universal war, to do all in our power for our country. The question was whether it was possible for us in our subsidiary theatre of war to exercise any influence on the great decision at home. Could we, with our small forces, prevent considerable numbers of the enemy from intervening in Europe, or in other more important theatres, or inflict on our enemies any loss of personnel or war material worth mentioning? At that time I answered this question in the affirmative. It is true, however, that I did not succeed in interesting all authorities in this idea to such an extent as to cause all preparations which a war of this kind rendered desirable to be carried out.<sup>9</sup>

These divergences began with the nomination of Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck<sup>10</sup> in German East Africa as Commander of the German colonial forces in German

7 Imanuel Geiss, *German Foreign Policy 1871–1914* (London, 1976), 173–181.

8 See Manfred Ehmer, *Mitteleuropa: Die Vision des politischen Romantikers Constantin Frantz* (Hamburg, 2012).

9 Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck, *My Reminiscences of East Africa* (London, 1920), 3–4.

10 Uwe Schulte-Varendorff, *Kolonialheld für Kaiser und Führer: General Lettow-Vorbeck* (Berlin, 2006), 10–27.

East Africa on 13 April 1914. From the moment he assumed his position, he intended to reform the military forces. However, he did not succeed in constituting a complete regiment prepared for battle. Indeed, Lettow-Vorbeck led at most 2,998 Germans and 11,300 African soldiers. This included the workforces involved in food and material supplies as well as administration.<sup>11</sup> Half of these men were mobilized on different fronts and included professional militaries, policemen, and mostly volunteers, Africans as well as Europeans (Germans for the most part). Among the Europeans, we can particularly identify those who could not leave the colony after the bombing of Dar es Salaam and the British blockade as well as those from neighboring countries that could not reach Germany and decided to be enrolled in German East Africa, the last German African territory at war. Consequently, the German East African army was mostly constituted of non-professional troops and was not very prepared for battle because even the trained military troops' mission was to maintain order and 'pacify' the territory, but not to challenge a military power like the British one. However, the crew of the two German ships, *S.M.S. Königsberg* and *S.M.S. Möwe*, with their cannons and munitions, reinforced the German troops.

The role of porters also changed between the beginning of the war and 1916. The number of porters was initially fixed to 11 per European with a maximum of 250 per company. This strongly slowed down the movement of the army.<sup>12</sup> That is the reason why Lettow-Vorbeck decided to fire the porters, starting from 1916 – in order to make the military companies more mobile than the Allied ones. The Commander of the German colonial troops was an experienced man who knew that only an attack could prevent suffering strong damages or defeat. His troops knew the field and the railway lines gave them a higher mobility.

The military campaign of Eastern Africa is composed of three phases, in accordance with Lettow-Vorbeck's actions:

- August 1914 – February 1916: Germans had the advantage, notably concerning the control of the African Great Lakes.
- February 1916 – November 1917: The Allies controlled the railway lines (Usambara Railway: from Tanga to the hinterland and Central Line (*Zentralbahn*) from Dar es Salaam to Lake Tanganyika).
- November 1917 – November 1918: The war took an unexpected turn. The Germans did not want to surrender and continued the war against the Allies and made them suffer strong losses using guerilla warfare.

<sup>11</sup> Porte, *La conquête*, 286.

<sup>12</sup> Porte, *La conquête*, 287.

In East Africa, on the British side, Africans were mobilized to fight as the military Eastern campaign appeared more and more threatening. Indeed, the British troops were largely mobilized in Europe and could not be called for external help. Thus, the first forces to engage came from the King's African Rifles (KAR)<sup>13</sup>, which mobilized three of their six regiments: n°1 from Rhodesia-Nyasaland, n°3 and n°4 from Uganda and from British East Africa, which later became the colony of Kenya in 1920. The latter was the first colony to impose a mobilization on immigrants who were hired directly in the KAR. These six regiments came from Uganda, Kenya, Zanzibar, British Somaliland, and Nyasaland. Indeed, at the beginning of the campaign (summer 1914), only 3,600 men could be counted, but the British could provide more troops from Punjab starting from the fall of 1914.

A blockade<sup>14</sup> was established by the Allies in February 1915 along the coast. This forced German East Africa to live in autarky. But all these intimidations did not enable the British to conquer the colony. Then, the campaign lingered: the British army was expecting new troops, but they could not come either from India, or Great Britain or Oceania (Australia and New Zealand), which were too far from the battlefields in East Africa. Moreover, other areas were judged as priorities, notably Europe and the Near-East. The only hope lay with the South African troops that succeeded in defeating the German forces in South-West Africa on 9 July 1915.<sup>15</sup> The arrival of new forces, 15,000 white men, gave a new life to this campaign in spring 1916. The British army was numbered at more than 50,000 men (Whites, Indians, and Africans) and 57,000 porters.<sup>16</sup> The ability to gain reinforcements was an undeniable asset for the British forces. It gave them the opportunity to constitute a strong expeditionary force thanks both to internal and external inputs.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, Western Africa (Sierra Leone, Gold Coast, Gambia, and Nigeria) also contributed to reinforcing the troops in Eastern Africa by sending soldiers and porters in 1917.

From the Belgian side, the Germans attempted to settle in the Congolese territory several times, but they were rejected each time. The Belgians did not have a real army in Africa. They only had at their disposal a 'Public Force' (*Forces publiques*), in order to defend the territory and to establish internal pacification. However, in 1915, General Tombour was nominated to head the

13 Malcolm Page, *King's African Rifles: A History* (Barnsley, 2011).

14 On German violations of the blockade, see Schulte-Varendorff, *Kolonialheld für Kaiser*, 31.

15 Robert Galic, *Les colonies et les coloniaux dans la Grande Guerre. L'illustration, ou l'Histoire en images* (Paris, 2013), 34.

16 Porte, *La conquête*, 303.

17 *The London Gazette*, April 18, 1917, 3723.

African army that was in the process of being set up. A military formation composed of Belgian and British soldiers was put in place in order to lead a lakeside war, but on the Western border, the Belgians were fighting alone. They managed to mobilize troops after 18 months of war with 11 000 soldiers divided in three fronts: Burundi, Rwanda and Lake Tanganyika.

The Portuguese, under the pressure from the British government, went into the First World War in Africa on 9 March 1916. Having found British support for their colonial rule in Africa, the Portuguese tried to counter the Germans, but they suffered from a lack of knowledge of the area, namely the North of Mozambique. Thus, the Germans used these circumstances to settle there and oust the British who succeeded in pushing them further South, outside German East Africa. Then, the Portuguese sent 8,000 European soldiers and constituted an army of 15,000 men to try to stop the German forces at the border.

So, the Allied troops were always larger than the German forces, which became weaker and weaker. Despite their successes, the German troops could not suffer from important losses in terms of men and munitions during frontal assaults because they could not replace them (autarkic system). With a maximum of 15,000 men at his disposal, Lettow-Vorbeck was aware of not being able to win this war in a classic manner against an opponent that was always stronger. It was necessary to slow the enemy down. For these reasons, Lettow-Vorbeck changed his *modus operandi* by leading specific assaults instead of vast operations and frontal assaults that would have necessarily, even in case of victory, cost too much. A repositioning of the strategic points – food, supplies, and munitions depots – was performed in the South of the colony. This area benefited from non-intervention by the Portuguese colony until March 1916. Moreover, Lettow-Vorbeck left behind the wounded and ill soldiers in makeshift hospitals to be found by the British troops. Indeed, the Allies were obliged to take care of them in accordance with the Geneva Convention (1864 and 1906). This enabled Lettow-Vorbeck to downsize his army because of the burden he placed on the Allied forces. He lightened his army even more by sending back all non-combatant personnel, such as the quartermasters and the administrators. Only the volunteers and healthy men were mobilized. The armed forces were then considerably reduced but much more mobile; they could lead surprise attacks putting the Allied troops in difficult positions. Until the signature of the armistice, the German forces attacked Allied military outposts. They even continued after the signing of the armistice such as in Kasama on 13 November 1918.

It was not before 25 November 1918 that the Governor of German East Africa Dr. Heinrich Schnee, and Commander Lettow-Vorbeck surrendered to the British. They succeeded in negotiating their conditions, particularly the

surrender of weapons that was deducted from those which were given back to the Allied governments by Germany, in Europe. The German prisoners generally were well-treated by the British officers who recognized their combativeness and their courage during these four years of battles.<sup>18</sup> The prisoners were then transported to Dar es Salaam at the end of the war in order to be sent back to Germany, contrary to the other German prisoners, notably German officers from Cameroon that were interned for some years in camps in Algeria or Tunisia.<sup>19</sup>

### The Experience of Local Populations During the War

Local populations experienced this war very differently depending on the regions where they lived, but the common denominator was their involvement in a war between Europeans. It was the first time that the power and the superiority of whites were questioned. However, the local population remained loyal to the Germans, as long as they were in control of the colony. The fear of insurrection abated rapidly. Most Africans still remembered the terrible Maji-Maji War (1905–1907) and the following violent repression that caused between 75,000 and 150,000 deaths, and the majority of the German East African troops was made up of local troops, which were called *askaris* ('soldiers' in Kiswahili).<sup>20</sup> As previously discussed, the War involved porters in great numbers, earning it the title 'the war of porters'. The East African campaign exemplifies the widespread participation of Africans in the War on both sides. For instance, 120,000 African porters worked for the British General Staff.

It is also significant to note that there was a very high mortality rate within the mobilized African population, as a result of combat, mistreatment and the lack of resources. There was a high level of turnover of porters during this campaign.<sup>21</sup> The authorities were obliged to send recruitments patrols into villages to forcibly recruit all the men and children who were fit to fight.<sup>22</sup> Desertion

18 Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck, *Heia safari! Deutschlands Kampf in Ostafrika: der deutschen Jugend unter Mitwirkung seines Mitkämpfers* (Leipzig, 1920), 258–270.

19 ECPAD (*Etablissement de Communication et de Production Audiovisuelle de la Défense*) Archives, Photographic Section, Samama Chikly, Series 4L & 6L, 1916–1918.

20 Felicitas Becker, "Von der Feldschlacht zum Guerillakrieg. Der Verlauf des Krieges und seine Schauplätze," in *Der Maji-Maji-Krieg in Deutsch-Ostafrika 1905–1907*, ed. Felicitas Becker and Jigal Beez (Berlin, 2005), 74–86.

21 John Iliffe, *A modern History of Tanganyika* (Cambridge, 1984), 249–250.

22 Michael Pesek, *Das Ende eines Kolonialreiches : Ostafrika im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Frankfurt am Main, 2010), 158–160.

rates reached such high levels that the German Commander even suggested bringing along entire families to the front as an antidote to desertion.

In addition to the direct consequences of the war in the African societies, the daily life of African and European peoples in Africa changed radically. First of all, from the economic point of view, resources were diverted in order to compensate for shortages. The Amani agricultural institute (founded in 1902) developed substitutes for products such as gasoline (using 'Trebol' based on coconuts), quinine, textiles, chocolate, toothpaste, very early on. Food products like sugar and salt were also produced locally during the war. Cotton was transformed and woven in textile factories in the colony. This process necessitated a large workforce.<sup>23</sup> Consequently, the demand for labor increased in the colony to an unprecedented degree, as all external trade was disrupted. Parents pushed their children into working from an early age to replace adult workers and thus helped to make up deficits in farming revenue. These changes were not the most important consequences of this war, but they affected the entire African population, especially in the urban centers.

In socio-demographic terms, the War led to high levels of population mobility and flight by refugees, who were forced to abandon their villages and families. The human losses, directly or indirectly linked to the war, the diseases and the absence of medical treatment weakened the population which was on the cusp of development. The evacuations of Europeans, including doctors, resulted in a shortage of highly skilled medical workforce. Apart from some recently trained nurses, who tried to treat patients using a minimum of resources, the hospitals were empty. Muslim workers living on the coast also migrated to the hinterland, causing alarm among Christian missionaries. The drastic reduction in resources led to a decline in educational levels. Moreover, the evacuation of many European missionaries meant that pupils only had access to African auxiliaries. Many pupils stopped attending school as a result.

Only a minority of the population took a direct part in the conflict. However, all the local peoples contributed in some way to the war effort. The colony, separated from the German homeland and its supply lines, could only count on its local resources and inhabitants. This phenomenon also applied to other colonies like Cameroon and German South-West Africa. However, unlike these examples, German East Africa was the only colony to remain in war for so long. Indeed, Togo capitulated in August 1914 and German South-West Africa in July 1915. Finally, Cameroon surrendered in February 1916, that is to say after no more than one year and a half at war. Therefore, German East Africa was the

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23     Porte, *La conquête*, 298.

only German colony to experience four years of war without contact with the outside world except on very rare exceptions.

Moreover, the colonial bureaucracy collapsed, the administrative and educational institutions were deserted, leaving the population to their own devices. The mobilization of European peoples, then their expulsion, caused problems in the short-term management of the colony, in industry, business and educational institutions. Delays in decisions by the League of Nations on the formalization of the mandate by the British and Belgians made the area less attractive to potential investors.

Several months, even years, were necessary to rebuild administrative and economic infrastructure. The gap created by the evacuation of Germans allowed African peoples to take unprecedented responsibilities. African seminarians and teachers continued their work in spite of the absence of payment and locals fundraised in order to maintain the buildings in their localities. From the European perspective, this was a major challenge for the Africans. As a priest of the White Fathers (*Pères Blancs*) wrote in his annual report in 1915–1916: “But, they are Negros and they would not be able to replace the fathers, neither for the teaching, nor for the training of the pupils.”<sup>24</sup>

But the most disastrous consequences for the populations were the siege of the cities, the movement of the troops, and the scorched earth policy that left lasting marks in the territory. Indeed, entire regions were devastated and were no longer able to produce agricultural products or replace livestock. Thus, large herds and crops were destroyed, and starvation ensued. It caused heavy human and environmental consequences, several thousand casualties and deaths, notably as a result of the Influenza Pandemic of 1918–19. The colony needed many years to recover from this European war on this African territory.

## Conclusion

The armistice, signed on 11 November 1918, marked the end of the war both in Europe and the rest of the world, including East Africa. It also set the terms for the evacuation of German troops outside Germany. The case of German East Africa appeared in the third section of the armistice, but only because it was the last colony that was still at war, even inflicting a defeat to the Allies on 13 November. The surrender of German East Africa took place on 25 November, that is to say, 14 days after the armistice in Europe, in which German East Africa

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24 White Fathers Archives in Dar es Salaam, 1915–1916.



is specifically mentioned.<sup>25</sup> The treaty led to very serious consequences for Germany, as its colonial Empire was divided between the victorious powers under the control of the League of Nations.<sup>26</sup> In the case of German East Africa, Belgium acquired Rwanda and Burundi, whereas Great Britain took the rest of the colony as a mandate called Tanganyika Territory.<sup>27</sup>

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25 Frank H. Simonds, *History of the World War*, Vol. 5 *The Victory of Armistice* (Garden City, 1920), 349.

26 See Article 119, *Treaty of Versailles* (Paris, 1919).

27 See John Reed, *The Treaties of Peace, 1919–1923*, Volume 1 (Clark, 2007), xvi.



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