

World War I: A Student Encyclopedia Documents Volume (5)

By: Spencer C. Tucker, Editor

Priscilla Mary Roberts, Editor, Documents Volume

Foreword by John S. D. Eisenhower

List of Documents and Essays

[Section One: The Coming of War](#) p. 5

[1. The Idea of Progress](#) pp. 6-14

[2. Early Twentieth-Century Globalization: Its Impact on Thinking on War and Peace](#) pp. 15-27

[3. British Foreign Policy](#) pp. 28-40

[4. Prewar Fears of German Expansion](#) pp. 41-50

[5. A German Military Theorist](#) pp. 51-58

[6. The Assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, June 1914](#) pp. 59-69

[7. Europe Moves toward War](#) pp. 70-88

[8. Great Britain Chooses War](#) pp. 89-103

[9. War as Romantic Fulfillment](#) pp. 103-122

[10. The British “Lost Generation”: Vera Brittain](#) pp. 123-138

[Section Two: Fighting the War](#) p. 139

[11. Conclusions of the Committee on Alleged German Atrocities \(The Bryce Report\), 1915](#) pp. 140-152

[12. A German Deserter's Experience of Trench Warfare in France Following the First Battle of the Marne, 1914–1915](#) pp. 153-165

[13. Alan Seeger on Trench Warfare](#) pp. 166-182

[14. The Western Front: Verdun and the Somme](#) pp. 183-212

[15. New Weapons: Chemical Warfare and the Use of Poison Gas](#) pp. 213-224

[16. The Gallipoli Campaign](#) pp. 225-238

[17. The Siege of Kut, 7 December 1915–29 April, 1916](#) pp. 239-255

[18. The Soldier's Experience: Herbert G. Boorer and Victor Richardson](#) pp. 256-269

[19. The Soldier's Reaction to War](#) pp. 270-286

[20. The French Mutinies of 1917](#) pp. 287-303

[Section Three: The United States and World War I: The Years of Neutrality](#) p. 304

[21. American Reactions to the Lusitania Crisis](#) pp. 305-314

[22. Peace Sentiment in the United States](#) pp. 315-327

[23. Plans for Postwar International Organization](#) pp. 328-338

[24. The British Financial Crisis, November–December 1916](#) pp. 339-350

[Section Four: The Political Impact of War and the Home Fronts](#) p. 351

[25. Progressive and Left-Wing Forces Rally to Their Own Governments](#) pp. 352-368

[26. German War Aims, 1915](#) pp. 369-384

[27. The Eastern Front](#) pp. 385-395

[28. War Finance](#) pp. 396-410

lii

[29. The British Home Front](#) pp. 411-423

[30. The Growth of Statism](#) pp. 424-444

[31. Superpatriotism and 100 Percent Americanism on the U.S. Home Front](#) pp. 445-457

[32. Wartime Demands for Greater Democracy](#) pp. 458-470

[33. Demands for Postwar Social Justice](#) pp. 471-487

[34. African Americans and the Great War](#) pp. 488-509

[35. Women and War](#) pp. 510-528

[Section Five: War Stimulates Change and the Break-Up of the Old International Order](#) p. 529

[36. A Socialist Opposes World War I](#) pp. 530-543

[37. World War I and Japanese Ambitions](#) pp. 544-543

[38. Nationalist Forces Threaten the Austro-Hungarian Empire](#) pp. 544-552

[39. The Middle East during World War I: Britain Encourages Anti-Ottoman Muslim Independence Movements and Zionism](#) pp. 553-556

[40. The Weakening of British Imperial Rule](#) pp. 582-594

[41. Strains upon the British Empire](#) pp. 595-605

[42. The Murder of Rasputin, 29–30 December 1916](#) pp. 606-620

[Section Six: New Expectations](#) p. 621

[43. The Bolshevik Revolution](#) pp. 622-635

[44. Wilson's Fourteen Points](#) pp. 636-653

[45. Challenges to Western Dominance](#) pp. 654-669

[46. The War's Impact on International Radicalism](#) pp. 670-684

[47. Walter Lippmann on World War I and the International Role of the United States](#) pp. 685-701

[48. A Postwar German Intellectual Triumph](#) pp. 702-713

MLA

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "List of Documents." *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*, ABC-CLIO, 2005, pp. . *ABC-CLIO eBook Collection*, legacy.abc-clio.com/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2005.

Chicago Manual of Style

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "List of Documents." In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005.
<http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2005>.

APA

Roberts, P. M., S. C. Tucker (2005). List of Documents. In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia* (pp.). Retrieved from <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2005>

SECTION ONE

THE COMING OF WAR

[Section One: The Coming of War](#)

- [1. The Idea of Progress](#) pp. 6-14
- [2. Early Twentieth-Century Globalization: Its Impact on Thinking on War and Peace](#) pp. 15-27
- [3. British Foreign Policy](#) pp. 28-40
- [4. Prewar Fears of German Expansion](#) pp. 41-50
- [5. A German Military Theorist](#) pp. 51-58
- [6. The Assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, June 1914](#) pp. 59-69
- [7. Europe Moves toward War](#) pp. 70-88
- [8. Great Britain Chooses War](#) pp. 89-103
- [9. War as Romantic Fulfillment](#) pp. 104-122
- [10. The British “Lost Generation”: Vera Brittain](#) pp. 123-138

Essay 1. The Idea of Progress

Social Darwinism and the Idea of Progress

One of the most influential nineteenth-century ideals was the belief in progress: the conviction that an inexorable law of nature, embodied in the principles of evolution expounded by Charles Darwin and other scientists, meant that not only natural organisms but also political, economic, and social systems were perpetually improving. For many intelligent and well-meaning prewar men and women, the logical corollary was that “higher” ideas were becoming dominant and that, as living standards improved and the world moved toward greater democracy, war would naturally become impossible. From at least the time of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, Western intellectuals, philosophers, and thinkers had believed that man and society were both perfectible if unfettered reason and logic could be applied in the spheres of education, government, and political, social, and economic organizations. To many, the technological and scientific enhancement of daily life that resulted from the Industrial Revolution, and the concurrent spread of liberalism and more representative government, seemed to prove this theory. There was an almost intoxicating sense that man had mastered the natural world and, using the light of reason, could bring about a perfect society. As the nineteenth century wore on, many intellectuals and others believed that mankind had achieved the ability to solve all major problems in a (2070) peaceful manner, and it was only a matter of time before this state of affairs was attained.

From this perspective, human beings had come close to attaining technological mastery of their world and could be expected to do so completely in the near future. War was wasteful, illogical, and old-fashioned and therefore would become obsolete. Men and women could be expected to reject the irrational, to run their societies on lines that would, according to the then very popular utilitarian philosophy, ensure the greatest good of the greatest number and assure increasing prosperity for all. Almost inexorably, human society would move toward a state of near-perfection, of liberal democracy, free trade, and ever greater technological, scientific, and economic advances. Individuals would enjoy better lives and greater personal freedom than ever before in harmonious societies whose institutions would be more efficiently organized and administered for the benefit of all. This outlook had some parallels with the theory expounded by Francis Fukuyama and briefly popular during the 1990s, immediately after the Cold War ended, that the world had come to “the end of history” and in the future could be expected to focus upon the attainment of ever greater economic growth and the development of increasingly democratic

institutions, following the model embodied most prominently in the United States.

Perhaps the greatest nineteenth-century exponent of the theory of progress was the influential British sociologist Herbert Spencer. In his 1851 book *Social Statics*, Spencer optimistically argued that simply through the working of natural processes, “evil perpetually tends to disappear.” As Spencer contended, “The changes that constitute progress are the successive steps of the transition. And the belief in human perfectibility, merely amounts to the belief, that in virtue of this process, man will eventually become completely suited to his mode of life. . . . Thus the ultimate development of the ideal man is logically certain—as certain as any conclusion in which we place the most implicit faith; for instance, that all men will die. . . . Progress, therefore, is not an accident but a necessity. . . . [S]o surely must the human faculties be moulded into complete fitness for the social state; so surely must the things we call evil and immorality disappear; so surely must man become perfect.” With other believers in progress, he went so far as to argue that natural laws meant that although war had been necessary to the development of civilization, as society evolved to a higher stage organized war would inevitably become obsolescent.

Progress also had a racial aspect, as white nations assumed that their own peoples represented those civilizations by far the most advanced and that they were therefore entitled to lead the rest of the world in the quest for ever greater progress. From this perspective it was also a given that Western institutions and practices would serve as the model for other countries and peoples, many of whom had been colonized by European powers or the United States since the sixteenth century. The outbreak of World War I and, even more, its long-term impact as the West’s vaunted technology and science were applied to the grim task of killing as many human beings as efficiently as possible would deal a great blow not just to any belief in the inevitability of progress but also to all Western claims that their governments and societies were inherently superior to those of other, supposedly less developed or “backward” states and peoples. It could indeed be argued that the West had proved itself to be as barbaric as any primitive tribe, the only difference being that the availability of advanced technology meant that Western nations were more efficient in killing and maiming large numbers of the troops of those states they considered their enemies. Symptomatically, in 1918 the pessimistic German philosopher Oswald Spengler (1880–1936) published the first volume of his massive study titled *The Decline of the West*, a work arguing that the superiority of white or Western races was endangered and that within a few decades the European powers would be forced to yield their international dominance to nonwhite

nations. In Western colonies such as French Indochina and India, in rival Asian states such as Japan, and in other subordinate though nominally independent countries such as China, World War I undoubtedly helped to fuel nationalist resentment of European and U.S. dominance and demands for the end of imperial rule, quasi-colonial privileges, and racial discrimination.

The experience of World War I also effectively shattered most optimistic Western beliefs in the benign inevitability of progress as an inexorable and almost painless consequence of liberal democracy and industrial development. From World War I onward, novels by such popular writers as John Buchan would stress the (2071) fragility of civilization and the existence of menacing forces of unreason and disorder lurking just underneath their own societies' brittle crust, especially the insidious dangers from totalitarian ideologies of both left and right. Many intellectuals would subsequently turn to Communism, a fundamentally nineteenth-century progressive ideology that promised a perfect and just society once the working-class or proletariat controlled both the means of production and the institutions of government. Others would embrace Fascist ideologies that glorified military strength and the role of charismatic leadership and demanded the creation of a state that could act decisively while meeting the needs of the mass of the people, not just by providing economic security, but also by giving individuals the opportunity to identify with some great and inspiring larger national entity. Very few, however, were able to retain that unshadowed faith in the future's potential so characteristic of the late nineteenth century and the years preceding 1914.

Herbert Spencer, *The Study of Sociology* (1873)

Warfare among men, like warfare among animals, has had a large share in raising their organizations to a higher stage. The following are some of the various ways in which it has worked.

In the first place, it has had the effect of continually extirpating races which, for some reason or other, were least fitted to cope with the conditions of existence they were subject to. The killing-off of relatively-feeble tribes, or tribes relatively wanting in endurance, or courage, or sagacity, or power of co-operation, must have tended ever to maintain, and occasionally to increase, the amounts of life-preserving powers possessed by men.

Beyond this average advance caused by the destruction of the least-developed races and the least-developed individuals, there has been an average advance caused by inheritance of those further developments due to functional activity. . . . [B]y the unceasing antagonisms between human societies, small

and large, there has been a mutual culture of an adapted intelligence, a mutual culture of certain traits of character not to be undervalued, and a mutual culture of bodily powers.

A large effect, too, has been produced upon the development of the arts. In responding to the imperative demands of war, industry made important advances and gained much of its skill. Indeed, it may be questioned whether, in the absence of that exercise of manipulative faculty which the making of weapons originally gave, there would ever have been produced the tools required for developed industry. . . .

A no less important benefit bequeathed by war, has been the formation of large societies. By force alone were small nomadic hordes welded into large tribes; by force alone were large tribes welded into small nations; by force alone were small nations welded into large nations. While the fighting of societies usually maintains separateness, or by conquest produces only temporary unions, it produces, from time to time, permanent unions; and as fast as there are formed permanent unions of small into large, and then of large into still larger, industrial progress is furthered in three ways. Hostilities, instead of being perpetual, are broken by intervals of peace. When they occur, hostilities do not so profoundly derange the industrial activities. And there arises the possibility of carrying out the division of labour much more effectively. War, in short, in the slow course of things, brings about a social aggregation which furthers that industrial state at variance with war; and yet nothing but war could bring about this social aggregation.

These truths, that without war large aggregates of men cannot be formed, and that without large aggregates of men there cannot be a developed industrial state, are illustrated in all places and times. Among existing uncivilized and semi-civilized races, we everywhere find that union of small societies by a conquering society is a step in civilization. . . .

The furtherance of industrial development by aggregation is no less manifest. If we compare a small society with a large one, we get clear proof that those processes of co-operation by which social life is made possible, assume high forms only when the numbers of the co-operating citizens are great. . . . Hence, unquestionably, that integration of societies effected by war, has been a needful preliminary to industrial development, and consequently to developments of other kinds—Science, the Fine Arts, &c.

Industrial habits too, and habits of subordination to social requirements, are indirectly brought about by the same cause. The truth that the power of working

continuously, wanting in the aboriginal man, could be (2072) established only by that persistent coercion to which conquered and enslaved tribes are subject, has become trite. An allied truth is, that only by a discipline of submission, first to an owner, then to a personal governor, presently to government less personal, then to the embodied law proceeding from government, could there eventually be reached submission to that code of moral law by which the civilized man is more and more restrained in his dealings with his fellows.

Though, during barbarism and the earlier stages of civilization, war has the effect of exterminating the weaker societies, and of weeding out the weaker members of the stronger societies, and thus in both ways furthering the development of those valuable powers, bodily and mental, which war brings into play; yet during the later stages of civilization, the second of these actions is reversed. So long as all adult males have to bear arms, the average result is that those of most strength and quickness survive, while the feebler and slower are slain; but when the industrial development has become such that only some of the adult males are drafted into the army, the tendency is to pick out and expose to slaughter the best-grown and healthiest: leaving behind the physically-inferior to propagate the race. The fact that among ourselves, though the number of soldiers raised is not relatively large, many recruits are rejected by the examining surgeons, shows that the process inevitably works towards deterioration. Where, as in France, conscriptions have gone on taking away the finest men, generation after generation, the needful lowering of the standard proves how disastrous is the effect on those animal qualities of a race which form a necessary basis for all higher qualities. . . .

In like manner, though war, by bringing about social consolidation, indirectly favours industrial progress and all its civilizing consequences, yet the direct effect of war on industrial progress is repressive. It is repressive as necessitating the abstraction of men and materials that would otherwise go to industrial growth; it is repressive as deranging the complex inter-dependencies among the many productive and distributive agencies; it is repressive as drafting off much administrative and constructive ability, which would else have gone to improve the industrial arts and the industrial organization. . . . [W]e cannot fail to see that persistent war is at variance not only with industrial development, but also with the higher intellectual developments that aid industry and are aided by it.

So, too, with the effects wrought on the moral nature. While war, by the discipline it gives soldiers, directly cultivates the habit of subordination, and does the like indirectly by establishing strong and permanent governments; and while in so far as it cultivates attributes that are not only temporarily essential,

but are steps towards attributes that are permanently essential; yet it does this at the cost of maintaining, and sometimes increasing, detrimental attributes—attributes intrinsically anti-social. The aggressions which selfishness prompts (aggressions which, in a society, have to be restrained by some power that is strong in proportion as the selfishness is intense) can diminish only as fast as selfishness is held in check by sympathy; and perpetual warlike activities repress sympathy: nay, they do worse—they cultivate aggressiveness to the extent of making it a pleasure to inflict injury. The citizen made callous by the killing and wounding of enemies, inevitably brings his callousness home with him. Fellow-feeling, habitually trampled down in military conflicts, cannot at the same time be active in the relations of civil life. In proportion as giving pain to others is made a habit during war, it will remain a habit during peace: inevitably producing in the behaviour of citizens to one another, antagonisms, crimes of violence, and multitudinous aggressions of minor kinds, tending towards a disorder that calls for coercive government. . . .

Taking the most general view of the matter, we may say that only when the sacred duty of blood-revenge, constituting the religion of the savage, decreases in sacredness, does there come a possibility of emergence from the deepest barbarism. Only as fast as retaliation, which for a murder on one side inflicts a murder or murders on the other, becomes less imperative, is it possible for larger aggregates of men to hold together and civilization to commence. And so, too, out of lower stages of civilization higher ones can emerge, only as there diminishes this pursuit of international revenge and re-revenge, which the code we inherit from the savage insists upon. Such advantages, bodily and mental, as the race derives from the discipline of war, are exceeded by the disadvantages, bodily and mental, but especially mental, which result after a certain stage of progress is (2073) reached. Severe and bloody as the process is, the killing-off of inferior races and individuals, leaves a balance of benefit to mankind during phases of progress in which the moral development is low, and there are no quick sympathies to be continually seared by the infliction of pain and death. But as there arise higher societies, implying individual characters fitted for closer co-operation, the destructive activities exercised by such higher societies have injurious re-active effects on the moral natures of their members—injurious effects which outweigh the benefits resulting from the extirpation of inferior races. After this stage has been reached, the purifying process, continuing still an important one, remains to be carried on by industrial war—by a competition of societies during which the best, physically, emotionally, and intellectually, spread most, and leave the least capable to disappear gradually, from failing to leave a sufficiently numerous posterity.

Source

Herbert Spencer, *The Study of Sociology* (1873), 192–199, excerpted in J. D. Y. Peel, ed., *Herbert Spencer on Social Evolution* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1972), 167–174.

Herbert Spencer (1820–1903)

Spencer was one of the most prominent and respected of nineteenth-century moral philosophers. His writings were widely circulated not just in Great Britain but throughout the world. The son of a Methodist schoolteacher, in later life Spencer became an agnostic; he was also greatly influenced by an uncle's utilitarian views, though his own bias in favor of individual rights later caused him to query some of the tenets of other philosophers of that school, especially their emphasis upon the "greatest good of the greatest number." Spencer attempted to synthesize knowledge in all fields of learning, including biology, sociology, ethics, economics, and politics, in the light of the evolutionary theories propounded by the scientist Charles Darwin, that in a state of natural competition only those biological organisms and species most suited to their environment were able to survive. A strong proponent of laissez-faire thinking, he argued forcefully that policies of state intervention and other artificial restrictions were liable to distort the political economy, enabling businesses and industries less inherently suited to survive to do so at the expense of stronger competitors. At certain stages of development, he also saw much to commend in rivalry and warfare between different states and races, arguing that this would winnow out the less efficient "uncivilized and semi-civilized" social groupings so that only the best organized and run would survive. Spencer's writings therefore buttressed the outlook of classical liberalism, arguing that the pursuit of rational self-interest by individuals, in light of what he believed to be their innate moral sense, would ultimately promote the most effective development of society overall. Opponents of state intervention frequently cited his works, as did those who sought to justify colonial rule over "backward" races.

About The Document

We have here a short excerpt from *The Study of Sociology*, a book of several hundred pages that Spencer published in 1871, in which he purported to demonstrate that as nations and states became more advanced, warfare would no longer be a rational activity to undertake. Whereas in early stages of civilization conflict performed valuable functions, weeding out individuals and societies least suited to survive and instilling the social discipline necessary for

industrial development, ultimately warfare could prove counterproductive, diverting materials and energies from constructive development and encouraging antisocial behavior within a state as well as beyond its borders. “Higher societies,” he believed, would therefore restrict competition with each other to the industrial sphere.

Spencer’s views on the future of warfare, which represented only part of a much broader attempt to synthesize the principles governing the direction of human societies, were published in an influential book whose intended audience was the intellectual and thinking classes of his time, in Britain and beyond. His published writings were designed to convince and win over his readers to his own views and, if possible, to influence governmental attitudes and policymaking. Spencer’s writings were part of his efforts as what is sometimes termed a public intellectual to affect ongoing political debates on policy that were taking place within his own country and in other contemporary Western nations. Conscious of his standing as a leading moral philosopher, Spencer drafted his writings (2074) carefully and attempted to ensure that his conclusions were incontrovertible. This excerpt, therefore, represented his considered views, reached after much thought and drafted diligently and meticulously in order to influence public opinion on the subject. It was one of the most polished and skillfully crafted statements of the belief that the natural development of modern industrial society precluded any outbreak of outright war between advanced Western states.

Further Reading

Bowler, Peter J. *The Invention of Progress: The Victorians and the Past*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1989.

Catley, Bob, and Wayne Cristaudo. *This Great Beast: Progress and the Modern State*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 1997.

Gray, T. S. *The Political Philosophy of Herbert Spencer*. Aldershot: Avebury, 1996.

Nisbet, Robert. *History of the Idea of Progress*. London: Heinemann, 1980.

Owen, G. L. *The Betterment of Man: A Rational History of Western Civilization*. New York: Putnam, 1974.

Taylor, M. W. *Man versus the State: Herbert Spencer and Late Victorian Liberalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.

Von Arx, Jeffrey Paul. *Progress and Pessimism: Religion, Politics, and History in Late Nineteenth Century Britain*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985.

Weinstein, D. *Equal Freedom and Utility: Herbert Spencer's Liberal Utilitarianism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Wiltshire, David. *The Social and Political Thought of Herbert Spencer*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978.

MLA

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "1. The Idea of Progress." *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*, ABC-CLIO, 2005, pp. . *ABC-CLIO eBook Collection*, legacy.abc-clio.com/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2007.

Chicago Manual of Style

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "1. The Idea of Progress." In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005.
http://legacy.abc-clio.com/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2007.

APA

Roberts, P. M., S. C. Tucker (2005). 1. The Idea of Progress. In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia* (pp.). Retrieved from <http://legacy.abc-clio.com/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2007>

Essay 2. Early Twentieth-Century Globalization: Its Impact on Thinking on War and Peace

Pre-1914 Globalization

Not only did Angell's book appeal to those who wished to believe that the maintenance of peace was inevitable, it also described the manner in which, before 1914, a degree of "globalization" and interdependence that would not be matched again until the 1990s characterized the international economic and financial system. Much of this was underpinned by the hegemonic role of the British Empire, a power whose naval forces guaranteed freedom of navigation across most of the world's oceans; whose impressive financial power helped to maintain the prewar gold standard, a fixed medium of exchange; and whose liberal ideological principles backed free trade throughout its extensive empire. With the exception of Britain, most prewar nations observed at least some degree of protectionism, but free trade nonetheless obtained within the relatively large trading areas defined by the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Wilhelmine Germany, tsarist Russia, the Ottoman Empire, and the United States. More broadly, international investment flowed freely across borders, propelled and facilitated by a network of cosmopolitan financial houses such as those of the Rothschilds, J. P. Morgan and Company, Barings, and others, whose own branches and associated firms spanned the boundaries of all the world's major states and economic powers. The existence of this web of transnational ties was one reason few prominent bankers foresaw the outbreak of World War I and even those who did regarded the prospect with near unmitigated horror, since war would fracture the complex bonds uniting the international financial community.

Such individuals' fears were well grounded. During the war, banks were expected to act at the behest of their country's governments, regardless of whatever damage such policies might inflict on their own positions or investments. State-imposed systems of capital controls dictated their investments; such trade and investment as continued were almost invariably geared toward the effective prosecution of the war. When the war ended, many anticipated that hostilities would continue through economic rather than military means. The peace treaties that the defeated powers signed forbade the imposition of discriminatory tariffs upon the victorious Allied Powers, but not a generally high level of duties. Moreover, with 10 million Europeans dead in the war, great bitterness separated the former adversaries. Europe was now divided into numerous small and often mutually hostile states, many of them created

from the Austro-Hungarian Empire, others from the ruins of the western portions of the tsarist empire. Soviet Russia repudiated the debts that both the tsarist government and prewar Russian businesses owed to Western governments, bankers, and investors and declared itself hostile to the entire capitalist system. The United States began to raise higher tariff (2075) walls against the outside world, while the war debts that the former Allies owed the United States and the war-related reparations Germany owed the Allies became persistent sources of contention among the various powers involved. Despite protracted efforts by Western governments and financiers during the 1920s to restore the prewar gold standard of currencies at fixed exchange rates and promote international growth and recovery, the foundations of the economic new order remained shaky and collapsed almost completely once the Great Depression took hold in the 1930s.

Norman Angell, *The Great Illusion* (1912 – reprinted in 1933)

What are the fundamental motives that explain the present rivalry of armaments in Europe, notably the Anglo-German? Each nation pleads the need for defense; but this implies that some one is likely to attack, and has therefore a presumed interest in so doing. What are the motives which each State thus fears its neighbors may obey?

They are based on the universal assumption that a nation, in order to find outlets for expanding population and increasing industry, or simply to insure the best conditions possible for its people, is necessarily pushed to territorial expansion and the exercise of political force against others (German naval competition is assumed to be the expression of the growing need of an expanding population, a need which will find its satisfaction in the conquest of British Colonies or trade, unless these are defended); it is assumed, therefore, that a nation's relative prosperity is broadly determined by its political power; that nations being competing units, advantage, in the last resort, goes to the possessor of preponderant military force, the weaker going to the wall, as in the other forms of the struggle for life.

The author challenges this whole doctrine. He attempts to show that it belongs to a stage of development out of which we have passed; that the commerce and industry of a people no longer depend upon the expansion of its political frontiers; that a nation's political and economic frontiers do not now necessarily coincide; that military power is socially and economically futile, and can have no relation to the prosperity of the people exercising it; that it is impossible for one nation to seize by force the wealth or trade of another—to enrich itself by subjugating, or imposing its will by force on another; that, in

short, war, even when victorious, can no longer achieve those aims for which peoples strive.

He establishes this apparent paradox, in so far as the economic problem is concerned, by showing that wealth in the economically civilized world is founded upon credit and commercial contract (these being the outgrowth of an economic interdependence due to the increasing division of labor and greatly developed communication). If credit and commercial contract are tampered with in an attempt at confiscation, the credit-dependent wealth is undermined, and its collapse involves that of the conqueror; so that if conquest is not to be self-injurious it must respect the enemy's property, in which case it becomes economically futile. Thus the wealth of conquered territory remains in the hands of the population of such territory. When Germany annexed Alsatia, no individual German secured Alsatian property as the spoils of war. Conquest in the modern world is a process of multiplying by x , and then obtaining the original figure by dividing by x . For a modern nation to add to its territory no more adds to the wealth of the people of such nation than it would add to the wealth of Londoners if the City of London were to annex the county of Hertford.

The author also shows that international finance has become so interdependent and so interwoven with trade and industry that the intangibility of an enemy's property extends to his trade. It results that political and military power can in reality do nothing for trade; the individual merchants and manufacturers of small nations, exercising no such power, compete successfully with those of the great. Swiss and Belgian merchants drive English from the British Colonial market; Norway has, relatively to population, a greater mercantile marine than Great Britain; the public credit (as a rough-and-ready indication, among others, of security and wealth) of small States possessing no political power often stands higher than that of the Great Powers of Europe, Belgian Three per Cents. standing at 96, and German at 82; Norwegian Three and a Half per Cents. at 102, and Russian Three and a Half per Cents. at 81.

The forces which have brought about the economic futility of military power have also rendered it futile as a means of enforcing a nation's moral ideas or (2076) imposing social institutions upon a conquered people. Germany could not turn Canada or Australia into German colonies—i.e., stamp out their language, law, literature, traditions, etc.—by “capturing” them. The necessary security in their material possessions enjoyed by the inhabitants of such conquered provinces, quick intercommunication by a cheap press, widely-read literature, enable even small communities to become articulate and effectively defend their special social or moral possessions, even when military conquest

has been complete. The fight for ideals can no longer take the form of fight between nations, because the lines of division on moral questions are within the nations themselves and intersect the political frontiers. There is no modern State which is completely Catholic or Protestant, or liberal or autocratic, or aristocratic or democratic, or socialist or individualist; the moral and spiritual struggle of the modern world go on between citizens of the same State in unconscious intellectual cooperation with corresponding groups in other States, not between the public powers of rival States.

This classification by strata involves necessarily a redirection of human pugnacity, based rather on the rivalry of classes and interests than on State divisions. War has no longer the justification that it makes for the survival of the fittest: it involves the survival of the less fit. The idea that the struggle between nations is a part of the evolutionary law of man's advance involves a misreading of the biological analogy.

The warlike nations do not inherit the earth; they represent the decaying human element. The diminishing role of physical force in all spheres of human activity carries with it profound psychological modifications.

These tendencies, mainly the outcome of purely modern conditions (e.g., rapidity of communication), have transformed the nature of the modern international problem; yet our ideas are still dominated by the principles and axioms, images and terminology of bygone days.

The author urges that these little-recognized facts may be utilized for the solution of the armament difficulty on at present untried lines—by such modification of opinion in Europe that much of the present motive to aggression will cease to be operative, and, by thus diminishing the risk of attack, diminishing to the same extent the need for defense. He shows how such a political reformation is within the scope of practical politics, and the methods which should be employed to bring it about. . . .

Those who have followed at all closely the peace advocacy of the last few years will have observed a curious shifting of ground on the part of its opponents. Until quite recently, pacifists were generally criticized as unduly idealistic, sentimental, oblivious to the hard necessities of men in a hard world of struggle, and disposed to ask too much of human nature in the sense of altruistic self-sacrifice on behalf of "a Sunday School view of life." We were given to understand that while peace might represent a great moral ideal, man's evil passions and cupidity would always stand in the way of its achievement. . . .

During the last few years, however, the militarist position has shifted. Peace, we are told by those who oppose the pacifist movement, may ensure the material interests of men, but the spiritual nature will stand in the way of its ever being achieved! Pacifism, far from being branded as too idealistic and sentimental, is now scorned as “sordidly material.” . . .

My object in calling attention to this unconscious shifting of ground is merely to suggest that the economic case for war has become practically untenable, and has consequently compelled those who defend war to shift their ground. . . .

It is true that we want to satisfy national pride of place, satisfy our dislike of foreigners. These are strong impulses, it may well be. But we also want not to ruin our trade, our national prosperity, and, if it is brought clearly before us that the result of indulging the impulse will be just that ruin, the one want will counterbalance the other. And the way we feel about it will be largely determined by the way we think about it, by the degree of clarity and force with which we see what is indispensable to our nation’s happiness.

At this stage of man’s development in the West, he has one outstanding need in order to solve his gravest social problems: a closer cooperation between the political groups. Yet the tendency is to rivalry, a contest for domination of the one by the other. And I suggest that that contest will go on, just because it has such strong instinctive roots, until we realize clearly and vividly that it won’t work, will not fulfill what, after all, have become our permanent needs. To the degree to which we realize the futility of individual coercion and domination, we shall turn to partnership. But only to such degree. . . .

(2077)

At this moment, our popular press is attributing to Germany all sorts of schemes of conquest—including the conquest of Britain—which could only arise, so it seems to this present writer, in the minds of madmen; and the German popular press is attributing to Great Britain schemes about as wise. If indeed it be true, as I have heard it seriously stated by sober business men, that it is the intention of Germany to enslave our population, to drive our people under the lash and rifle to forced labor, to carry off our women to Prussian seraglios (all this is quite seriously alleged), then indeed, of course, we must fight to the last man and last penny. But if what Germany asks is the right to mine or trade in Morocco, to keep open the roads to the East, to build a Turkish railroad, why, presumably we could talk business and perhaps come to an agreement. But we do not know yet, with all the talk of “encirclement,” naval supremacy, capture at sea and the rest of it, what we are preparing to fight for;

whether it is a vital thing that we could never possibly yield or a perfectly trivial thing not worth the bones of one single seaman. . . .

The essence of truth is degree. This book does not argue that there is not, and could never be, such a thing as a conflict of national interests. It is not necessary to prove such absolutes in order to establish the case which I am trying to establish. But if it be true, broadly, that a nation cannot capture wealth by military means—that wealth in the modern world is of such a nature that the very fact of military seizure causes the thing we want to disappear; if, far from it being true that we *must* fight or starve, it is very much nearer to the truth to say that we shall starve unless we stop fighting; and that only by cooperation can we solve our economic problems, then to prove this is to clear the road to cooperation, to do the thing which must be done if the *will* to cooperate is to be set in motion.

For while it may not be true that, where there is a will, there is a way, it is certainly true that where there is no will, there is no way; and there can be no will to cooperation so long as each party believes that partnership means dividing limited spoils of which he could secure the whole if only he can “conquer” that other party. . . .

Thus, though we may decide that fighting each other in order to seize things which cannot be seized is a silly business, and that as civilized men we must learn to cooperate, cooperation needs organizing, perhaps policing.

Collective power, expressed through police, may be necessary to give men—or nations—equality, equality of right. . . .

But if anarchy, the competition of arms, does not ensure justice, neither does non-resistance: the unresisted domination of the stronger. Power must act impartially for all, and it can only do that if it is placed behind a law or code that is applied equally to all.

Even when civilized individuals, living within the nation, accept completely the principle of social cooperation and do not base their conduct on the assumption that, in order to live, some one else has to go under—even so, we know that life can only go on by means of established rules and codes, sometimes of great complexity, covering things from motor traffic to marriage laws, banking practice and inheritance of property. Each individual must know that such rights as he possesses will be assured to him other than by his own strength, otherwise he will be his own defender of his own rights and try to be stronger than his neighbor; and that neighbor will claim the same right to be stronger,

and you will then get the process of everybody trying to be stronger than everybody else,—anarchy and chaos.

That is why I do not believe that the problem of defense can be simply ignored; nor that we can persuade men to accept sheer non-resistance as its solution. The first stage in getting rid of our instruments of coercion, or reducing them to vanishing point, is, as indicated in preceding pages, to transfer them from rival litigants to the law, to the community, to make of our armies and navies the common police of civilization, standing behind a commonly agreed rule. But, before that can be done, there must be created a sense of community, a sense of our interests being common interests, not inherently, “biologically,” in conflict. It is futile to lament the fact that there is no police to restrain our rival if we ourselves refuse to cooperate in the creation of a police. Before the police can exist, there must be a community; and before the community can exist, there must be a sense of common interest; and before that can exist, we must shed the false ideas which are incompatible with that sense. To that end finally—the transformation of men’s ideas which determine their acts—do we inevitably come.

Source

Norman Angell, *The Great Illusion*, 1933 (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1933), 59–62, 226–227, 233, 252–255.

(2078)

John Maynard Keynes, *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* (1919)

What an extraordinary episode in the economic progress of man that age was which came to an end in August 1914! The greater part of the population, it is true, worked hard and lived at a low standard of comfort, yet were, to all appearances, reasonably contented with this lot. But escape was possible, for any man of capacity or character at all exceeding the average, into the middle and upper classes, for whom life offered, at a low cost and with the least trouble, conveniences, comforts, and amenities beyond the compass of the richest and most powerful monarchs of other ages. The inhabitant of London could order by telephone, sipping his morning tea in bed, the various products of the whole earth, in such quantity as he might see fit, and reasonably expect their early delivery upon his doorstep; he could at the same moment and by the same means adventure his wealth in the natural resources of the world, and share, without exertion or even trouble, in their prospective fruits and

advantages; or he could decide to couple the security of his fortunes with the good faith of the townspeople of any substantial municipality in any continent that fancy or information might recommend. He could secure forthwith, if he wished it, cheap and comfortable means of transit to any country or climate without passport or other formality, could dispatch his servant to the neighbouring office of a bank for such supply of the precious metals as might seem convenient, and could then proceed abroad to foreign quarters, without knowledge of their religion, language, or customs, bearing coined wealth upon his person, and would consider himself greatly aggrieved and much surprised at the least interference. But, most important of all, he regarded this state of affairs as normal, certain, and permanent, except in the direction of further improvement, and any deviation from it as aberrant, scandalous, and avoidable. The projects and politics of militarism and imperialism, of racial and cultural rivalries, of monopolies, restrictions, and exclusion, which were to play the serpent to this paradise, were little more than the amusements of his daily newspaper, and appeared to exercise almost no influence at all on the ordinary course of social and economic life, the internationalisation of which was nearly complete in practice.

Source

John Maynard Keynes, *The Collected Writings of John Maynard Keynes*, Vol. 2, *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*, ed. Elizabeth Johnson (Macmillan: St. Martin's, 1971; reprint of 1924 ed.), 6–7. Reproduced with permission of Palgrave Macmillan.

Norman Angell (1872–1967)

Angell was a writer and journalist whose best-known book, published before World War I, presciently argued that a major war had become economically irrational. He studied in Britain, France, and Geneva and at the age of 17 migrated to the United States for seven years, before returning to Britain to work for the Northcliffe press. From 1903 onward Angell published numerous books, all concerned with the quest for rationality in politics. *The Great Illusion*, first published in 1909 as *Europe's Optical Illusion*, essentially put forward ideas first propounded by such nineteenth-century liberals as Richard Cobden, John Bright, and others that technological advances and growing international economic interdependence had made war so costly that it would prove unprofitable for any country to begin a major military conflict. Instead, he argued, nations must concentrate on free trade and economic development. The work almost disappeared into obscurity, but Angell sent copies to various public men, including Reginald, Viscount Esher, an influential British elder

statesman who feared that over-heated naval propaganda would compromise a balanced defense policy and believed that any major war, no matter which power emerged nominally victorious, would ultimately destroy the British Empire. Esher convinced a wealthy businessman to establish the Garton Foundation for the Study of International Policy, essentially an organization to propagate Angell's ideas. In 1910 Angell published a revised and expanded version, *The Great Illusion*, the first of numerous later editions of what subsequently became an enormously successful and influential volume. In 1912 Angell resigned his job to become an independent writer and spent the next four decades defending his doctrines and publishing prolifically—at least thirty books and numerous articles—on international affairs. His work was well received in official circles in Britain, less so in Imperial Germany, even though it was to that country above all that his influential British backers hoped it would appeal.

(2079)

Initially, the outbreak of World War I in August 1914 seemingly contradicted Angell's arguments, but he eventually contended that the collapse or drastic weakening of most of the major belligerent powers due to the war effectively proved his case. During the war Angell spent much time in the United States, endeavoring to convince influential American publicists, notably the editors of the liberal journal *The New Republic*, that their country should function as the voice of rationality and stand up for international law and "civilized" principles of behavior in the ongoing conflict. He also became a pioneering supporter of the League of Nations, writing extensively in support of its creation on both sides of the Atlantic and, once it was established, seeking to invest the League with more forcible powers to impose sanctions. In 1933 Angell was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. He was often considered a pacifist, yet he never, strictly speaking, argued that war had become inconceivable, merely that as a policy it would prove counterproductive to those nations that embarked upon it. When one contemplates the long-term damage World War I inflicted on all those great powers—Austria-Hungary, Germany, Russia, France, Britain, and Ottoman Turkey—that joined the conflict in 1914, Angell's view might well seem to carry considerable weight.

About The Documents

The writings of both Norman Angell and John Maynard Keynes fall neatly into the tradition of late Victorian and Edwardian progressive thought to which the political philosopher Herbert Spencer also belonged. Before World War I broke out, Angell assumed that since war was illogical and irrational, by

demonstrating this conclusively, at least to his own satisfaction, he could then persuade human beings and, more especially, the governments of those powers that were widely believed to contemplate war as a practical political possibility to exercise their powers of reason and determine to make war impossible. Angell was one of many public intellectuals of the period, in both Europe and the United States, who would probably have described himself as a “practical idealist,” a man following the eighteenth-century Enlightenment tradition that men of goodwill could apply common sense and logic to the conduct of political affairs. War having been shown to be counterproductive, he like many others involved in the prewar peace movement hoped for the establishment of a supranational authority, an extension of the existing World Court established by The Hague international peace conferences of 1899 and 1907, an organization that would not only possess the power to arbitrate international disputes but to which the nations of the world would be prepared to transfer their military forces. Today, close to a century later, nations with significant military power seem no more eager than they were in Angell’s time to abandon their unilateral freedom of action by ceding it to any such body.

John Maynard Keynes, writing a few months after the war Angell hoped to avoid had formally ended, nostalgically described the golden prewar world of economic interdependence whose restoration, Keynes would proceed to argue, the treaty of peace recently concluded with Germany precluded. The historian Samuel Hynes has pointed out how, to many if not most Englishmen, the time before August 1914 quickly assumed a near-mythical status as an era of lost innocence, harmony, and prosperity. Keynes, a brilliant economist whose financial talents were of great value to the wartime British Treasury, was nonetheless an opponent of the war and had insisted on registering as a conscientious objector even though his occupation exempted him from conscription. He also had great respect for German philosophical, cultural, and educational accomplishments. His brief but telling description of the comfortable, convenient, and predictable situation that prevailed until the war was deliberately intended to highlight the impossibility, in his view, of regaining this lost “paradise” if the terms of the Treaty of Versailles were not revised.

Both Angell and Keynes functioned as publicists, men who wrote extensively for the print media of their time, bringing out books and articles designed to make their views familiar to the educated and influential public in their own country and beyond. These two books were specifically written to win people over to the author’s own way of thinking, and each was enormously successful at the time and has been well remembered since. Each was the best-known

book of a man who for several decades wrote extensively for a broad general audience, and each was intended to be readily comprehensible to the intelligent general reader. In this case even Keynes, the highly intellectual economist, several of whose books demanded far (2080) greater specialized knowledge of his field, avoided the technical jargon of his trade. Although a journalist, Angell was less of a literary stylist than Keynes. Though each might claim to be advancing a liberal viewpoint, Angell's message was also less controversial than that of Keynes. In a time of peace, Angell essentially preached that war was irrational and counterproductive to those countries that waged it and should therefore be avoided. After a lengthy war, Keynes effectively used all his considerable literary skills, embellished with often malicious pen portraits of the leading protagonists at the peace conference, to contend that the peace settlement that had ended the conflict was unjust to Germany, the loser nation, and that the imposition of its terms would bar any hope of returning to the prewar normality many still wistfully hoped to regain.

In other portions of *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*, Keynes was particularly scathing when condemning the reparations demanded of Germany as a punishment for its role in precipitating World War I. Some of Keynes's economic assumptions have since been questioned; the peace imposed upon Germany was undoubtedly far less Carthaginian than is often assumed; and a victorious Germany would almost certainly have demanded far harsher terms of its defeated opponents. Moreover, as Keynes himself argued, another major factor inhibiting postwar recovery was the division of Europe into numerous new, small, competitive, and often close to unviable states whose political boundaries frequently made little economic sense. Even so, Keynes was acute in recognizing the political near-impossibility of extracting long-term payments from a resentful German population determined to regard these reparations as a symbol of their wartime losses. Reparations or war indemnities are usually best collected quickly, within a few years of the ending of a war when their payment can be justified as a consequence of losing a war, as was the case with vanquished France in 1815 and 1871 and defeated Finland in 1945, and as Keynes himself, in his capacity as a British Treasury official, suggested just after World War I had ended. While post-World War I German reparation payments were probably financially far less onerous than was once believed, their significance went well beyond the economic, and they contributed disproportionately to the souring of postwar international relations. Keynes perhaps gilded unduly the pre-1914 Elysium that had, he feared, become impossible to regain, but his idyllic portrait of that vanished world was perhaps the best measure of the spell its memory cast upon those who had inhabited it

and the consequent bitterness he—and many others—felt when its disappearance proved irreparable.

Further Reading

Angell, Norman. *After All: The Autobiography of Norman Angell*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Young, 1952.

Bisceglia, Louis. *Norman Angell and Liberal Internationalism in Britain, 1931–1975*. New York: Garland, 1982.

Ceadel, Martin. *The Semi-Detached Idealists: The British Peace Movement and International Relations, 1854–1945*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Ferguson, Niall. *The Pity of War*. London: Allen Lane, 1998.

Foreman-Peck, James. *A History of the World Economy: International Economic Relations since 1850*. 2nd ed. New York: Harvester, 1995.

Hynes, Samuel. *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture*. London: Bodley Head, 1990.

Marrin, Albert. *Sir Norman Angell*. Boston: Twayne, 1979.

Miller, J. B. D. *Norman Angell and the Futility of War: Peace and the Public Mind*. New York: St. Martin's, 1986.

Skidelsky, Robert. *John Maynard Keynes: A Biography*. 3 vols. London: Macmillan, 1983–2001.

Thompson, William R. *The Emergence of the Global Political Economy*. New York: Routledge, 2000.

MLA

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "2. Early Twentieth-Century Globalization." *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*, ABC-CLIO, 2005, pp. . *ABC-CLIO eBook Collection*, legacy.abc-clio.com/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2012.

Chicago Manual of Style

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "2. Early Twentieth-Century Globalization." In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005. <http://legacy.abc-clio.com/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2012>.

APA

Roberts, P. M., S. C. Tucker (2005). 2. Early Twentieth-Century Globalization. In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia* (pp.). Retrieved from <http://legacy.abc-clio.com/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2012>

Essay 3. British Foreign Policy

The International Situation at the Turn of the Century

Until the end of the nineteenth century, Great Britain's foreign policy was broadly anti-Russian and anti-French in emphasis. British leaders feared colonial competition with France in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East and regarded Russia—an assertive power with potential designs on India by way of Iran and Afghanistan—as the greatest threat to their interests throughout Asia. Relations with Germany, by contrast, had been relatively friendly. During the 1860s, Great Britain acquiesced in the plans of Count Otto von Bismarck of Prussia to bring about German unification through successive wars with Denmark, Austria, and France. Bismarck in turn refrained from challenging Great Britain's naval supremacy and, having built Imperial Germany into the (2081) strongest power on the European continent, followed relatively cautious international policies.

Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany, who succeeded his father in 1888, was a grandson of Queen Victoria of England. His feelings toward Great Britain mingled deep personal admiration with a strong sense of rivalry and a desire that his own nation should emulate and surpass his mother's country of origin. A fondness for grandiose imperialist schemes nonetheless led him increasingly to seek to rival Great Britain, pursuing a *Weltpolitik* that envisaged the acquisition of German colonies overseas, primarily in Asia and Africa, and from the mid-1890s onward embarking on the construction of a high seas fleet that, though it never matched the British Royal Navy, nonetheless appeared to pose a substantial threat to British naval power. In 1900 Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz, chief of the German naval staff, succeeded in persuading the German Reichstag to authorize a naval-building program that envisaged the construction within two decades of thirty-eight battleships, twenty armored cruisers, and thirty-eight light cruisers. Although neither said so publicly, both Tirpitz and his master Wilhelm viewed the British fleet as this effort's ultimate target. In addition, Wilhelm's tactless and blustering style, at least as much as his policies, alarmed many British leaders. In 1899 war broke out in South Africa when the Boers, white settlers of Dutch descent, sought to win independence from British rule. The war, which lasted three years, highlighted many of the military weaknesses of the British army. Much international sentiment favored the Boers, who were viewed as rugged individualists resisting an unsympathetic British imperial overlord. Wilhelm's open avowals of support, albeit merely rhetorical, for the Boers helped to alienate many British leaders.

Throughout the 1890s various prominent British figures, including Joseph Chamberlain, the influential colonial secretary, and Cecil Rhodes, the businessman who spearheaded British imperial expansion in much of Central Africa, were staunch exponents of a closer British alliance with Germany in order to counterbalance the potential French and Russian threats. Others, however, began to see Germany as the greater long-term menace to British interests and to urge a reorientation of British policy. While the Boer War was in progress, *The National Review*, a prominent London monthly journal whose editor Leo Maxse was closely connected with various leading public figures who sought to reinforce the British Empire and their country's international strength, published an anonymous article. The product of several hands, including the Liberal politician Sir Edward Grey, who would later serve as British foreign secretary from 1905 to 1916, this essay urged that Britain recognize the depths of German rivalry, expand its naval and military forces, consolidate bonds within the empire, and enter into alliances with other European nations. Of those potential partners recommended, Russia was the first and most prominent, while France and Italy were also mentioned as fruitful possibilities. The "A.B.C." article generated much discussion, the product in part of its unidentified but clearly well-connected authors but also of the uneasy consciousness in political circles that the Boer War had demonstrated serious weaknesses in Britain's defense capabilities. Within a few years, the suggested reorientation of Britain's foreign policy had taken place, as the Conservatives under Arthur Balfour and Liberals under Herbert Asquith successively negotiated the Entente Cordiale with France in 1904 and the Anglo-Russian Entente of 1907, agreements that settled various outstanding imperial questions that had previously divided the signatories.

A.B.C., "British Foreign Policy," *The National Review* (November 1901)

The events which have occurred in South Africa during the last few years cannot fail to produce consequences deeper and more far-reaching than the most penetrating observer of contemporary politics could have contemplated. . . . It is patent to every thinking Englishman that the financial affairs of our Empire must be worked on more methodical lines. . . . Great Britain does not require an immense army of the approved Continental type, but she does require a splendidly equipped and highly trained force, ready for transportation at short notice to any part of her over-sea Empire which may be menaced. The British Navy should be increased so as to enable us to meet three Powers at sea in superior numbers. The naval policy and avowed hostility of Germany, to which even the British official world can no longer remain blind,

will force us to keep on a war-footing in the North Sea a fleet as powerful and efficient as the Mediterranean or Channel Squadrons. . . .

(2082)

The lesson which foreign countries may learn from our war in South Africa is one that in their own interest each of them would do well to take to heart. . . . There have been hours of difficulty, and even of danger, when more than one foreign Power desired, and tentatively sought, to form a coalition against this country. It was the temper of the people of the British Empire backed by the Navy that stunned into sobriety the zealous malignity of those who were willing to wound, but afraid to strike. . . .

The efforts of certain European Powers—because neither Japan nor the United States has at any time been remotely implicated in these intrigues, which, in passing, we may say have never received the slightest encouragement from either the Austrian Sovereign or the Italian Government—have forced the conviction upon the British people that their national policy demands more serious attention than it has yet received. . . .

. . . [T]he people of England most thoroughly realise that the attention of their statesmen can no longer be exclusively devoted to the domestic affairs of two little islands, but that henceforward in all questions of policy we must give a close and sympathetic consideration, not only to the interests, but also to the feelings of the people of Greater Britain.

Closely connected with the subject of inter-imperial relations is the policy which the British Empire should pursue as regards other nations and empires. We shall have to re-consider our position with regard to them one by one. . . . Perhaps the main fact which should impress itself upon Englishmen in considering the actual international outlook is not merely the extraordinary growth of Germany—who has achieved greatness by trampling on her neighbours—but the fact that this formidable community is becoming increasingly dependent on a foreign food supply, as well as on foreign supplies of raw and partially manufactured articles. This necessarily involves the development of Germany as a Sea Power, and it is a matter for every European State to ponder over. She is already stronger at sea than either France or Russia. It therefore affects them as well as England, though up to a certain point they may welcome it, because it is the cause of German hostility to England. . . .

The official advocates of the Naval Bills which have been introduced into the “Reichstag” during the last three years have made no concealment as to the objective of the modern German navy, and that portion of the German press

which takes its cue from the Government has told us in language impossible to misunderstand that Germany aspires to deprive us of our position on the ocean. “*Unsere Zukunft liegt auf dem Wasser*” [Our future lies on the water]; such is the swelling phrase of the Kaiser; but, like all his rhetoric, there is serious purpose behind it. At the present time it is estimated that a substantial proportion of the food of the entire population of Germany is sea-borne. She is becoming transformed from an agricultural into an industrial community, and if the process continues for another quarter of a century, while remaining secured against actual starvation by her land frontiers, she will become no less dependent on the ocean highways for her prosperity than we are. Great Britain is therefore confronted with the development of a new sea power founded on the same economic basis as herself, and impelled by a desire to be supreme. But *l’océan necomporte qu’un seul maître* [the ocean can only have one master]. We have secured in the past the sovereignty of the seas, and our sceptre cannot be wrested from us without a desperate and bloody struggle. Germany will not be so insane as to attempt this task single-handed, at any rate for many years to come; and it is for other Powers to consider in the interval whether it is for their advantage to support her in a joint attack on England. . . .

We approach the delicate question of our relations with Russia with considerable diffidence, as the omniscient German press has declared at any time during the last twenty years that the interests of England and Russia are as irreconcilable as their hatred is hereditary. . . . If once the sea power of England were overthrown, Germany would be free to execute her hostile policy towards Russia, who is not less in her way than we are. There is an idea growing steadily amongst Germans that Germany should expand into an empire branching from the Bosphorus to the Persian Gulf; thus would territories be secured enjoying an excellent climate, to which the surplus stream of German population, which now flows to the United States and to the British Empire, might be diverted, without being lost to the German flag. This is by no means a new idea; it is the revival of an old idea, and it means of course the supremacy of Germany in the Near East and the supersession of the Slav by the Teuton. Such is the (2083) objective of those ambitious dreamers known as the Pan-Germanic League, a body most tenderly regarded by the German Government, and it embodies a policy as antagonistic to Russia as the German naval programme is hostile to England.

Whatever the effect of recent developments may have been upon Russia, the attitude of the German nation and the suspicious policy of the German Government has led a continually increasing number of Englishmen to inquire whether it would not be worth while for England and Russia to discuss their

differences with the object of arriving at a working understanding, and, if possible, a comprehensive settlement? Very distinguished Russians have frequently expressed an earnest desire that their country should seek an entente with England. The late Emperor Alexander openly avowed his desire for such a settlement. The present Emperor is credited with the same disposition as his father, and has more than once, though in an unostentatious manner, manifested his beneficent intentions towards this country. . . .

The chief political obstacle to an Anglo-Russian understanding is, no doubt, due to the desire of Russia to come down to the Persian Gulf. If we are able to recognise and tolerate her ambition in that quarter our antagonism would come to an end, at least for a generation. This admittedly is a subject of great difficulty, and one not to be settled off-hand; but that is no reason, as the *Times* has lately pointed out, why statesmen should not be prepared to face it. It is clearly our interest, as it is our intention, to preserve intact the status quo in the Gulf unless we can come to an arrangement with Russia by which we get a *quid pro quo*. . . . But it cannot be too often repeated that the condition precedent of such an agreement is the active goodwill of the powers that be in St. Petersburg. It is for them to reflect as to whether the co-operation of England might not be of enormous use in promoting Russian trade in the Far East. . . .

In another part of the world it is for the Russians to consider whether the goodwill of England might not be worth cultivating. The question of Manchuria naturally rankles in the mind of the Japanese, who can clearly see that if a Japanese *pied à terre* [foothold] constituted a menace to the integrity of the Chinese Empire, which was the pretext on which she was ordered out of Port Arthur, then the establishment of Russia in Manchuria may become a very formidable menace to Japan. . . . [T]he burning indignation which the Russian appropriation of Manchuria raises in the breast of Japan may be concealed for a while, but she is merely biding her time and awaiting an opportunity for displaying her real sentiments. The keystone to British policy in the Far East is a friendly understanding and co-operation with Japan but, that being recognised, there is nothing to prevent this country from supporting a settlement of the Manchurian and Korean questions on lines which would be regarded as fairly satisfactory both in St. Petersburg and in Tokio. If the Korean question were regularised, Japan would have considerably less reason than at present to apprehend Russian schemes, and Russia, on her part, might devote herself to developing her far eastern dominions without risk of interruption from Japan.

Russian statesmen have to make up their minds whether, in the present condition of Russian industries, Russian agriculture, and Russian finance, a friendly understanding with England, which would relieve her anxieties in the Far East, and which might result in her being able to continue her Trans-Caucasian and Siberian railways to the shores of the Persian Gulf, and which, last but not least, might enable her to carry out her historic mission in the Balkans, is not worth a high price.

. . . [W]e venture to sketch in outline some suggestions for a comprehensive settlement between the two Powers with the object of demonstrating to the sceptics that at any rate the raw material for an Anglo-Russian agreement abounds—whatever may be the case as regards the goodwill and statesmanship requisite to evolve the finished article. We would invite the reader to note that these suggestions are calculated to compromise neither the relations between Russia and France nor those between Great Britain and Japan.

Proposed Anglo-Russian Understanding.

The understanding would naturally fall under three different heads:

I. The Near East.

With regard to the Near East the basis would be that whilst Russia abstained from any attempt to interfere with the *status quo* in Egypt, we should frankly recognize that the fulfilment of what Russia regards as her (2084) historic mission in the Balkan peninsula conflicts with no vital British interests, and that in Asiatic Turkey we should abstain from favouring the development of German schemes of expansion.

II. Persia and Central Asia.

With regard to Persia and Central Asia, we might offer Russia our cooperation in the development of railway communication between the Caspian and the Persian Gulf; and in securing for her a commercial outlet on the Gulf in return for an undertaking on the part of Russia to respect the political status quo along the shores of the Gulf.

III. The Far East.

With regard to the Far East the question is necessarily more complicated, as Japan would have to be taken into the counsels of the two Empires and a basis

of agreement arrived at which would satisfy her as well as Russia and Great Britain.

As far as Japan is concerned, such a basis might be found in the recognition by Russia and England of the Japanese claim to an exclusive sphere of influence in Korea.

Japan would presumably, in return for this concession, have no objection to a formal agreement under which Great Britain would recognise Russia's claim to regulate her political and commercial position in Manchuria and Mongolia by direct negotiation with China, and Russia would in like manner recognise Great Britain's claim to regulate in the same way her political and commercial position in the Yangtze Valley, each Power binding itself to give no support in those regions to the enterprise of any other Power. With regard to all other questions in China, Great Britain, Russia, and Japan would agree to take no steps without mutual consultation.

The fact of Russia being a party to such an agreement would give France a guarantee that her interests would be taken into due consideration, while our participation would afford a natural safeguard to the commercial interests of the United States.

The effect of such an agreement, accompanied by the customary demonstrations in such cases, public declarations by the Sovereigns and their official representatives, and an exchange of visits by their respective fleets, would at once remove the danger of a sudden explosion, which must continue to hang over the whole world so long as the Far East remains the powder-magazine of international rivalries and conflicting interests which it is at present.

The natural consequence of this understanding would be that in the event of war between Germany and Russia, Great Britain would remain neutral, and in the event of war between Great Britain and Germany, Russia would remain neutral. . . .

We need not enlarge upon other points in the European relations of Great Britain. Lord Salisbury's Government deserves credit for having strengthened the bonds between this nation and her oldest ally, Portugal, a country we should stand by on all occasions. On the other hand, have not his Majesty's Ministers shown some remissness in their dealings with Italy? . . . Apart from all sentiment, Italy is one of the natural allies of England, and we have not so many that we can afford to trifle with her. Italian statesmen have one and all

proclaimed their desire to maintain the status quo in the Mediterranean, and any attempt to impair the supremacy of England in that sea must be looked askance at in Italy, for if we were overthrown, France—the friend of the Vatican—would take our place. And just as Russia has nothing to gain but everything to lose from the substitution of German for British supremacy, so Italy would have bitter cause to rue the disappearance of the White Ensign from the Mediterranean. On her side, Italy has a right to expect the material as well as the moral support of England under certain circumstances easier to conceive than to discuss. For instance, should the nightmare which haunts European statesmanship materialise and the Austrian Empire be plunged into the melting-pot, England should exert herself to secure for Italy that portion of the *disjecta membra* [separated remnants] which is Italian in sympathy and feeling. Under no circumstances should we tolerate that the German flag should float over the Italian city of Trieste.

If we are to revert, as some of us desire, to the policy of [former British Foreign Secretaries] Canning and Palmerston, and energetically support the cause of civil and religious liberty and popular rights in Europe, the time may not be remote when we should lift up our voices on behalf of the Czechs of Bohemia. In so (2085) doing we shall be promoting the real interests of the Austrian Empire. The question has been so persistently misrepresented that Englishmen are only beginning to realise that the Slavs of Austria are not the disintegrating force within that country. But it is the German element enrolled under the banner of the Pan-Germanic League which threatens the existence of an empire which a great Czech writer has told us would have to be created if it did not exist.

To sum up, then, the general conclusions of this paper: we should do everything in our power to promote the interests of Italy and the expansion of Italian power, while we need not conceal our sympathies for the Bohemian Slavs and the ideas they represent, and we should adhere firmly to our old policy of alliance with Portugal. We are the only great European Power which covets no European territory, and it ought not to be beyond the resources of our statesmanship to profit by this unique feature in our position. In the Far East the keystone of our policy will be the maintenance of our entente with Japan. It is our earnest desire to meet, if possible, the wishes of Russia, particularly on the Persian Gulf; but this policy is only practicable if Russia realises that our co-operation is at least as valuable to her as hers is to us. . . .

In seeking to close our prolonged contest with Russia, we are desirous of doing something which would be for the advantage of civilisation, and, should it be effected, it would not be less welcome because it brought us back into friendly

relations with France—a country whose history is closely interwoven with our own, and with which we share so many political sentiments. The French are perhaps the only nation which will make sacrifices and run risks for the sake of those who enjoy their friendship. They are capable of sentimental attachment as well as sentimental hatred. . . .

But earnestly as we advocate a particular policy there should be no misunderstanding as to our motives. We are not touting for alliances. We are prepared to entertain friendly overtures, and to enter alliances on suitable terms and for practical purposes; and for the realisation of ideals beneficial to the world at large we think Great Britain should be prepared to make considerable though reasonable sacrifices. . . . If Russia wishes to come to us, we shall meet her cordially and at least half way. If, on the other hand, Russia and France, one or both of them, elect to combine with Germany in an attempt to wrest from us the sceptre of the seas and to replace our sovereignty by that of Germany, England will know how to meet them. . . .

(Signed) A.B.C. etc.

Source

A.B.C., “British Foreign Policy,” *National Review* 28(225) (November 1901): 343–358.

About The Document

The “A.B.C.” article was not an official statement of any kind. Its significance arose from the fact that its unnamed authors were clearly influential and politically well connected and from the role *The National Review* itself enjoyed within the British governing elite. Indeed, as the example of George F. Kennan’s 1947 “X” article on Cold War containment policy would later reveal, there is no better way to draw attention to an article on some controversial topic than to have it published anonymously in a prominent outlet, leaving all its readers convinced that the author is a highly placed individual whose position demands that he remain anonymous! Since 1887 the editor and proprietor of *The National Review* had been Leo Maxse, an ardent supporter of British imperialism, whose sister Violet was also the daughter-in-law of Lord Salisbury, British prime minister and foreign secretary from 1886 to 1892 and again from 1895 to 1902. From the mid-1890s onward, Maxse was one of the most dedicated and vociferous critics of German expansion and imperialism, warning repeatedly that German ambitions posed grave dangers to Britain’s own position, views forcefully expressed by his sharp, caustic, and witty pen.

Maxse unwaveringly supported increased British naval and military spending, a more efficient army, and national service for all male citizens. He invariably criticized those such as Chamberlain for supporting closer ties with Germany and viewed them as shortsighted optimists who deliberately ignored the role of top German leaders, including the kaiser and his highest officials, in promoting an anti-British outlook within Germany. Maxse's view of France, by contrast, was always highly favorable, while he believed that Germany deliberately sought to stir up discord and misunderstanding between Britain and Russia. The "A.B.C." (2086) article was in many respects an effort to rebut several well-publicized speeches by Chamberlain in 1900 urging an Anglo-German rapprochement.

The process of drafting the "A.B.C." article was rather complicated, and the fact that the original drafts of the article were subsequently destroyed makes it difficult to trace precisely. The fullest account is that given by A. J. A. Morris in *The Scaremongers*. Maxse wrote the initial draft himself and then submitted it to his close friend Sir Rowland Blennerhassett, a prolific journalist specializing in foreign affairs who had studied at Munich University in Germany, had excellent connections in French government circles, and traveled extensively on the continent. Although a great admirer of Bismarck, whom he met as a young man, Blennerhassett—who died in 1909, too early to see his prophesy come true—believed that war between Britain and Germany would inevitably occur no later than 1915. Blennerhassett apparently persuaded Maxse to tone down attacks on the German press for seeking to destabilize Anglo-Russian relations. Grey, who had already served from 1892 to 1895 as second-in-command at the Foreign Office under Lord Rosebery, received a first proof of the article and successfully requested Maxse to insert a paragraph on the importance of continuity in British foreign policy, so that it did not change dramatically when a Liberal government succeeded a Conservative one or vice versa. Maxse also consulted Edward Byas Cook, the editor of the *Daily News*, over the first proof. In addition, the high-flying British diplomat Charles Hardinge, then secretary at the embassy in St. Petersburg, offered advice on the article, even while carefully stressing that he did so in a personal and unofficial capacity and could not speak for the Foreign Office.

When the article appeared, Maxse mounted a major publicity campaign on its behalf. Advance copies were dispatched to all the British daily newspapers, leading German newspapers, numerous European writers on international affairs, all the senior members of the British Foreign Office, and Maxse's own vast array of contacts among the British and continental political and governing elites. He subsequently corresponded with Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan, the

influential U.S. naval historian and strategist, expanding on the themes included in the article. German diplomats assumed that the article might well represent a trial balloon launched by the British Foreign Office to assess the likely reaction to an Anglo-Russian rapprochement and unavailingly tried to obtain definite identifications of its author or authors. Interestingly, Chamberlain soon fell out with Germany when German officials rebuked him for suggesting that Germans critical of harsh British policies toward the Boers should realize that these were better than the treatment German armies had meted out to the French in 1870–1871. By 1902 Chamberlain had abandoned his calls for an Anglo-German entente, while Maxse encouraged other prominent British journalists, such as J. L. Garvin of *The Observer* and *The Fortnightly*, to take up his calls for the reorientation of British foreign policy toward France and Russia. After 1901, the possibility of basing British foreign policy on an Anglo-German understanding was never again seriously considered in British government circles.

The “A.B.C.” article did not cause British governments to embark on moves toward a new understanding with both France and Russia in the early twentieth century. It did, however, spearhead a well-organized publicity campaign urging such policies. Its appearance was, moreover, symptomatic of growing suspicions of Germany within influential British political circles, which generated a new readiness to consider adopting an anti-German and pro-French and pro-Russian—and also pro-Japanese—emphasis. One of those who contributed to the article and apparently agreed with its fundamental outlook was Sir Edward Grey, who as foreign secretary negotiated the 1907 Anglo-Russian Entente and deepened the existing understanding between France and Britain, embarking on secret military conversations with the French and dividing Anglo-French naval responsibilities in both the Mediterranean and North Seas. This was an indication of the degree to which by the early twentieth century leading British politicians with a special interest in international affairs were coming to view Germany as Britain’s most formidable international opponent. It was perhaps predictable that, in the weeks leading up to the British declaration of war on Germany in August 1914, within the Liberal government Grey was one of the two most forceful advocates of British intervention should Germany go to war against Russia and France.

(2087)

Further Reading

Charmley, John. *Splendid Isolation? Britain, the Balance of Power, and the Origins of the First World War*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1999.

Ferguson, Niall. *The Pity of War*. London: Allen Lane, 1998.

Hinsley, F. H., ed. *British Foreign Policy under Sir Edward Grey*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977.

Hutcheson, John A. *Leopold Maxse and The National Review, 1893–1914*. New York: Garland, 1989.

Kennedy, Paul M. *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism, 1860–1914*. London: Allen and Unwin, 1980.

Morris, A. J. A. *The Scaremongers: The Advocacy of War and Rearmament, 1896–1914*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984.

Robbins, Keith. *Sir Edward Grey: A Biography of Lord Grey of Fallodon*. London: Cassell, 1971.

Startt, James D. *Journalists for Empire: The Imperial Debate in the Edwardian Stately Press, 1903–1913*. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1991.

Tuchman, Barbara. *The Proud Tower: A Portrait of the World before the War, 1890–1914*. New York: Macmillan, 1966.

MLA

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "3. British Foreign Policy." *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*, ABC-CLIO, 2005, pp. . *ABC-CLIO eBook Collection*, legacy.abc-clio.com/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2019.

Chicago Manual of Style

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "3. British Foreign Policy." In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005. <http://legacy.abc-clio.com/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2019>.

APA

Roberts, P. M., S. C. Tucker (2005). 3. British Foreign Policy. In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia* (pp.). Retrieved from <http://legacy.abc-clio.com/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2019>

Essay 4. Prewar Fears of German Expansion

Prewar Fears of German Expansion

Roland G. Usher's book *Pan-Germanism* was only one among many such volumes that appeared in the early twentieth century predicting that German expansionism might well precipitate a major war between Britain and Germany. Another such work, also by an American, was Homer Lea's *The Day of the Saxon* (1912). Such books formed only part of a broader literature, ranging from scholarly tracts to sensational novels, that envisaged a potential clash between the interests of the Triple Entente of Great Britain, France, and Russia on the one hand and Germany on the other, since, in Usher's own words, every "available spot [where Germany might wish to expand] is held by England, France, or Russia." Perhaps the most interesting aspect of Usher's work was his assumption that the United States itself possessed significant interests in what might transpire between the world's other major powers. His writings essentially challenged the still prevalent belief that the United States could safely hold itself aloof from international affairs, depending upon the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans for "free security."

Like many early-twentieth-century American advocates of a more activist foreign policy, Usher was a staunch believer in the superiority of the "Anglo-Saxon" race, or English-speaking peoples, and felt a conscious sense of kinship with the British Empire in his belief that the United States and Britain shared a common political and governmental heritage. American adherents to this perspective, who included such influential figures as former President Theodore Roosevelt and the naval strategist Alfred Thayer Mahan, often advocated the conclusion of an alliance, formal or informal, between Great Britain and the United States, an arrangement they felt would enable both powers to safeguard their own interests while dominating the world between them. In the early twentieth century assorted British statesmen, businessmen, and publicists—including most of the influential family of Lord Salisbury, Conservative prime minister for much of the late nineteenth century; the visionary businessman Cecil Rhodes; the journalists W. T. Stead and John St. Loe Strachey, and a group of young men recruited by the British administrator Lord Milner to rebuild South Africa's government after the Boer War of 1899–1902—likewise cherished visions of an Anglo-American entente that would, they hoped, enable the British Empire to hold off such rising rivals as Germany. The most controversial aspect of *Pan-Germanism* was, interestingly, Usher's assertion that as early as 1897, the United States had reached an

informal understanding with the British Empire and France that “in certain contingencies” each power would support the other. The popular press wrongly seized on this as evidence that binding formal pledges had been exchanged, something Usher was at some pains to rebut in his book’s second edition, published after war broke out in Europe. Rather interestingly, in his first edition Usher depicted Germany as set on winning international predominance through war but characterized such plans as unfeasible, concluding that: “As the situation looks at present, nothing short of the breaking of the alliance between England, France, the United States, and Russia can permit the German scheme to obtain anything more than a temporary and partial success.” He seems to have had no doubt that such a state of affairs was highly desirable.

Once war broke out, Usher not only revised the original text of *Pan-Germanism* but published several (2088) additional works urging that the United States could not hold itself aloof from the conflict or from international affairs. Besides writing extensively for such influential journals as the *Atlantic Monthly*, *Century* magazine, and *The New Republic*, he produced several more best-selling books. Within a year of the war’s onset, Usher brought out the volume *Pan-Americanism*, which suggested that whichever side emerged victorious from the conflict, its outcome would have gravely disrupted the existing European balance of power and would probably jeopardize the existing U.S. immunity from overseas threats. He envisaged a postwar German effort to exploit Latin America economically rather than through outright colonization, a venture that might well involve attempts to exclude the United States from Latin American commerce and investment. Seeking to appear impartial, Usher also suggested that should Britain be victorious, she too might use her navy for such purposes. In addition, he raised the possibility of other challenges in the Pacific where, given existing U.S. military weakness, a quest for additional territory conceivably might persuade expansionist Japanese leaders to resort to war.

In *The Challenge of the Future*, published one year later, in 1916, Usher was less circumspect. In terms that anticipated the Realist tradition in U.S. foreign policy, he urged Americans to abandon what he characterized as their past sentimental attitudes toward the outside world and recognize that their country could not isolate itself from international affairs, since it possessed national interests that had to be defended. A German victory would, he contended, pose a serious threat to the Western hemisphere. A year earlier Usher had contended that a triumphant Germany would only seek economic influence in Latin America; he now revised his predictions to embrace potential territorial expansion in South America, a danger to which he feared the American people

remained blind. In Usher's view, only if the United States concluded a full-scale alliance with Great Britain could it avert such dangers. In 1916, of course, any such understanding would almost certainly have implied U.S. intervention in World War I, a position Usher's writings now implicitly endorsed.

A few months later, the United States did indeed join the Allies against Germany. Usher still, however, found much to criticize in his country's thinking on international affairs. Immediately after the war ended, he brought out another volume, *The Winning of the War*, that once again condemned the majority of Americans for basing their international thinking upon "righteous indignation and high moral anger" rather than upon more rational calculations of their country's national interests. Although Usher himself occasionally commended his country's idealism—its lack of "baseness or selfishness"—fundamentally he found its posture somewhat disturbing and feared that such attitudes might well undercut the long-term U.S. commitment to a greater international role. Within two years, U.S. rejection of the League of Nations finally caused him to fall silent, and his years in the spotlight as a popular pundit came to an end around the time he reached his fortieth birthday. For the rest of his long life, Usher apparently made no further attempt to influence public debate. This did not mean, however, that his cause was dead. From 1939 to 1941, when World War II had begun in Europe but the United States was still officially neutral, other prominent American and British figures, some of whom Usher had been associated with during the war years, would more forthrightly restate Usher's earlier argument that only an alliance with Great Britain could safeguard U.S. security, and the administration of President Franklin D. Roosevelt effectively based its policies on that assumption.

Roland G. Usher, *Pan-Germanism*, 1913

For some years those at all familiar with current international affairs have known that it was the custom in the German navy to drink a toast, "To the day." Many people have hugged to themselves with glee the "secret" information that the officers were drinking to the day when war should be declared against England, but few indeed seem to have realized the splendor of the vision now before German eyes, or the ideas of the international situation which makes victory seem so near as to send German blood coursing swiftly in the anticipation of triumph. The Germans aim at nothing less than the domination of Europe and of the world by the Germanic race. One of the fundamental errors, of which idealists and advocates of peace have been often guilty, is to treat this vast project as an unreality. In fact, it is already half accomplished. An equally mistaken view declares it the conception of an individual which chances to find for the moment a response in the German people, or a scheme

which depends for its existence upon the transient personal (2089) influence of a few men. No doubt, a few men only know the full details of the plans for the realization of this stupendous enterprise, but the whole nation is none the less fired by their spirit and is working as a unit in accordance with their directions. . . .

The vital factor in the modern international situation is the aggression of Germany, her determination to expand her territories, to increase her wealth and power. Three centuries ago, Prussia was a tiny state whose many parts were separated from each other by the lands of her neighbors. Cut off from the sea on all sides, pushed hither by the oncoming Russians, dragged thither by the encroaching French, surrounded by tiny incompetent states, her rulers saw in aggression the only possible method of preserving the national life. . . . Poverty-stricken, still recovering from the ravages of the wars of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, menaced on all sides by powerful enemies, her only chance of victory depended upon striking the first blow. By this policy, she has built up one of the most powerful states in the world and one of the most populous and prosperous. But she has reached the boundaries of Germany; further expansion means the acquisition of what other nations now own.

The logic of facts, proving the necessity of expansion, is, to such Germans as General Bernhardt, unanswerable. The population has increased so rapidly that it is already difficult for efficient, well-trained men to secure any employment. Not only is the superficial area of the country suitable for cultivation practically exhausted, but intensive scientific agriculture is speedily limiting the prospect of the employment of more hands on the same acres or the further increase of the produce. Industry has grown at a stupendous rate, and the output from German factories is enormously in excess of the needs of even the growing population. Her exports *per capita* are \$24 a year, as against England's \$40, and France's \$25, and she has not their exclusive colonial markets. Unless some outlet can be found for the surplus population, and a new and extensive market discovered for this enormous surplus production, prosperity will be inevitably succeeded by bankruptcy. There will be more hands than there is work for, and Germany must either get rid of the surplus mouths and hands or swell the surplus product by employing them at home, which cannot be done without entailing national ruin. Expansion is, therefore, the only alternative, for the German considers equivalent to ruin the reduction of the pressure of population by emigration, and the avoidance of overproduction by the proportionate reduction of output. For Germany to be thus forced to remain static in population and in wealth, while her neighbors continue to expand,

England in her colonies, France in Morocco, Russia in Siberia and Turkestan, means that the date of her annihilation will be fixed by the rate of their growth. And such action on her part would compel her in fact to be an accessory to her own destruction, for her emigrants must strengthen her rivals both in the field and in the factory. To ask a German, therefore, whether the expansion of Germany is desirable is merely to ask him whether he believes it desirable from any point of view for the German nation to survive.

Already the boundaries of Germany in Europe have been pushed to their furthest extent; more territory can be added only at the expense of other nations, either of her powerful rivals, France and Russia, or of her weaker neighbors, Belgium, Holland, Denmark, and Sweden. Nor would the accession of such territory solve the difficulty. All European nations are already experiencing to some degree the necessity of an outlet for their surplus population and manufactures. A war for expansion in Europe would be without purpose and could only be detrimental to all. Germany must find some territory suitable for development by her own people which is not already choked with men and women. She is seeking the counterpart of the fertile plains of western Canada, of the rich valleys of northern Africa, where her people may build a new Germany whose existence will strengthen her and not her rivals. But such a promised land, tenanted only by native races, is not to be found. Every really available spot is held by England, France, or Russia. Germany can, therefore, obtain colonies suitable for her purposes only at the expense of these last. This is what is meant by the oft-reiterated statements that England, France, and Russia are by their very existence inimical to Germany's welfare, that, if she is to escape ruin, she must fight them. The alternative to colonies is access to some new market for her products, so vast in extent and so unlimited in its capacity of continued absorption, that her surplus population can be provided with work at home, and thus prosperity and the increase of the national strength indefinitely ensured. The total (2090) annual imports into her own colonies she knows to be well under ten millions of dollars; the exports from England to the English colonies alone she knows to total several hundred millions of dollars. Such a market she is determined to have, cost what it may.

One other fact marks England as the greatest obstacle in the path of her legitimate growth. The English Channel is the only available safe passageway for her merchant fleets. The voyage round the British Isles is long and during the winter months positively dangerous even for steamships. Natural conditions, therefore, by compelling Germany to use the Channel, force her to expose her commerce to the assaults of the English fleet so long as the latter controls the Channel. Even if she should acquire colonies and a great market,

she cannot really possess them until she acquires a highroad to them safe from the attacks of her enemies. Short of conquering England and France, she can never free her commerce from actual danger; without a great fleet in the North Sea, strong enough to terrify England into inaction, she cannot even be assured of the continuance of her present freedom of passage. Her fleet, therefore, seems to her merely the guarantee of her present position, and it will continue to be a guarantee only as long as its size makes it formidable. Merely to retain what she now has, Germany is condemned to increase her navy at any pace the English see fit to set. Something more will be absolutely essential if the dire consequences of an economic crisis are not to impoverish her and pave the way for her ultimate destruction at the hands of her hereditary enemies, France and Russia.

To secure a share of the world's trade in some fashion which will not expose her to the attacks of the English fleet, and which will create an empire less vulnerable in every way than she believes the British Empire to be, an overland route to the East must be found. The Germans consider perfectly feasible the construction of a great federation of states including Germany, Austria, Hungary, the Balkan States, and Turkey, which would control a great band of territory stretching southeast from the North Sea to the Persian Gulf. A railway from Constantinople to Baghdad would effectually tie the great trunk lines, leading from the Rhine and Danube valleys, to Constantinople and the Persian Gulf, and so establish a shorter route to India than that *via* Suez. Egypt, Syria, Arabia, Persia, India herself, the mother of nations, would fall into German hands and be held safe from conquest by this magnificent overland route to the East. Pan-Germanism is, therefore, in the first place, a defensive movement for self-preservation, for escaping the pressure of France and Russia, both bent on her destruction. It is, in the second place, an offensive movement directed against England, its object, the conquest of the English possessions in the Mediterranean and in Asia. She expects thus to obtain an outlet for her surplus population and manufactures and to create an empire as little vulnerable politically, economically, or strategically as any the world has yet seen.

In reply to the outcries from other nations, denouncing these plans as unprovoked aggression and lacking in morality, as a reversion to the forcible methods of bygone centuries whose brutalities the world long ago outgrew, the Germans derisively point to the presence of the English in India, of the French in Morocco, of the Russians in Manchuria, of the United States in Panama. They insist that their aims and methods are absolutely identical with those their detractors have so long employed. Now that the latter's work is complete and their own futures assured, they are no doubt eager to establish "moral,"

“ethical,” and “legal” precepts whose acceptance by other nations would insure them the undisturbed possession of all they now hold. This, the Germans admit, is but natural and not blameworthy; but they ought not to expect other nations to subscribe to such principles from motives of love or admiration. General Bernhardt, a man whose undoubted attainments and learning compel the respect of his enemies, and whose following in Germany is large in numbers and influential in character, declares openly that might is right, and that right is decided by war. He scoffs at such ideas of ethics and morality as his critics represent, and insinuates that, if war happened to promise other nations at this moment as many advantages as it does Germany, they would hold views similar to his upon that subject.

With him, the Germans as a whole refuse to admit the validity of any theoretical notions whose application would in any way restrict or interfere with Germany’s “full share in the mastery of the world.” . . . Is not the very existence of Imperial Germany due to war? Could it conceivably have been created by anything else? Will anything less preserve it. They deny (2091) the validity of any particular set of ethical notions of right and wrong to decide issues vital to the continued existence of the German race. If such considerations are to be dragged into the discussion, the notion of the relativity of truth, the doctrine that moral and ethical standards are not fixed but merely reflect the stage of progress each particular age has reached, the Darwinian doctrine of the survival of the fittest, all seem to them infinitely more satisfactory theoretical grounds for action than what Bismarck sneeringly called “the English phrases about humanity.”

The most significant question now before the Anglo-Saxon race, therefore, is the truth or falsity of those notions of strategical geography, of military and naval organization, of finance and commerce upon which these vast schemes are based. If the factors, on which the Germans rely, are what they think they are, the domination of the world by Germany and her allies can be only a question of time. If they are not valid, the world will certainly develop along different lines. So widely do the economical and political interests ramify, so completely are all sections of the globe influenced by them, that nothing can happen, from this moment until the final decision of the issue, which will not vitally affect it or be vitally affected by it.

Source

Roland G. Usher, *Pan-Germanism* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1913), 1–15.

Roland G. Usher (1880–1967)

At the time he wrote *Pan-Germanism*, Roland G. Usher was an associate professor of history at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri, where he continued teaching until 1950. Born in Lynn, Massachusetts, Usher was a transplanted East Coast American who traced his family's roots in the United States back to 1638 and the Pilgrim Fathers. He earned a bachelor's degree and doctorate from Harvard University and also spent two years studying in Europe at Cambridge, Oxford, and Paris. Usher's first book, *Pan-Germanism*, published in 1913 and issued in a revised edition after the outbreak of war, made him something of a popular celebrity. During and immediately after World War I, he published several other books on international relations, all of them urging that the United States could not continue to follow policies of aloofness from world affairs but must in the future play a far more active role. This prolific decade ended in 1920, at the same time the United States rejected membership in the League of Nations. Although he spent three additional decades teaching at Washington University, Usher published no more books and seems to have played little further part in public debate.

About The Document

Usher wrote his books and articles in an effort to influence the thinking of the educated general public and, by persuading others to his way of thinking, to make an impact upon the conduct of political affairs. Like all his writings of this nature, *Pan-Germanism* was written so as to be easily accessible to the intelligent general reader. Inevitably, since he was arguing a case, his publications were somewhat one-sided, presenting Germany as a nation bent on aggression whose designs could only be frustrated by timely action on the part of the United States. *Pan-Germanism* was Usher's first major foray into the world of public affairs, a book that while he was still in his early thirties immediately made him a significant commentator on national and international affairs, one of those helping to set the terms of his country's foreign policy debates during the intellectually vibrant Progressive period. As often happens, those who summarized his book sometimes tended to miss the subtleties of its argument, focusing primarily upon the author's obvious predilection toward closer Anglo-American understanding. Usher's works were undoubtedly among those that helped to set the tone of public opinion and the agenda of policy debate within the United States. They were read by such influential policymakers as Colonel Edward M. House, President Woodrow Wilson's closest confidential advisor from 1913 until the end of World War I.

On the purely personal level, the book almost certainly represented an excellent move in terms of Usher's career. In place of being an obscure academic in the Midwest, he had become a national celebrity, his writings discussed in-depth by the chattering classes around the country. It was probably no coincidence that in 1914 Usher won the rank of full professor at Washington University. In broader terms, the book's appearance and reception were symptomatic of the manner in which, even before the outbreak of World War I, within the United States popular interest in (2092) international affairs was increasing. The publication of *Pan-Germanism* was also an indication of the existence of growing American suspicions of German ambitions in foreign affairs and of a widespread though by no means unquestioned belief that ultimately these might well cause the United States to clash with Imperial Germany.

Further Reading

Osgood, Robert E. *Ideals and Self-Interest in America's Foreign Relations: The Great Transformation of the Twentieth Century*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953.

Perkins, Bradford. *The Great Rapprochement: England and the United States, 1895–1914*. New York: Atheneum, 1968.

Usher, Roland G. *The Challenge of the Future: A Study in American Foreign Policy*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1916.

———. *Pan-Americanism: A Forecast of the Inevitable Clash between the United States and Europe's Victor*. New York: Century, 1915.

———. *Pan-Germanism*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1913.

———. *Pan-Germanism, From Its Inception to the Outbreak of the War: A Critical Study*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1914.

———. *The Pilgrims and Their History*. New York: Macmillan, 1918.

———. *The Rise of the American People: A Philosophical Interpretation of American History*. New York: Century, 1914.

———. *The Story of the Great War*. New York: Macmillan, 1919.

———. *The Winning of the War: A Sequel to "Pan-Germanism."* New York: Harper and Brothers, 1918.

MLA

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "4. Prewar Fears of German Expansion." *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*, ABC-CLIO, 2005, pp. . *ABC-CLIO eBook Collection*, legacy.abc-clio.com/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2023.

Chicago Manual of Style

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "4. Prewar Fears of German Expansion." In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005. <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2023>.

APA

Roberts, P. M., S. C. Tucker (2005). 4. Prewar Fears of German Expansion. In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia* (pp.). Retrieved from <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2023>

Essay 5. A German Military Theorist

General Bernhardt and Prewar German Military Thinking

The German General Friedrich von Bernhardt (1849–1930), who fought on both the Eastern and Western Fronts during World War I, was one of Germany's foremost military thinkers of the prewar period. When German forces entered Paris in 1870, Bernhardt, who began his career as a Prussian cavalry officer, was allegedly the first German to ride through the Arc de Triomphe. From 1898 to 1901 Bernhardt served as chief of the war historical section of the German General Staff. In 1909 he was appointed to command the Seventh Army Corps. He wrote several extremely popular books proclaiming the benefits that war might bring, warning Germans that they should reject peace propaganda and must not flinch from war if necessary. The most famous of these was *Germany and the Next War*, initially published in 1912, in the aftermath of the Second Morocco Crisis, as the second volume of a larger two-volume study, *On War Today*. It quickly became a best-seller, going through nine German editions in the years before the war.

Bernhardt's works were greatly affected by the contemporary ideology of Social Darwinism. Drawing on the naturalist Charles Darwin's exposition of the biological theory of evolution—that competition within and between species was a law of nature in which only the fittest would survive—political theorists argued that the same was true of human societies. Within such social groupings as nations, they contended, it was undesirable to tamper with the laws of free enterprise and the market or to favor one group over another, since this would ensure that “unfit” individuals would prosper, passing their inherently feeble biological heritage on to another generation and thereby weakening the group or nation as a whole. On the international scene, relations between states were viewed as characterized by incessant and fierce competition. Any nation that became infirm, soft, or “decadent” would inevitably fall behind, eclipsed by stronger rivals. The only alternatives any nation faced were national expansion or decline. In direct opposition to the thinking of other Social Darwinist philosophers such as Herbert Spencer, who believed that historical logic would inevitably make war obsolescent, adherents of this outlook argued that war was an inescapable biological imperative. The logic of history and geopolitical factors, according to Bernhardt, dictated that nations must, as their right and duty, go to war in order to promote their own national development. Influenced by the published writings of the influential German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, he glorified military strength, effectively arguing that might was right and that any strong nation was ipso

facto entitled to maximize its international power and influence. From this perspective, attempts to avoid war, negotiate with rivals, or arbitrate international disputes were themselves a sign of national weakness.

War was also presented as an experience that would promote the internal health, unity, and morale of the entire state; boost national resolve; and combat the insidiously corrupting influences of peacetime commercialism. In 1912, in *Our Future: A Word of Warning to Germans*, Bernhardt proclaimed that: “Wars are ennobling (2093) because small-minded men are swamped in the greatness of the movement. The nations and States are at their greatest when fighting with their whole strength for liberty, independence, and honor. Only in States which calculate with the possibility of war will the character of the nation possess that energy which enables them to develop their mental and moral forces to the highest degree.” Within a year, Bernhardt was convinced that the weakening of Ottoman Turkey and the strengthening of Serbia in the 1913 Balkan War were seriously disadvantageous to German interests and had impaired the prestige of Germany and the other members of the Triple Alliance, Austria-Hungary and Italy. In a chapter Bernhardt added to his latest edition of *Germany and the Next War*, he argued that by contrast the Triple Entente powers—Great Britain, France, and Russia—had good reason to welcome the diminution of Turkish power. By this time, Bernhardt clearly anticipated that a “great European war” would occur in the near future.

Bernhardt’s writings did not, it should be noted, represent the official thinking of Germany’s top military and political leadership immediately before World War I. Rather, they were a protest against the reluctance of the German Reichstag and governing circles to spend as heavily on the army and navy as Bernhardt considered desirable. Bernhardt belonged to the influential Pan-German League, a group of right-wing nationalists formed in the 1890s with the objective of lobbying for expansionist foreign policies, what was termed German *Weltpolitik*. Their efforts generated considerable popular enthusiasm but were less successful in persuading German politicians to authorize the heavy government spending necessary to finance the massive armed forces that would be required to underpin those policies. Bernhardt’s writings reflected the frustration that he and his associates within and beyond the military felt because, due in large part to Germany’s complex federal political system and the domination of the Reichstag by center-left parties from 1912 onward, military spending lagged well behind the levels that fervent German nationalists envisaged. Bernhardt’s writings, published with the acquiescence and encouragement of like-minded elements within the German General Staff, were therefore designed to win over German public opinion to support the

budgetary increases for the German armed forces that a more assertive foreign policy would demand.

Extract from Friedrich von Bernhardi, *Germany and the Next War* (1913)

The European situation has chiefly changed, because Germany, which formerly was politically quite unimportant, has become by far the foremost Power on the Continent. A new factor has arisen.

It can really not reasonably be expected that Germany, with her 65,000,000 inhabitants and her world-wide trade, should allow herself to be treated on a footing of equality with France, with her 40,000,000 inhabitants. It can really not be expected that Germany should allow 45,000,000 inhabitants of Great Britain (Celtic Scotchmen, Welshmen, and Irishmen side by side with Germanic Englishmen) to act as arbiters to the States of the Old World, and to exercise an absolute supremacy of the sea. It can really not be expected that Germany, with her constantly growing population, should renounce her claims to become a great colonial Power and to acquire territories suitable for settlement, while States with a decreasing or an insufficient population, such as France and England, share the possession of the Old World with Russia, which in the main is an Asiatic Power.

Germany, though she has become a world-Power only lately, is entitled to claim an important increase of her sway, corresponding to her economic and cultural importance. Circumstances compel her to strive for such expansion. On the other hand, *it cannot be denied that Germany's desire, even if she acts with the greatest modesty, is one of the reasons of the present tension.* Germany's national competitors fully recognize the power of expansion possessed by the German nation, and its necessity. They therefore conclude that Germany will, notwithstanding her proved love of peace, be at last compelled to enter upon a policy of expansion. England, France, and Russia will never be induced to believe that Germany will for all time resign herself to her present position. Therefore these countries strive to keep down Germany, and to re-create the convenient conditions which prevailed when a weak Germany occupied Central Europe. . . .

The position in the Balkan Peninsula has completely changed. The Turks have suffered a crushing (2094) defeat, and none of the European Powers have come to their aid.

A terrible awakening has taken place. The Great Powers did not for a moment think of enforcing their peace program. The States of the Triple Alliance

[Germany, Austria-Hungary, Italy] could not find the necessary energy actively to defend their interests, while the Triple Entente [Great Britain, France, Russia] desired to see Turkey weakened, if not broken. To the Entente Powers the victory of the Balkan States could be only advantageous whilst it would most seriously damage the States of the Triple Alliance. . . .

Turkey has been in a state of decay for a long time. Still, it was absolutely in the interests of the Triple Alliance to delay the expulsion of the Turks from Europe until the great European war, which will decide the fate of the Central European States, has been fought. Owing to the course of events, the Triple Alliance will now have to fight such a war under far less favorable conditions. Before Turkey's defeat Germany could calculate upon the cooperation of Turkey and Rumania. To-day all this has changed, and a state of affairs has arisen which brings with it the greatest perils for Germany and her allies. . . .

The superiority against which we have to fight has increased, and Germany's strategical war preparations must be changed accordingly.

In consequence of the Balkan war, Germany's prestige throughout the world has suffered, though without justification. Turkey's defeat is celebrated by our enemies as a German defeat. The fact that the Turkish army had Krupp guns and German instructors induces them to depreciate the German army. All England is triumphant at Turkey's defeat, which is attributed to German military training. Besides, the English clearly recognize that the Triple Alliance has lost power by that defeat. In France similar sentiments prevail. Formerly only the French army was eager for war. Now the whole nation shares these feelings. The people are sure of victory, and armaments are secretly increased in expectation of war. In Russia the Pan-Slavists are gaining ground and are attacking Austria. Even little Belgium has found that she has a French heart, and she is jubilant at the defeat of the Turks and the lost labor of the German instructors.

The peril of a general war has come nearer. The strained relations between Austria and Serbia may lead to war. Even if the present quarrel should be settled, the Austro-Serbian differences remain. We cannot expect that the Powers of the Triple Entente will not make use of their improved position. Urged on by public opinion, they may try to enforce their will upon Germany. That would be logical and natural. Hence a wise and farseeing policy must calculate with the possibility of war. France and Russia seemed hitherto not to consider the moment favorable for striking. The unexpected events in the Balkan Peninsula have completely changed the position for them. The German Government must be on its guard.

All the pusillanimous supporters of a policy of surrender who do not wish to embark upon a real world-policy, and who desire that Germany should continue to exist in its narrow Continental confines, will, under the circumstances, certainly loudly assert that Germany has no vital interest in the Balkans, and protest against energetic action. Never dare and never strive! That is the motto of those Philistines to whom peace is the most precious good, even if the greatness and the future of the Fatherland are at stake. They will energetically point out the dangers of a war against superior forces, and demand that the Government should avoid war by its moderation, instead of preparing for it by energetic action.

. . . And again, and ever again, it must be pointed out that we have no reason to be afraid of war if we act with our whole armed strength, if we do everything to be as strong as possible on the field of battle, and *if we are determined to act before Germany's opponents are ready* if it becomes clear to us that an honorable peace cannot be maintained.

Our enemies envy us not only our position and our world-wide trade, which increases our national wealth from year to year, and which we have conquered by two victorious wars. Exactly as they envied Frederick the Great Silesia, they desire now to crush us. It would be unworthy of our past and of our German name if we should bow down before their hostility without a struggle. Our claim to a great position in the world may certainly lead to a war similar to the Seven Years' War. Still, we shall be as victorious as was Prussia's hero king. That is my absolute and joyous conviction. A great war will unify and elevate the people and destroy the diseases which threaten the national health. The latent forces within our armies (2095) require arousing. They will make it unconquerable in hard times. Besides, it is not yet too late to complete our armaments. In very little time the *cadres* and the numbers of horses can be increased, the machine guns procured, and the cycling battalions be raised. The Army Service Corps can be reinforced with motor vehicles. Germany's highly developed industry will satisfy the highest requirements. Besides, it is necessary, in view of the changed situation, to strengthen and modernize the fortresses on the eastern frontier. The war readiness of the German navy and the strength of the coast fortifications can very greatly be increased in a short time. A strong will can achieve all this as if by witchcraft. . . .

In view of Germany's tremendous wealth, and in view of the fact that the future of State and nation are at stake, it seems criminal to speak of financial difficulties. Germany does not lack money. What we want is a firm will to greatness. Then only shall we obtain greatness. Every one must do his best. All true Germans must gather round the Emperor, ready to give their blood and

their treasure for the honor, the greatness, and the future of the German nation.
“Through war to victory!”

Source

Friedrich von Bernhardi, *Germany and the Next War*, revised ed. (1913), reprinted in Charles F. Horne and Warren F. Austin, eds., *Great Events of the Great War*, 7 vols. (Washington, DC: National Alumni, 1920), 1:230–235.

About The Document

Bernhardi’s analysis of the problems facing prewar Germany and his preferred solution were both straightforward. German unification and the rapid industrialization of the late nineteenth century had, he argued, created a superpower whose new status ipso facto entitled it to parity with Great Britain, the world’s greatest power, and superiority over France. Writing at a time when the possession of colonial empires was considered a mark of national greatness, he expected Germany to emulate these powers in acquiring substantial imperial possessions. He anticipated that even if Germany renounced such ambitions, the country’s potential to fulfill them would inevitably provoke the hostility of France, Britain, and Russia, who would strive to keep Germany weak. Thus “a great European war, which will decide the fate of the Central European States,” was inevitable. Bernhardi professed shock over the outcome of the Balkan War of 1913, claiming that Germany, by failing to support the interests of its quasi ally, the Ottoman Empire, against the demands of the minor Balkan powers, had demonstrated a lack of resolve that had caused it to lose prestige in the eyes of Britain, France, and Russia. This would in turn encourage those powers in their efforts to keep Germany weak, together with its ally, the Austro-Hungarian Empire. He therefore urged Germany to show a spirit of daring by quickly building up its military so as to resort to war against its opponents before they were ready for such a conflict.

Although Bernhardi was writing in a personal capacity rather than in his official status as a general in the German army, this was not always clear to his readers, either at home or abroad. His arguments were indeed extremely popular with like-minded German military and naval officers, many of whom found their government’s policies extremely frustrating. The very fact that his books were produced by a prominent German military man tended to give them additional credibility among both sympathetic and hostile audiences. Translated immediately into English and French, they convinced many British, American, and French readers that Imperial Germany had resolved on war. Once war began, they were often cited as evidence of Wilhelmine Germany’s long-

standing aggressive intentions, its grandiose belief that might meant right, and its reluctance to accept the constraints of existing international law and custom. Within Germany, Bernhardt's influential writings almost certainly contributed to the atmosphere of impending national crisis, the sense of military vulnerability, and the popular enthusiasm for war that in July 1914 impelled top Austrian and German military and political leaders to take the decisions that inexorably plunged their countries into a conflict that, by the end of the decade, destroyed each state's established political and governmental systems.

Further Reading

Berghahn, V. R. *Germany and the Approach of War in 1914*. 2nd ed. New York: St. Martin's, 1993.

Bernhardt, Friedrich von. *Germany and England*. New York: G. W. Dillingham, 1915.

Chickering, Roger. *Imperial Germany and the Great War, 1914–1918*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

(2096)

Herrmann, David G. *The Arming of Europe and the Making of the First World War*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996.

Herwig, Holger H. *The First World War: Germany and Austria-Hungary, 1914–1918*. London: Edward Arnold, 1997.

Kelly, Alfred. *The Descent of Darwin: The Popularization of Darwinism in Germany, 1860–1914*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981.

Massie, Robert K. *Dreadnought: Britain, Germany, and the Coming of the Great War*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1992.

Stevenson, David. *Armaments and the Coming of War: Europe, 1904–1914*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1996.

Stibbe, Matthew. *German Anglophobia and the Great War, 1914–1918*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Verhey, Jeffrey. *The Spirit of 1914: Militarism, Myth and Mobilization in Germany*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

MLA

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "5. A German Military Theorist." *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*, ABC-CLIO, 2005, pp. . *ABC-CLIO eBook Collection*, legacy.abc-clio.com/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2028.

Chicago Manual of Style

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "5. A German Military Theorist." In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005. <http://legacy.abc-clio.com/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2028>.

APA

Roberts, P. M., S. C. Tucker (2005). 5. A German Military Theorist. In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia* (pp.). Retrieved from <http://legacy.abc-clio.com/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2028>

Essay 6. The Assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, June 1914

The Assassination at Sarajevo, 28 June 1914

The event that triggered World War I was the assassination at Sarajevo, capital of the Austrian province of Bosnia, of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria, nephew of and heir to Emperor Franz Joseph II, together with his morganatic wife, the Countess Sophie Chotek. For several decades the southeast European fringes of the Ottoman and Habsburg Empires had been in a state of political turmoil, the product of declining Ottoman power and conflicting Habsburg and Slav nationalist ambitions in the area. Since 1878 Bosnia and Herzegovina, which had earlier been provinces of the Ottoman Empire, had by the 1878 Treaty of Berlin been under Austrian administration. Until 1903 the small Slav state of Serbia, which won semiautonomy from the Ottoman Empire in 1829, with the last Turkish garrison troops withdrawn in 1867, was effectively an Austro-Hungarian satellite. In 1903 a new royal dynasty, the Karadjordjevic, seized power in Serbia, reorienting Serbian loyalties toward Russia, while seeking to unite all those Slavs still under Habsburg or Ottoman rule in a Greater Serbia. Russia too hoped to profit from Ottoman weakness by assuming the role of patron to the Balkan Slavs. In 1908 Austria exercised her right under the Treaty of Berlin to annex Bosnia and Herzegovina outright, a move that annoyed several of the great powers, most notably Russia, and infuriated Serbia, which had hoped to incorporate them into its own territory. Major popular demonstrations against the annexation took place in Serbia.

In summer 1912 a newly established Balkan League, a coalition comprising the region's small states of Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece, and Montenegro, declared war on Ottoman Turkey, its objective the complete expulsion of Turkish power from Europe. The Balkan League's armies defeated the Turks, and peace negotiations that began in London in December 1912 brought the creation of yet another small new Balkan state, Albania. Even though they had made extensive territorial gains, Serbia and Montenegro both coveted and tried to seize the region around Scutari, territory designated for Albania, but these plans were thwarted when Austro-Hungarian, British, Italian, and Russian pressure forced them to withdraw in spring 1913. In May a peace treaty ended the First Balkan War, effectively doubling Serbia's territory, but within a month hostilities broke out again as the members of the erstwhile Balkan League

squabbled over the division of Macedonia. Bulgaria attacked Serbia and Greece, impelling first Romania and then Turkey to take arms against Bulgaria; Turkey retook the port of Adrianople, and Bulgaria was quickly defeated. Under the August 1913 Peace of Bucharest, Bulgaria lost territory to Serbia, Greece, and Romania. Austria had sympathized with Bulgaria, but without the support of Germany or Italy, its partners in the Triple Alliance, refrained from intervention in the Second Balkan War. When Serbia failed to evacuate Albania immediately, as the Peace of Bucharest required, the Austro-Hungarian government unilaterally sent an ultimatum to Serbia demanding its withdrawal, and Serbia complied.

Within Serbia itself and also within Bosnia, Herzegovina, and other parts of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the barriers Austria presented to Serbian expansion inflamed Serb nationalist sentiment. Extremist Slav groups and secret societies, often with close links to the Serb military or individual officers, proliferated in Serbia itself, in the Ottoman Empire, and also in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where the 1908 annexation remained highly unpopular with much of the Serb population. Among the more prominent in Serbia were the relatively (2007) moderate Narodna Odbrana (Defense of the People) and the more radical Union or Death (Ujedinjenje ili Smrt) society, also known as the Black Hand, founded in 1903 by some of those army officers who had recently overthrown and murdered King Alexander Obrenovitch. In 1913 the latter organization's leader, Colonel Dragutin Dimitrijevic, whose massive, bull-like physique won him the nickname "Apis," became head of military intelligence on the Serbian General Staff. Black Hand members hoped to destabilize Europe sufficiently to bring about a war with Austria, preferably one in which Russia came to Serbia's support, in the course of which they hoped to gain those territories they believed should belong to "Greater Serbia"—the southern Slav state of all areas where Slavs predominated—that they wanted to establish.

The visit of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, and his wife to the Bosnia capital of Sarajevo in late June 1914 provided an opportunity for Serbian extremists to mount an outrage ideally designed to provoke a ferocious Austrian response in defense of the empire's prestige. The Black Hand, and Dimitrijevic in particular, was at this time embroiled in a bitter power struggle with Serb prime minister Nicola Pašić for political control of the country, and they may have hoped that a crisis and potential war would strengthen their domestic position. Pašić apparently had some foreknowledge of the plot's existence and would later be strongly criticized for not taking more effective measures to thwart it. Earlier attempts by Serb officials to warn the Austrian government at the beginning of June that Franz Ferdinand's life might

be in jeopardy should he visit Bosnia had proved ineffective. Dimitrijevic, it seems, provided a group of nine young Serb would-be assassins with a variety of weapons and basic training in their use. Originally from Bosnia, at the time they were living in Belgrade, the Serb capital. Militant Black Hand members apparently took this action without the knowledge or sanction of their executive committee and refused to call off the operation when ordered to do so by that committee. The intention was to strike during the archduke's visit to Sarajevo on 28 June 1914, the anniversary of Serbia's defeat by the Turks in 1389 at the Battle of Vidovdan (Kosovo), a date the Serbs regarded as the beginning of their country's oppression under foreign rule.

When the royal couple arrived in Sarajevo on 28 June, no less than seven Black Hand members, three of them armed, were placed strategically among the crowds. In a counterproductive effort to demonstrate how secure Bosnia was under his rule, the Austro-Hungarian military governor, General Oskar Potiorek, had only assigned 120 troops as an honor guard for the royal party, making them an easy target. On the way to city hall, one assassin threw a bomb at the royal motorcar, but it missed its target, provoking complaints from Franz Ferdinand during the ceremony of welcome. Later that day, when the archduke and his wife left the building to visit those wounded earlier, their car took a wrong turn, stopping directly in front of the 18-year-old Gavrilo Princip, one of the assassins, where he was sitting in a café. From a distance of 5 feet, Princip shot the archduke in the neck and his wife in the abdomen, and within a few hours both had died of their injuries. Princip was restrained from committing suicide, tried, and imprisoned for twenty years, dying in captivity of tuberculosis in 1918. The archduke and his wife were buried in his castle of Artstetten, a ceremony neither his uncle, Emperor Franz Joseph II, nor the German kaiser saw fit to attend.

Official Austrian Report on the Assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, 28 June 1914

Record of the District Court at Sarajevo, touching the proceedings there instituted against Gavrilo Princip and confederates on account of the crime of assassination perpetrated on June 28, 1914, on His Imperial and Royal Highness the Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria-Este and Her Highness the Duchess Sophie of Hohenberg.

Gavrilo Princip, Nedeljko Cabrinovic, Trifko Grabez, Vaso Cubrilovic and Cetres Popovic confess that in common with the fugitive Mehemed Mehmedbasic they contrived a plot for the murder of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand and, armed with bombs and in the case of some of them with

Browning pistols, laid wait for him on June 28, 1914, on his progress through Sarajevo for the purpose of carrying out the planned attack.

Nedelhko Cabrinovic confesses that he was the first of the conspirators to hurl a bomb against the Archduke's carriage, which missed its mark and which (2098) on exploding injured only the occupants of the carriage following the Archducal motor car.

Gavrilo Princip confesses that he fired two shots from a Browning pistol against the Archducal motor car, by which the Archduke Franz Ferdinand and the Duchess Sophie of Hohenberg received fatal wounds.

Both perpetrators confess that the act was done with intent to murder.

These confessions have been fully verified by means of the investigations which have taken place, and it is established that the deceased Archduke Franz Ferdinand and the deceased Duchess Sophie of Hohenberg died as a result of the revolver shots fired at them by Gavrilo Princip.

The accused have made the following declarations, which are essentially consistent, before the examining magistrate:

In April, 1914, Princip, during his stay at Belgrade, where he associated with a number of Serbian students in the cafés of the town, conceived the plan for the execution of an attempt on the life of the late Archduke Franz Ferdinand. He communicated this intention to his acquaintance, Cabrinovic, who also was in Belgrade at the time. The latter had already conceived a similar idea and was ready at once to participate in the attempt. The execution of an attempt on the Archduke's life was a frequent topic of conversation in the circle in which Princip and Cabrinovic moved, because the Archduke was considered to be a dangerous enemy of the Serbian people.

Princip and Cabrinovic desired at first to procure the bombs and weapons necessary for the execution of the deed from the Serbian Major Milan Pribicevic or from the Narodna Odbrana [Defense of the People, a Serbian independence group founded in 1908], as they themselves did not possess the means for their purchase. As, however, Major Pribicevic and the authoritative member of the said association, Zivojin Dacic, were absent from Belgrade at that time, they decided to try to obtain the weapons from their acquaintance Milan Ciganovic, who had formerly been a Komitadji [brigand or guerrilla fighter] and was at that time in the employment of the State railways.

Princip, through the instrumentality of an intimate friend of Ciganovic, now got into communication with the latter. Thereupon Ciganovic called on Princip and discussed the planned attempt with him. He entirely approved it, and thereupon declared that he would like to consider further whether he should provide the weapons for the attempt. Cabrinovic also talked with Ciganovic on the subject of the weapons.

At Easter Princip took Trifko Grabez, who also was in Belgrade, into his confidence. The latter is also shown by his own confession to have declared himself ready to take part in the attempt.

In the following weeks Princip had repeated conversations with Ciganovic about the execution of the attempt.

Meanwhile Ciganovic had reached an understanding on the subject of the planned attack with the Serbian Major Voja Tankosic, who was a close friend of his and who then placed at his disposal for this object the Browning pistols.

Grabez confesses in conformity with the depositions of Princip and Cabrinovic that on the 24th of May he, accompanied by Ciganovic, visited Major Tankosic at the latter's request at his rooms. He says that after he had been introduced Tankosic said to him: "Are you the man? Are you determined?" Whereupon Grabez answered: "I am." Tankosic next asked: "Do you know how to shoot with a revolver?" and when Grabez answered in the negative Tankosic said to Ciganovic: "I will give you a revolver, go and teach them how to shoot."

Hereupon Ciganovic conducted Princip and Grabez to the military rifle range at Topcider and instructed them in a wood adjoining the range in shooting with a Browning pistol at a target. Princip proved himself the better shot of the two. Ciganovic also familiarized Princip, Grabez and Cabrinovic with the use of bombs which were given them.

On the 27th of May, 1914, Ciganovic handed over to Princip, Cabrinovic and Grabez, as their confessions agree in stating, six bombs, four Browning revolvers and a sufficient quantity of ammunition as well as a glass tube of cyanide of potassium with which to poison themselves after the accomplishment of the deed in order that the secret might be kept. Moreover, Ciganovic gave them some money.

Princip had previously informed Danilo Ilic, at Easter, of his plan of assassination. He now begged the latter on his return to Sarajevo to enlist certain additional (2099) persons, in order to ensure the success of the attempt.

Hereupon Ilic according to his confession enlisted Jaso Cubrilovic, Cetro Popovic, and Mehemed Mehmedbasic in the plot.

Only one of the bombs was made use of in the execution of the attempt. The remaining five bombs came later into the possession of the police at Sarajevo.

In the opinion of the judicial experts these bombs are Serbian hand-grenades which were factory-made and intended for military purposes. They are identical with the 21 bombs which were found in the Save at Brcko in the year 1913 and which were partly in their original packing, which proved without a doubt that they came from the Serbian arsenal of Kragujevatz.

It is thus proved that the grenades which were used in the attempt against the Archduke Franz Ferdinand also came from the stores of the Army Depot at Kragujevatz.

Grabez quite spontaneously calls the grenades which were handed over to him and his accomplices "Kragujevatz bombs." . . .

It is clear how far the criminal agitation of the Narodna Odbrana and those who shared in its views, has of late been primarily directed against the person of the hereditary Archduke. From these facts, the conclusion may be drawn that the Narodna Odbrana, as well as the associations hostile to the Monarchy in Serbia, which were grouped round it, recently decided that the hour had struck to translate theory into practice.

It is noteworthy, however, that the Narodna limits itself in this way to inciting, and where the incitement has fallen on fertile soil to providing means of material assistance for the realization of its plans, but that it has confided the only dangerous part of this propaganda of action to the youth of the [Habsburg] Monarchy, which it has excited and corrupted, and which alone has to bear the burden of this miserable "heroism."

All the characteristics of this procedure are found in men who have been poisoned from their school days by the doctrines of the Narodna Odbrana.

At Belgrade, where he frequented the society of students imbued with these ideas, Princip busied himself with criminal plans against the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, against whom the hatred of the Serbian element hostile to the Monarchy was particularly acute on the occasion of his tour in the annexed territories.

He was joined by Cabrinovic, who moved in the same circles, and whose shifting and radically revolutionary views, as he himself admits, as well as the influence of his surroundings in Belgrade and the reading of the Serbian papers, inspired him with the same sense of hostility to the Monarchy, and brought him into the propaganda of action.

Thanks to the state of mind in which he already was, Grabez succumbed very quickly to this milieu, which he now entered.

But however far this plot may have prospered, and however determined the conspirators may have been to carry out the attempt, it would never have been effected, if people had not been found, as in the case of Jukic, to provide the accomplices with means of committing their crime. For, as Princip and Cabrinovic have expressly admitted, they lacked the necessary arms, as well as the money to purchase them.

It is interesting to see where the accomplices tried to procure their arms. Milan Pribicevic and Zivojin Dacic, the two principal men in the Narodna Odbrana, were the first accomplices thought of as a sure source of help in their need, doubtless because it had already become a tradition amongst those ready to commit crimes that they could obtain instruments for murder from these representatives of the Narodna Odbrana. The accidental circumstance that these two men were not at Belgrade at the critical moment doubtless balked this plan. However, Princip and Cabrinovic were not at a loss in finding other help, that of Milan Ciganovic, an ex-Komitadji, and now a railway official at Belgrade, and at the same time an active member of the Narodna Odbrana, who, in 1909, first appeared as a pupil at the school at Cuprija. Princip and Cabrinovic were not deceived in their expectations, as they at once received the necessary help from Ciganovic.

Source

Charles F. Horne and Warren F. Austin, eds., *Great Events of the Great War*, 7 vols. (Washington, DC: National Alumni, 1920), 1:247–251.

Archduke Franz Ferdinand (1863–1914)

Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the heir to the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, whose assassination provided the excuse for Austria to submit an ultimatum to (2100) Serbia demanding that country's effective subjugation, was on poor terms with the Hapsburg Empire's ruling elite, including his uncle, Emperor Franz Joseph II. Franz Ferdinand's position as heir apparent was the result of the scandalous

deaths of Crown Prince Rudolf and his mistress at Mayerling in 1889. After the death in 1896 of the emperor's brother, Archduke Charles Louis, Franz Ferdinand in his turn became the Habsburg heir. A short-tempered and rather stiff and difficult man who had embarked on a military career and had risen to the rank of inspector general of the army, Franz Ferdinand alienated himself from his uncle when he insisted on marrying Countess Sophie Chotek von Chotkova in 1900. The emperor considered her rank too low to qualify her to become empress in due course and would only permit Franz Ferdinand to marrymorganatically, debarring their children from the imperial succession. The couple were extremely happy, and Franz Ferdinand largely withdrew into private life, holding aloof from the imperial court, where his wife's inferior status was always deliberately highlighted and she was excluded from accompanying him during official functions. One reason he accepted the invitation to Sarajevo was apparently that due to the unsettled status of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Sophie would be treated as his official consort during their visit, which included the couple's wedding anniversary.

Franz Ferdinand nonetheless had ambitious plans—most of them unpalatable to the ruling elite—to strengthen the Austro-Hungarian state once he became emperor. One scheme he contemplated involved replacing the Austro-Hungarian Dual Monarchy created in 1867 with a triple system in which the Habsburg Empire's Slavs would carry equal political weight with the Hungarians and Austrians; an alternative plan envisaged a federation of sixteen states, with the monarchy as the unifying factor. These schemes, which by giving Slavs greater say within the empire might well have undercut independence agitation, may have been one reason Franz Ferdinand became the target of Serb assassins in 1914.

About The Documents

The record above is an official legal document, produced by the court in Sarajevo in which the eight men arrested for their involvement in the murder of Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife were tried and convicted, summarizing the findings of the court. It was written under considerable pressure from the imperial government, which quickly sought to find in the assassination a pretext for war against Serbia, if possible on the grounds of official Serb involvement in Franz Ferdinand's murder. Given the circumstances, the judicial record was commendably fair.

Once the Sarajevo police had seized Princip, the group of young activists involved in the assassination plot were quickly located, taken into custody, and interrogated. Their testimony, summarized in this record, was unequivocal that

they had as a group conspired to assassinate the archduke, that they had received assistance from various Serb military officers and government officials in Belgrade, and that the weapons they used came from Serb military arsenals. The record also placed much of the blame for the assassination on the propaganda and “criminal agitation” of the Narodna Odbrana, whose older members were responsible for inciting and “providing means of material assistance” to the young assassins but were not prepared to run the risks of such action themselves. Perhaps surprisingly, the Black Hand was not even mentioned, despite the fact that all the assassins seem to have been members of that organization, whose personnel overlapped with that of the Narodna Odbrana.

Interestingly, what neither this record nor even the entire official Austrian investigation into Franz Ferdinand’s death succeeded in demonstrating was that the murders of the archduke and his wife constituted a genuine *casus belli* between Austria-Hungary and either Serbia or Russia. While some official Serbian military and civilian personnel who sympathized with their aims were undoubtedly involved in training and equipping the assassins and facilitating their journey to Sarajevo, there was no incontrovertible proof that the Serbian military and political leadership had authorized the operation, as opposed to it being the work of rogue army and civilian elements. Conclusive evidence of Dimitrijevic’s involvement only surfaced after the war had begun, though the Austro-Hungarian military attaché at Belgrade quickly informed his superiors of strong indications to this effect. Although the Serbian prime minister almost certainly knew enough to lead him to suspect that an assassination attempt might take place, he possessed little definite evidence of this. Absorbed in the (2101) final stages of a bitter and tight election campaign, Pašić may well have hesitated to alert Austrian authorities officially, an action liable to cost him not just the election but even his life, as he would probably have become the next Black Hand assassination target. Likewise, though the Austro-Hungarian government later alleged that V. A. Artamonov, the Russian military attaché in Belgrade, had financed the assassins, backing for this contention was absent from their testimony, and the allegations seem intrinsically unlikely. As a propaganda document bolstering the Austro-Hungarian case for military action against Serbia, if necessary, this record left much to be desired. It furnishes an interesting example of the degree of independence the judiciary enjoyed within the pre-1914 Austro-Hungarian Empire, precluding the government from exerting excessive pressure upon the courts even in such a significant matter as the assassination of the heir to the throne.

Further Reading

Brook-Shepherd, Gordon. *Archduke of Sarajevo: The Romance and Tragedy of Franz Ferdinand of Austria*. Boston: Little Brown, 1984.

Cassels, Lavender. *The Archduke and the Assassin: Sarajevo, June 28th, 1914*. New York: Stein and Day, 1985.

Dedijer, Vladimir. *The Road to Sarajevo*. London: Macgibbon and Kee, 1967.

Fromkin, David. *Europe's Last Summer: Who Started the Great War in 1914?* New York: Knopf, 2004.

Gilfond, Henry. *The Black Hand at Sarajevo*. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merill, 1975.

Jannen, William, Jr. *The Lions of July: Prelude to War, 1914*. Novato, CA: Presidio, 1996.

Sondhaus, Lawrence. *Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf: Architect of the Apocalypse*. Boston: Humanities Press, 2000.

Tuchman, Barbara. *The Guns of August*. New York: Macmillan, 1962.

West, Rebecca. *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon: The Story of a Journey through Yugoslavia in 1937*. Reprint ed. London: Macmillan, 1967.

Williamson, Samuel R., Jr. *Austria-Hungary and the Origins of the First World War*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991.

MLA

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "6. The Assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, June 1914." *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*, ABC-CLIO, 2005, pp. . *ABC-CLIO eBook Collection*, legacy.abc-clio.com/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2032.

Chicago Manual of Style

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "6. The Assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, June 1914." In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005. <http://legacy.abc-clio.com/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2032>.

APA

Roberts, P. M., S. C. Tucker (2005). 6. The Assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, June 1914. In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia* (pp.). Retrieved from <http://legacy.abc-clio.com/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2032>

Essay 7. Europe Moves toward War

The Approach of War, July 1914

Thousands of books have sought to explain why within six weeks an unpleasant but what might seem essentially local dispute between Austria-Hungary and Serbia escalated into a major world war that would soon involve every significant European power. Wide-ranging explanations have been advanced, including inadvertent incremental escalation that caused the European nations to “slither” reluctantly over the precipice into war; the impact of the armaments race and the developing hostility and suspicion that had characterized the great European powers for at least two decades; colonial competition among the major powers; the desire of some of the governments involved to use the unifying national effect of war to divert attention from internal divisions; the capitalist rivalries and conflicting business interests that divided various countries involved; and pressure from the press and public opinion.

A recent book edited by the distinguished historians Richard Hamilton and Holger Herwig, which scrutinizes the making of the decision to go to war in each nation involved, suggests that while such factors may have set the scene for conflict, in each different state the decision to go to war was ultimately taken by a small elite of the country’s top political and military leaders. Austro-Hungarian officials, already seeking an issue they could use to humiliate Serbia and demonstrate their country’s dominance, felt that unless they took this opportunity to do so their status as a great power would soon be eroded. Even though not necessarily optimistic as to the outcome, they believed this was worth risking a major war with Russia, Serbia’s patron, unlikely to remain aloof while Austria took action. Before embarking on this course, however, they sought assurances of German support, which German officials—who believed that their country was already beleaguered and encircled by hostile powers and that within a few years Russia would be far stronger militarily than it was in 1914, further jeopardizing their own interests—duly provided.

Many historians, including David Fromkin and John Keegan, suggest that at least in the early stages of the crisis, both Austrian and German leaders hoped that the assurance of German support would suffice to deter Russian intervention and that had Austria moved more expeditiously to punish Serbia for the involvement of some of its officials in regicide, there would have been few international repercussions. Austria, however, waited several weeks to respond, and by the end of July 1914 Russian leaders likewise perceived (2102) that unless they demonstrated their readiness to take military action if

necessary, the crisis was a threat to their own country's international standing. Russian mobilization, initially undertaken as a precautionary measure, then provided Germany with a suitable pretext for war. The French almost fatalistically honored the terms of their alliance with Russia, believing that otherwise they would find themselves friendless against a potentially much stronger Germany, which had already defeated them in 1870–1871. Opposition to intervention was strongest within the British cabinet, several of whose members had opposed their country's policies during the Boer War of 1899–1902, but eventually the threat to British strategic interests, should hostile German forces occupy the vital Flanders coast, and the German invasion of Belgium impelled the Liberal government to declare war on Germany.

In each case, calculations of the national interest as perceived by an individual state's political and military leaders were paramount. Historians, notably Fritz Fischer and, most recently, John Röhl, have suggested that in late 1912 or 1913 Germany and Austria took a deliberate decision to escalate an appropriate international crisis into a war, before the European balance of power had tipped further against them, as they believed it was already doing. Neither state—Austria-Hungary, an empire in decline, and Germany, whose international power and status had burgeoned dramatically since the mid-nineteenth century—was satisfied with its existing position. In both countries, nationalism, industrialization, and rapid social and political change coexisted with a political system headed by an autocratic monarch and an aristocratic politico-military governing class drawn from a very restricted elite. This was also, of course, true of Russia, whose leaders initially hoped to avoid hostilities but were nonetheless prepared to resort to war rather than back down. In the final days of July, both Kaiser Wilhelm II and his cousin-by-marriage Tsar Nicholas II of Russia wavered, still trusting that war might be averted, but their advisors successfully pressured them to stay the course. Interestingly, in terms of logistical stockpiles, neither Austria nor Germany was well prepared for war, suggesting that while officials may have earlier contemplated the possibility of such an eventuality, they had failed to move forcefully in anticipation of it. Top policymakers in both empires pessimistically recognized that there was a good chance general war could bring about a *Götterdämmerung* in which their own nations would be destroyed but felt that this was more acceptable than, as they saw it, dwindling into second-rank powers.

“The Blank Check”

Confidential—For Your Excellency's personal information and guidance

The Austro-Hungarian Ambassador yesterday delivered to the Emperor a confidential personal letter from the Emperor Francis Joseph, which depicts the present situation from the Austro-Hungarian point of view, and describes the measures which Vienna has in view. A copy is now being forwarded to Your Excellency.

I replied to Count Szögyeny today on behalf of His Majesty that His Majesty sends his thanks to the Emperor Francis Joseph for his letter and would soon answer it personally. In the meantime His Majesty desires to say that he is not blind to the danger which threatens Austria-Hungary and thus the Triple Alliance as a result of the Russian and Serbian Pan-Slavic agitation. Even though His Majesty is known to feel no unqualified confidence in Bulgaria and her ruler, and naturally inclines more toward our old ally Rumania and her Hohenzollern prince, yet he quite understands that the Emperor Francis Joseph, in view of the attitude of Rumania and of the danger of a new Balkan alliance aimed directly at the Danube Monarchy, is anxious to bring about an understanding between Bulgaria and the Triple alliance. His Majesty will, therefore, direct his minister at Sofia to lend the Austro-Hungarian representative such support as he may desire in any action taken to this end. His Majesty will, furthermore, make an effort at Bucharest, according to the wishes of the Emperor Francis Joseph, to influence King Carol to the fulfilment of the duties of his alliance, to the renunciation of Serbia, and to the suppression of the Rumanian agitations directed against Austria-Hungary.

Finally, as far as concerns Serbia, His Majesty, of course, cannot interfere in the dispute now going on between Austria-Hungary and that country, as it is a matter not within his competence. The Emperor Francis Joseph may, however, rest assured that His Majesty will [“under all circumstances” deleted by Bethmann Hollweg from original draft] faithfully (2103) stand by Austria-Hungary, as is required by the obligations of his alliance and of his ancient friendship.

Bethmann-Hollweg

Source

Max Montgelas and Walter Schücking, eds., *Outbreak of the World War: German Documents Collected by Karl Kautsky* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1924), 78–79. Copyright 1924 by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

The Austro-Hungarian Ultimatum to Serbia, 23 July 1914

On the 31st of March, 1909, the Royal Serbian Minister at the Court of Vienna made, in the name of his Government, the following declaration to the Imperial and Royal Government:

Serbia recognizes that her rights were not affected by the state of affairs created in Bosnia, and states that she will accordingly accommodate herself to the decisions to be reached by the Powers in connection with Article 25 of the Treaty of Berlin. Serbia, in accepting the advice of the Great Powers, binds herself to desist from the attitude of protest and opposition which she has assumed with regard to the annexation since October last, and she furthermore binds herself to alter the tendency of her present policy toward Austria-Hungary, and to live on the footing of friendly and neighborly relations with the latter in the future.

Now the history of the past few years, and particularly the painful events of the 28th of June, have proved the existence of a subversive movement in Serbia, whose object it is to separate certain portions of its territory from the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. This movement, which came into being under the very eyes of the Serbian Government, subsequently found expression outside of the territory of the Kingdom in acts of terrorism, in a number of attempts at assassination, and in murders.

Far from fulfilling the formal obligations contained in its declaration of the 31st of March, 1909, the Royal Serbian Government has done nothing to suppress this movement. It has tolerated the criminal activities of the various unions and associations directed against the Monarchy, the unchecked utterances of the press, the glorification of the authors of assassinations, the participation of officers and officials in subversive intrigues; it has tolerated an unhealthy propaganda in its public instruction; and it has tolerated, finally, every manifestation which could betray the people of Serbia into hatred of the Monarchy and contempt for its institutions.

This toleration of which the Royal Serbian Government was guilty, was still in evidence at that moment when the events of the twenty-eighth of June exhibited to the whole world the dreadful consequences of such tolerance.

It is clear from the statements and confessions of the criminal authors of the assassination of the twenty-eighth of June, that the murder at Sarajevo was conceived at Belgrade, that the murderers received the weapons and the bombs with which they were equipped from Serbian officers and officials who belonged to the Narodna Odbrana, and, finally, that the dispatch of the

criminals and of their weapons to Bosnia was arranged and effected under the conduct of Serbian frontier authorities.

The results brought out by the inquiry no longer permit the Imperial and Royal Government to maintain the attitude of patient tolerance which it has observed for years toward those agitations which center at Belgrade and are spread thence into the territories of the Monarchy. Instead, these results impose upon the Imperial and Royal Government the obligation to put an end to those intrigues, which constitute a standing menace to the peace of the Monarchy.

In order to attain this end, the Imperial and Royal Government finds itself compelled to demand that the Serbian Government give official assurance that it will condemn the propaganda directed against Austria-Hungary, that is to say, the whole body of the efforts whose ultimate object it is to separate from the Monarchy territories that belong to it; and that it will obligate itself to suppress with all the means at its command this criminal and terroristic propaganda. In order to give these assurances a character of solemnity, the Royal Serbian Government will publish on the first page of its official organ of July 26/13, the following declaration:

“The Royal Serbian Government condemns the propaganda directed against Austria-Hungary, that is to say, the whole body of the efforts whose ultimate object it is to separate from the Austro-Hungarian (2104) Monarchy territories that belong to it, and it most sincerely regrets the dreadful consequences of these criminal transactions.

“The Royal Serbian Government regrets that Serbian officers and officials should have taken part in the above-mentioned propaganda and thus have endangered the friendly and neighborly relations, to the cultivation of which the Royal Government had most solemnly pledged itself by its declarations of March 31, 1909.

“The Royal Government, which disapproves and repels every idea and every attempt to interfere in the destinies of the population of whatever portion of Austria-Hungary, regards it as its duty most expressly to call attention of the officers, officials, and the whole population of the kingdom to the fact that for the future it will proceed with the utmost rigor against any persons who shall become guilty of any such activities, activities to prevent and to suppress which, the Government will bend every effort.”

This declaration shall be brought to the attention of the Royal army simultaneously by an order of the day from His Majesty the King, and by publication in the official organ of the army.

The Royal Serbian Government will furthermore pledge itself:

1. to suppress every publication which shall incite to hatred and contempt of the Monarchy, and the general tendency of which shall be directed against the territorial integrity of the latter;
2. to proceed at once to the dissolution of the Narodna Odbrana to confiscate all of its means of propaganda, and in the same manner to proceed against the other unions and associations in Serbia which occupy themselves with propaganda against Austria-Hungary; the Royal Government will take such measures as are necessary to make sure that the dissolved associations may not continue their activities under other names or in other forms;
3. to eliminate without delay from public instruction in Serbia, everything, whether connected with the teaching corps or with the methods of teaching, that serves or may serve to nourish the propaganda against Austria-Hungary;
4. to remove from the military and administrative service in general all officers and officials who have been guilty of carrying on the propaganda against Austria-Hungary, whose names the Imperial and Royal Government reserves the right to make known to the Royal Government when communicating the material evidence now in its possession;
5. to agree to the cooperation in Serbia of the organs of the Imperial and Royal Government in the suppression of the subversive movement directed against the integrity of the Monarchy;
6. to institute a judicial inquiry against every participant in the conspiracy of the twenty-eighth of June who may be found in Serbian territory; the organs of the Imperial and Royal Government delegated for this purpose will take part in the proceedings held for this purpose;
7. to undertake with all haste the arrest of Major Voislav Tankosic and of one Milan Ciganovitch, a Serbian official, who have been compromised by the results of the inquiry;
8. by efficient measures to prevent the participation of Serbian authorities in the smuggling of weapons and explosives across the frontier; to dismiss from the service and to punish severely those members of the Frontier Service at Schabats and Losnitza who assisted the authors of the crime of Sarajevo to cross the frontier;

9. to make explanations to the Imperial and Royal Government concerning the unjustifiable utterances of high Serbian functionaries in Serbia and abroad, who, without regard for their official position, have not hesitated to express themselves in a manner hostile toward Austria-Hungary since the assassination of the twenty-eighth of June;
10. to inform the Imperial and Royal Government without delay of the execution of the measures comprised in the foregoing points.

The Imperial and Royal Government awaits the reply of the Royal Government by Saturday, the twenty-fifth instant, at 6 p.m., at the latest.

A reminder of the results of the investigation about Sarajevo, to the extent they relate to the functionaries (2105) named in points 7 and 8 [above], is appended to this note.

Appendix

The criminal investigation undertaken at court in Sarajevo against Gavrilo Princip and his comrades on account of the assassination committed on the 28th of June this year, along with the guilt of accomplices, has up until now led to the following conclusions:

1. The plan of murdering Archduke Franz Ferdinand during his stay in Sarajevo was concocted in Belgrade by Gavrilo Princip, Nedeljko Cabrinovic, a certain Milan Ciganovic, and Trifko Grabesch with the assistance of Major Voijsa Takosic.
2. The six bombs and four Browning pistols along with ammunition—used as tools by the criminals—were procured and given to Princip, Cabrinovic and Grabesch in Belgrade by a certain Milan Ciganovic and Major Voijsa Takosic.
3. The bombs are hand grenades originating from the weapons depot of the Serbian army in Kragujevatz.
4. To guarantee the success of the assassination, Ciganovic instructed Princip, Cabrinovic and Grabesch in the use of the grenades and gave lessons on shooting Browning pistols to Princip and Grabesch in a forest next to the shooting range at Topischider.
5. To make possible Princip, Cabrinovic and Grabesch's passage across the Bosnia-Herzegovina border and the smuggling of their weapons, an entire secretive transportation system was organized by Ciganovic. The entry of the criminals and their weapons into Bosnia and Herzegovina was carried out by the main border officials of Shabatz (Rade Popovic)

and Losnitza as well as by the customs agent Budivoj Grbic of Losnitza, with the complicity of several others.

On the occasion of handing over this note, would Your Excellency please also add orally that—in the event that no unconditionally positive answer of the Royal government might be received in the meantime—after the course of the 48-hour deadline referred to in this note, as measured from the day and hour of your announcing it, you are commissioned to leave the I. and R. Embassy of Belgrade together with your personnel.

Source

The World War I Document Archive,
<http://www.lib.byu.edu/~rdh/wwi/1914/austro-hungarian-ultimatum.html>.

The Serbian Response to the Austro-Hungarian Ultimatum, 25 July 1914

The Royal Government [of Serbia] has received the communication of the Imperial and Royal Government of the 23rd inst. and is convinced that its reply will dissipate any misunderstanding which threatens to destroy the friendly and neighbourly relations between the Austrian monarchy and the kingdom of Serbia.

The Royal Government is conscious that nowhere have there been renewed protests against the great neighbourly monarchy like those which at one time were expressed in the Skuptschina, as well as in the declaration and actions of the responsible representatives of the state at that time, and which were terminated by the Serbian declaration of March 31st, 1909; furthermore that since that time neither the different corporations of the kingdom, nor the officials have made any attempt to alter the political and judicial condition created in Bosnia and the Herzegovina. The Royal Government states that the I. and R. [Imperial and Royal] Government has made no protestation in this sense excepting in the case of a textbook, in regard to which the I. and R. Government has received an entirely satisfactory explanation. Serbia has given during the time of the Balkan crisis in numerous cases evidence of her pacific and moderate policy, and it is only owing to Serbia and the sacrifices which she has brought in the interest of the peace of Europe that this peace has been preserved.

The Royal Government cannot be made responsible for expressions of a private character, as for instance newspaper articles and the peaceable work of societies, expressions which are of very common appearance in other countries,

and which ordinarily are not under the control of the state. This, all the less, as the Royal Government has shown great courtesy in the solution of a whole series of questions which have arisen between Serbia and Austria-Hungary, whereby it has succeeded to solve the greater number thereof, in favor of the progress of both countries.

(2106)

The Royal Government was therefore painfully surprised by the assertions that citizens of Serbia had participated in the preparations of the outrage in Sarajevo. The Government expected to be invited to cooperate in the investigation of the crime, and it was ready, in order to prove its complete correctness, to proceed against all persons in regard to whom it would receive information.

According to the wishes of the I. and R. Government, the Royal Government is prepared to surrender to the court, without regard to position and rank, every Serbian citizen for whose participation in the crime of Sarajevo it should have received proof. It binds itself particularly on the first page of the official organ of the 26th of July to publish the following enunciation:

“The Royal Serbian Government condemns every propaganda which should be directed against Austria-Hungary, i.e., the entirety of such activities as aim towards the separation of certain territories from the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, and it regrets sincerely the lamentable consequences of these criminal machinations.”

The Royal Government regrets that according to a communication of the I. and R. Government certain Serbian officers and functionaries have participated in the propaganda just referred to, and that these have therefore endangered the amicable relations for the observation of which the Royal Government had solemnly obliged itself through the declaration of March 31st, 1909. . . .

The Royal Government binds itself further:

1. During the next regular meeting of the Skuptschina to embody in the press laws a clause, to wit, that the incitement to hatred of, and contempt for, the Monarchy is to be most severely punished, as well as every publication whose general tendency is directed against the territorial integrity of Austria-Hungary.
It binds itself in view of the coming revision of the constitution to embody an amendment into Art. 22 of the constitutional law which

- permits the confiscation of such publications as is at present impossible according to the clear definition of Art. 12 of the constitution.
2. The Government possesses no proofs and the note of the I. and R. Government does not submit them that the society "Narodna Odbrana" and other similar societies have committed, up to the present, any criminal actions of this manner through any one of their members. Notwithstanding this, the Royal Government will accept the demand of the I. and R. Government and dissolve the society "Narodna Odbrana," as well as every society which should set against Austria-Hungary.
 3. The Royal Serbian Government binds itself without delay to eliminate from the public instruction in Serbia anything which might further the propaganda directed against Austria-Hungary provided the I. and R. Government furnishes actual proofs of this propaganda.
 4. The Royal Government is also ready to dismiss those officers and officials from the military and civil services in regard to whom it has been proved by judicial investigation that they have been guilty of actions against the territorial integrity of the Monarchy; it expects that the I. and R. Government communicate to it for the purpose of starting the investigation the names of these officers and officials, and the facts with which they have been charged.
 5. The Royal Government confesses that it is not clear about the sense and the scope of that demand of the I. and R. Government which concerns the obligation on the part of the Royal Serbian Government to permit the cooperation of officials of the I. and R. Government on Serbian territory, but it declares that it is willing to accept every cooperation which does not run counter to international law and criminal law, as well as to the friendly and neighborly relations.
 6. The Royal Government considers it its duty as a matter of course to begin an investigation against all those persons who have participated in the outrage of June 28th and who are in its territory. As far as the cooperation in this investigation of specially delegated officials of the I. and R. Government is concerned, this cannot be accepted, as this is a violation of the constitution and of criminal procedure. Yet in some cases the result (2107) of the investigation might be communicated to the Austro-Hungarian officials.
 7. The Royal Government has ordered on the evening of the day on which the note was received the arrest of Major Voislav Tankosic. However, as far as Milan Ciganovitch is concerned, who is a citizen of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and who has been employed till June 28th with the Railroad Department, it has as yet been impossible to locate him, wherefore a warrant has been issued against him.

The I. and R. Government is asked to make known, as soon as possible for the purpose of conducting the investigation, the existing grounds for suspicion and the proofs of guilt, obtained in the investigation at Sarajevo.

8. The Serbian Government will amplify and render more severe the existing measures against the suppression of smuggling of arms and explosives.
It is a matter of course that it will proceed at once against, and punish severely, those officials of the frontier service on the line Shabatz-Loznica who violated their duty and who have permitted the perpetrators of the crime to cross the frontier.
9. The Royal Government is ready to give explanations about the expressions which its officials in Serbia and abroad have made in interviews after the outrage and which, according to the assertion of the I. and R. Government, were hostile to the Monarchy. As soon as the I. and R. Government points out in detail where those expressions were made and succeeds in proving that those expressions have actually been made by the functionaries concerned, the Royal Government itself will take care that the necessary evidences and proofs are collected.
10. The Royal Government will notify the I. and R. Government, so far as this has not been already done by the present note, of the execution of the measures in question as soon as one of those measures has been ordered and put into execution.

The Royal Serbian Government believes it to be to the common interest not to rush the solution of this affair and it is therefore, in case the I. and R. Government should not consider itself satisfied with this answer, ready, as ever, to accept a peaceable solution, be it by referring the decision of this question to the International Court at The Hague or by leaving it to the decision of the Great Powers who have participated in the working out of the declaration given by the Serbian Government on March 18/31st, 1909.

Source

The World War I Document Archive,
<http://www.lib.byu.edu/~rdh/wwi/1914/serbresponse.html>.

Helmuth von Moltke, Chief of the German General Staff, to Imperial Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg, 29 July 1914

Summary of the Political Situation

It goes without saying that no nation of Europe would regard the conflict between Austria and Serbia with any interest except that of humanity, if there did not lie within it the danger of general political complications that today already threaten to unchain a world war. For more than five years Serbia has been the cause of a European tension which has been pressing with simply intolerable weight on the political and economic existence of nations. With a patience approaching weakness, Austria has up to the present borne the continuous provocations and the political machinations aimed at the disruption of her own national stability by a people which proceeded from regicide at home to the murder of princes in a neighboring land. It was only after the last despicable crime that she took to extreme measures, in order to burn out with a glowing iron a cancer that has constantly threatened to poison the body of Europe. One would think that all Europe would be grateful to her. All Europe would have drawn a breath of relief if this mischief-maker could have been properly chastised, and peace and order thereby have been restored to the Balkans; but Russia placed herself at the side of this criminal nation. It was only then that the Austro-Serbian affair became the thunder-cloud which may at any moment break over Europe.

Austria has declared to the European cabinets that she intends neither to make any territorial acquisitions (2108) at Serbia's expense nor to infringe upon her status as a nation; that she only wants to force her unruly neighbor to accept the conditions that she considers necessary if they are to continue to exist side by side, and which Serbia, as experience has proved, would never live up to, despite solemn assurances, unless compelled by force. The Austro-Servian affair is a purely private quarrel in which, as has been said, nobody in Europe would have a profound interest and which would in no way threaten the peace of Europe but, on the contrary, would establish it more firmly, if Russia had not injected herself into it. That was what first gave the matter its menacing aspect.

Austria has only mobilized a portion of her armed forces, eight army corps, against Serbia—just enough with which to be able to put through her punitive expedition. As against this, Russia has made all preparations to enable her to mobilize the army corps of the military districts of Kiev, Odessa and Moscow, twelve army corps in all, within the briefest period, and is providing for similar preparatory measures in the north also, along the German border and the Baltic Sea. She announces that she intends to mobilize when Austria advances into

Serbia, as she cannot permit the destruction of Serbia by Austria, though Austria has explained that she intends nothing of the sort.

What must and will the further consequences be? If Austria advances into Serbia she will have to face not only the Serbian army but also the vastly superior strength of Russia; thus she can not enter upon a war with Serbia without securing herself against an attack by Russia. That means that she will be forced to mobilize the other half of her Army, for she cannot possibly surrender at discretion to a Russia all prepared for war. At the moment, however, in which Austria mobilizes her whole Army, the collision between herself and Russia will become inevitable. But that, for Germany, is the *casus foederis*. If Germany is not to be false to her word and permit her ally to suffer annihilation at the hands of Russian superiority, she, too, must mobilize. And that would bring about the mobilization of the rest of Russia's military districts as a result. But then Russia will be able to say: I am being attacked by Germany. She will then assure herself of the support of France, which, according to the compact of alliance, is obliged to take part in the war, should her ally, Russia, be attacked. Thus the Franco-Russian alliance, so often held up to praise as a purely defensive compact, created only in order to meet the aggressive plans of Germany, will become active, and the mutual butchery of the civilized nations of Europe will begin.

It cannot be denied that the affair has been cunningly contrived by Russia. While giving continuous assurances that she was not yet "mobilizing," but only making preparations "for an eventuality," that "up to the present" she had called no reserves to the colors, she has been getting herself so ready for war that when she actually issues her mobilization orders, she will be prepared to move her armies forward in a very few days. Thus she puts Austria in a desperate position and shifts the responsibility to her, inasmuch as she is forcing Austria to secure herself against a surprise by Russia. She will say: You, Austria, are mobilizing against us, so you want war with us. Russia assures Germany that she wishes to undertake nothing against her; but she knows perfectly well that Germany could not remain inactive in the event of a belligerent collision between her ally and Russia. So Germany, too, will be forced to mobilize, and again Russia will be enabled to say to the world: I did not want war, but Germany brought it about. After this fashion things must and will develop, unless, one might say, a miracle happens to prevent at the last moment a war which will annihilate for decades the civilization of almost all Europe.

Germany does not want to bring about this frightful war. But the German Government knows that it would be violating in ominous fashion the deep-

rooted feelings of fidelity which are among the most beautiful traits of the nation, if it did not come to the assistance of its ally at a moment which was to be decisive of the nation's existence.

According to the information at hand, France, also, appears to be taking measures preparatory to an eventual mobilization. It is apparent that Russia and France are moving hand in hand as far as regards their preparations.

Thus, when the collision between Austria and Russia becomes inevitable, Germany, also, will mobilize, and will be prepared to take up the fight on two fronts.

With relation to the military preparations we have in view, should the case arise, it is of the greatest importance to ascertain as soon as possible whether (2109) Russia and France intend to let it come to a war with Germany. The further the preparations of our neighbors are carried, the quicker they will be able to complete their mobilization. Thus the military situation is becoming from day to day more unfavorable for us, and can, if our prospective opponents prepare themselves further, unmolested, lead to fateful consequences.

Source

Max Montgelas and Walther Schüking, eds., *Outbreak of the World War: German Documents Collected by Karl Kautsky* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1924), 306–308.

About The Documents

These official diplomatic documents, generated by the governments of Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Serbia during the July Crisis of 1914, delineate key points of the escalation of Franz Ferdinand's assassination into full-scale European war. The "blank check" letter sent by German Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg to Franz Joseph II in early July and the memorandum by German military chief of staff Count Helmuth von Moltke in late July were not publicly available until after the war, when governments and other organizations published several major collections of previously secret official documents relating to the outbreak of war. They provide insight into the secret diplomacy leading up to actual hostilities. The Austrian ultimatum to Serbia and the Serbian reply, by contrast, were made public to all at the time they were sent and constituted official statements of the Austro-Hungarian and Serbian positions, designed to influence opinion in their own and other countries.

Before taking action against Serbia, which might well cause Russia, Serbia's effective patron, to come to its client's defense, the Austro-Hungarian government wished to assure itself that it could depend on support from Germany. If Russia declared war on Austria, of course, rather than the reverse, under the terms of the Triple Alliance Germany would be obliged to lend support to Austria-Hungary. Nonetheless, nations reluctant to embark on war could prove adept at discerning loopholes in treaty commitments. On 2 July in Vienna the elderly Habsburg Emperor Franz Joseph II had a rather frank interview with the German ambassador, Count Heinrich von Tschirschky, ranging over the entire European situation before settling on the Serbian situation, a conversation that the interlocutor duly reported immediately to Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg. According to his own account of this conversation, during it Tschirschky told Franz Joseph "that His Majesty could count absolutely on finding Germany solidly behind the Monarchy whenever it came to the point of defending one of the latter's vital interests." The determination of precisely what constituted such interests, he added, was a matter for the Austrians to decide.

That same evening Franz Joseph wrote a lengthy letter in his own hand to his German fellow monarch, Kaiser Wilhelm II, that the Habsburg ambassador in Berlin delivered three days later to its recipient. Attached to it was an even longer memorandum, which the Austrian Foreign Office had drafted shortly before the death of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, calling for strong action against Serbia. There can be little doubt that Austro-Hungarian officials had for some time been seeking an excuse to discipline and if possible break up Serbia, whose existence they perceived as a threat to the survival of their own empire. What they needed was a pretext that would win them firm German backing, something that in many circumstances Imperial Germany might well be reluctant to provide. Kaiser Wilhelm II had a well-deserved reputation for backing down in international crises. In this case, however, his personal friendship with Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his opposition on principle to regicide impelled him to stand firmly with Austria-Hungary. Franz Joseph requested German support in dealing with Serbia, eliminating Russian influence from the Balkans, and replacing it with that of Germany and Austria. Immediately upon receiving this letter, Imperial Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg replied on Germany's behalf. Although Bethmann Hollweg modified the last sentence in the draft originally prepared for him by Foreign Minister Alfred von Zimmermann, this message, subsequently christened the "blank check," effectively committed Germany to support Austria in whatever policies it took. German officials clearly perceived the crisis as a test of their own country's international credibility. The dispatch of this message was later perceived as a

key turning point in the escalation of the crisis, as it gave Austria the confidence to demand concessions from Serbia that might (2110) well provoke full-scale European war. In all fairness, however, if Austria had taken swift military action against Serbia, acting in the heat of the moment, it is likely that other European powers, even Russia, would have acquiesced in this and regarded it as justified retaliation for a political assassination in which at least some Serb political and military officials had been implicated.

After Austria had received Germany's guarantee of support, a period of quiet ensued. Many Austro-Hungarian troops were on home leave until 25 July 1914, helping to bring in the harvest, and any cancellations of such dispensations would alert other European powers to Austria's belligerent intentions. In mid-July, French President Raymond Poincaré and Premier René Viviani were scheduled to make an official visit to St. Petersburg, the capital of their Russian ally, an occasion that might have given the French and Russians an opportunity to discuss the crisis and coordinate their strategies for defusing it. The Austrian government therefore deferred the delivery of the ultimatum until their visit had ended, though word of Austrian plans began to leak out over 18 and 19 July 1914, impelling the Serbian government to begin calling up its army reservists. On 22 July Austrian Minister of Foreign Affairs Count Leopold von Berchtold instructed the Austrian minister at Belgrade to deliver an ultimatum to Serbia the next day. Its terms were harsh, deliberately designed to prove unacceptable and provoke war. Arguing that the conspiracy to assassinate Franz Ferdinand had been conceived and initiated in Belgrade, this document made ten demands of the government, to be fulfilled within forty-eight hours. These included the official suppression of all anti-Austrian organizations and propaganda within Serbia, efforts in which the Austro-Hungarian authorities were to collaborate; the elimination from the Serbian government of all military and civilian officials implicated in anti-Austrian activities; and the institution of judicial proceedings against all participants in the assassination conspiracy, investigations in which the Austro-Hungarian authorities would participate.

The Serbs sought mediation and assistance from various European countries, but Russia offered no clear support, and Austria-Hungary and Germany discouraged mediation efforts. Under almost overwhelming pressure, Serb Prime Minister Nikola Pašić made a largely conciliatory response, accepting the majority of these demands and promising to surrender any Serbian citizen, resident, or official whose connection with the death of the archduke could be demonstrated. He refused, however, to allow Austro-Hungarian investigators to operate unchecked within Serbia on the grounds that this constituted an unacceptable infringement on Serbian sovereignty. In a desperate effort to

avoid war, which would almost certainly devastate his small country, he also suggested that rather than attempting to reach a hasty solution, the two countries involved submit the matter to the arbitration of the International Court of Justice at The Hague.

When the Serbian response appeared, Kaiser Wilhelm II initially thought it satisfactory and “all reason for war” had now disappeared, only to be told brutally by the Prussian Minister of War Erich von Falkenhayn that events had proceeded to a point where he “no longer had control of the affairs in his own hands.” On 26 July Austria-Hungarian officials, determined to find the Serb response unsatisfactory, untruthfully alleged that Serb troops had fired on Habsburg forces from steamers on the Danube. By late July, German military leaders, working on the assumption that their country was growing ever weaker militarily in relation to its potential enemies, seemingly had determined to provoke a general war, whatever the cost, and hope that their armies would successfully inflict knockout blows on first France and then Russia. As hostilities seemed ever more likely and as British Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey rejected the offer in late July that Germany would sign an official neutrality agreement with Britain, guarantee the independence of the Netherlands, and promise to take no territory from France so long as Britain remained neutral in the war, German Chancellor von Bethmann Hollweg, who had previously acquiesced in the German military’s intentions, apparently—though some skeptical historians have suggested he merely sought to shift the blame for hostilities to other countries than his own—panicked and wavered, hoping the war might still be limited if Austria merely took Belgrade, the Serb capital, and then allowed diplomatic efforts to solve the crisis.

German military leaders, however, were now determined to go to war and would have none of this. Even though he was in a pessimistic state of nervous depression, anticipating that general European war (2111) might result in a Nietzschean-style ultimate conflagration in which his own country would be devastated and changed beyond recognition, on 29 July Helmuth von Moltke, chief of staff of the German army, sent Bethmann Hollweg an analysis of the situation, which assumed that general war could no longer be avoided. Equating Russian military mobilization, essentially a precautionary measure designed to convey a warning message to Austria-Hungary, with an outright declaration of war, Moltke sought to shift the responsibility for the outbreak of hostilities onto Russia. Moltke was a supporter of the strategy of the Schlieffen Plan, developed by his predecessor General Alfred von Schlieffen. The Schlieffen Plan envisaged that in the event of a general European war, Germany would quickly launch an overwhelming flank attack on France

through Belgium and Holland while employing smaller forces in the East to keep Russia at bay. By the end of July, Moltke clearly thought war inevitable and was eager to bring this strategy into play. After the First Battle of the Marne (5–12 September 1914), when it became clear that the plan had failed to deliver the envisaged quick knockout blow against France, Moltke suffered a full-scale nervous breakdown and was forced to retire. The war that, according to his own assessment, he had “prepared and initiated” would nonetheless last another four years.

Further Reading

Berghahn, V. R. *Germany and the Approach of War in 1914*. 2nd ed. New York: St. Martin's, 1993.

Chickering, Roger. *Imperial Germany and the Great War, 1914–1918*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Fischer, Fritz. *Germany's Aims in the First World War*. Trans. Fritz Fischer. New York: Norton, 1967.

Fromkin, David. *Europe's Last Summer: Who Started the Great War in 1914?* New York: Knopf, 2004.

Hamilton, Richard F., and Holger H. Herwig, eds. *The Origins of World War I*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Herrmann, David G. *The Arming of Europe and the Making of the First World War*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996.

Martel, Gordon. *The Origins of the First World War*. 2nd ed. London: Longman, 1996.

Mombauer, Annika. *Helmuth von Moltke and the Origins of the First World War*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Steiner, Zara S., and Keith Neilson. *Britain and the Origins of the First World War*. 2nd ed. New York: Palgrave, 2003.

Stevenson, David. *Cataclysm: The First World War as Political Tragedy*. New York: Basic Books, 2004.

MLA

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "7. Europe Moves toward War." *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*, ABC-CLIO, 2005, pp. . *ABC-CLIO eBook Collection*, legacy.abc-clio.com/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2037.

Chicago Manual of Style

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "7. Europe Moves toward War." In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005. <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2037>.

APA

Roberts, P. M., S. C. Tucker (2005). 7. Europe Moves toward War. In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia* (pp.). Retrieved from <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2037>

Essay 8. Great Britain Chooses War

British Intervention in World War I

One of the more contentious debates regarding World War I is that raging over whether Great Britain's decision to enter the war was in error. In 1998 the British historian Niall Ferguson provoked considerable controversy when he suggested in *The Pity of War* that British interests would have been better served if it had remained neutral in the war, allowing Germany to dominate continental Europe but in return avoiding "the massive contraction in British overseas power entailed by the fighting of two wars" (460). A swift German victory would have spared Britain losses of almost 1 million dead and twice that number wounded, plus the heavy economic costs of war and the weakening of its imperial position. The kaiser's triumph would have had further consequences, Ferguson argued: in all probability, Germany would have led continental Europe in something resembling the present-day European Union, while Fascist politicians would have had no opportunity to seize power in Italy and France, nor would Communists in Russia.

In 1999 another British historian, John Charmley, followed suit with his book *Splendid Isolation*. Charmley had already won fame when he suggested some years earlier not only that British policy was prudent and justified in appeasing Germany during the 1930s but that British Prime Minister Winston Churchill erred in 1940 when he rejected a negotiated peace and acquiescence in German domination of the European continent, choosing instead to continue the war against Adolf Hitler—a decision that ensured Britain would emerge from the war no longer a great power, shorn of its empire and heavily dependent, in its diminished state, on U.S. economic and military assistance. Projecting his arguments backward, Charmley argued that traditional British strategy had rarely if ever been one of preventing the rise of any one hegemonic state on the European continent and that those British policymakers, most notably Foreign Secretary Sir Edward (2112) Grey, who acted on such assumptions when handling the crisis of July and August 1914 were working from an erroneous historical perspective, which mistakenly led them to choose war. Charmley essentially suggested that from the early 1900s Britain, Russia, and France followed provocative policies almost calculated to generate a sense of siege and threat within Germany.

Charmley and Ferguson were questioning what had become almost an orthodoxy, ably expounded by Sir Michael Howard, Trevor Wilson, Gary Sheffield, and others, that terrible though the consequences were in terms of

casualties and the devastation World War I wreaked on Britain's economy and international position, the decision to enter the war was amply justified in terms of long-term British national interests. Since at least the sixteenth century, these historians argue, British foreign policy toward Europe had invariably been one of preventing any major power dominating the European continent, and in particular of denying any hostile power control of the coast of the Low Countries, whose ports commanded the vital North Sea waters, without which British naval power could not protect Britain itself or command the seas. A German invasion of France and Belgium therefore threatened strategic interests that, for the sake of its own security and the maintenance of its position as a great power, Britain could not afford to compromise. Historians such as Howard were in turn implicitly responding to the British literature of disillusionment—memoirs and novels by survivors of the war, most of which appeared in the late 1920s and early 1930s—that generally highlighted the irrationality, senseless slaughter and waste, and inadequate political and military leadership of World War I, a view that also informed the writings of such historians and strategists as Sir Basil Liddell Hart.

Many agree that the policies of Sir Edward Grey, British foreign secretary since 1905, were crucial to placing Britain in a position in which the alliance relationship the country had developed with France and Russia since 1900 might impel it to join a major European war. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, growing German naval and territorial ambitions had alarmed Grey, who in 1901 had coauthored an influential article arguing that in response Britain should move closer to France and Russia. As foreign secretary, Grey strengthened Britain's developing ties with France under the *entente cordiale* negotiated by King Edward VII and in 1907 negotiated a *rapprochement* with Russia, Britain's traditional enemy in Asia. With Grey's encouragement, from 1906 Britain and France held regular though highly secret military and naval staff talks to coordinate their policies. Grey was also among the architects of an Anglo-French naval understanding reached in summer 1912 whereby the French fleet would patrol the Mediterranean, leaving the North Sea, including France's northwest coast, to British protection. While the French government failed to make this agreement conditional on a binding pledge from the British government that should they find themselves at war the British fleet would come to their assistance in the North Sea, the very division of responsibilities implicitly suggested that this would be the case. At the time, Grey himself argued that should "Germany attempt to crush France, I did not think we should stand by and look on, but should do all we could to prevent France from being crushed" (Charmley, 377).

Within the British cabinet, during July 1914 the most senior supporter of intervention was undoubtedly Grey, seconded by the bellicose young Winston Churchill, first lord of the Admiralty. Grey held office in a Liberal cabinet, several of whose members were radicals who had distinguished themselves by their opposition to the Boer War of 1899–1902, and some of whom were pacifist by inclination. When Austria delivered its ultimatum to Serbia, Grey and Churchill were the only two cabinet officers who favored British intervention should this incident develop into a major war. This is not to say that Grey actively sought war; his position was, in fact, far more complex, inasmuch as the fundamental objective of his policies had always been not simply to protect Britain's strategic position but also to deter Germany from starting a major war. In late July 1914 Grey made several efforts to mediate the crisis, all of which German officials blocked. Between the two world wars historians often condemned Grey for failing to indicate sufficiently clearly to Germany that in a major European war involving France, British intervention would be almost inevitable. This was not, however, strictly true. In December 1912, during the First Balkan War, a crisis that at one time seemed likely to escalate into a major European war, at Grey's urging his friend and associate Richard, Lord Haldane, British lord chancellor and former secretary of war, warned Prince Karl Max von Lichnowsky, Germany's ambassador in London, (2113) that in any war between France and Germany, Britain would almost certainly come to France's assistance. Wishful thinking may have impelled German leaders to ignore this advice, but it had been given and was apparently one of the triggers propelling the German military buildup of 1913.

German military planning posited that in any war with France's ally Russia, Germany would also go to war with France, seeking to remove it quickly from the war, a strategy that depended in part on violating the neutrality of Belgium, a policy that would greatly facilitate any German invasion of France. In late July 1914 German officials still cherished hopes that Britain might remain neutral during any full-scale European war, a belief that, had German leaders been privy to them, the British cabinet's deliberations might well have encouraged. On 29 July, Grey, with the support of Churchill and, more significantly, Prime Minister Herbert H. Asquith, tried and failed to persuade his colleagues that should Germany attack Belgium—whose permanent neutrality the European powers had guaranteed in 1839—and France, Britain should intervene. That evening German Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg proposed that in exchange for assurances of British neutrality in any war, Germany would be prepared to restore Belgium's postwar integrity and to annex only French colonies, respecting the territory of France proper, a deal Grey rejected out of hand. Ironically, British military planning likewise

envisaged encroaching on Belgium's neutrality should Germany fail to do so first.

On 1 August 1914, the date that Germany declared war on Russia, twelve of eighteen members of the British cabinet remained opposed to war. Until that date Grey had still hoped that his mediation efforts would succeed and that Germany could be dissuaded from declaring war on either Russia or France, but now he finally realized that this objective was unattainable. Germany's subsequent determination to attack France and, in doing so, violate Belgian neutrality further weakened antiwar forces in Britain. Within the cabinet, information that the rival Conservative Unionists favored intervention raised the prospect that any government split might permit the Unionists to regain office, whether independently or as part of a coalition they would dominate. In conjunction with the German invasion of Belgium announced on 3 August, a move in disregard of international treaties that shocked many liberals in Britain and elsewhere, this unpalatable prospect proved decisive. With four dissenting votes, only two from individuals who eventually resigned, on 3 August the British cabinet decided to join the war. That evening, Grey delivered a speech in the House of Commons that won Parliament's enthusiastic consent to a declaration of war on Germany, a policy that only a week earlier most of its members had considered inconceivable but now believed to be both justified and inevitable.

British Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey, Speech to the House of Commons, 3 August 1914

Last week I stated that we were working for peace not only for this country, but to preserve the peace of Europe. To-day events move so rapidly that it is exceedingly difficult to state with technical accuracy the actual state of affairs, but it is clear that the peace of Europe cannot be preserved. Russia and Germany, at any rate, have declared war upon each other.

Before I proceed to state the position of his Majesty's Government I would like to clear the ground so that, before I come to state to the House what our attitude is with regard to the present crisis, the House may know exactly under what obligations the government is, or the House can be said to be, in coming to a decision on the matter. First of all, let me say, very shortly, that we have consistently worked with a single mind, with all the earnestness in our power, to preserve peace. . . .

In the present crisis it has not been possible to secure the peace of Europe: because there has been little time, and there has been a disposition—at any rate

in some quarters on which I will not dwell—to force things rapidly to an issue, at any rate to the great risk of peace, and, as we now know, the result of that is that the policy of peace as far as the great powers generally are concerned is in danger. I do not want to dwell on that, and to comment on it, and to say where the blame seems to us to lie, which powers were most in favor of peace, which were most disposed to risk war or endanger peace, because I would like the House to approach this crisis in which we are now from the point of view of British interests, British honor, and British obligations, free from all passion as to why peace has not yet been preserved.

(2114)

The situation in the present crisis is not precisely the same as it was in the Morocco question. . . . It has originated in a dispute between Austria and Serbia. I can say this with the most absolute confidence—no government and no country has less desire to be involved in war over a dispute with Austria than the country of France. They are involved in it because of their obligation of honor under a definite alliance with Russia. Well, it is only fair to say to the House that that obligation of honor cannot apply in the same way to us. We are not parties to the Franco-Russian alliance. We do not even know the terms of the alliance. So far I have, I think, faithfully and completely cleared the ground with regard to the question of obligation.

I now come to what we think the situation requires of us. For many years we have had a long-standing friendship with France. I remember well the feeling in the House and my own feeling—for I spoke on the subject, I think, when the late Government made their agreement with France—the warm and cordial feeling resulting from the fact that these two nations, who had had perpetual differences in the past, had cleared these differences away; I remember saying, I think, that it seemed to me that some benign influence had been at work to produce the cordial atmosphere that had made that possible. But how far that friendship entails obligation—it has been a friendship between the nations and ratified by the nations—how far that entails an obligation, let every man look into his own heart, and his own feelings, and construe the extent of the obligation for himself. I construe it myself as I feel it, but I do not wish to urge upon any one else more than their feelings dictate as to what they should feel about the obligation. The House, individually and collectively, may judge for itself. I speak my personal view, and I have given the House my own feeling in the matter. The French fleet is now in the Mediterranean, and the northern and western coasts of France are absolutely undefended.

The French fleet being concentrated in the Mediterranean, the situation is very different from what it used to be, because the friendship which has grown up between the two countries has given them a sense of security that there was nothing to be feared from us. My own feeling is that if a foreign fleet, engaged in a war which France had not sought, and in which she had not been the aggressor, came down the English Channel and bombarded and battered the undefended coasts of France, we could not stand aside [Cheers] and see this going on practically within sight of our eyes, with our arms folded, looking on dispassionately, doing nothing. I believe that would be the feeling of this country. There are times when one feels that if these circumstances actually did arise, it would be a feeling which would spread with irresistible force throughout the land.

But I also want to look at the matter without sentiment, and from the point of view of British interests, and it is on that that I am going to base and justify what I am presently going to say to the House. If we say nothing at this moment, what is France to do with her fleet in the Mediterranean? If she leaves it there, with no statement from us as to what we will do, she leaves her northern and western coasts absolutely undefended, at the mercy of a German fleet coming down the Channel to do as it pleases in a war which is a war of life and death between them. If we say nothing, it may be that the French fleet is withdrawn from the Mediterranean. We are in the presence of a European conflagration; can anybody set limits to the consequences that may arise out of it? Let us assume that to-day we stand aside in an attitude of neutrality, saying, "No, we cannot undertake and engage to help either party in this conflict." Let us suppose the French fleet is withdrawn from the Mediterranean; and let us assume that the consequences—which are already tremendous in what has happened in Europe even to countries which are at peace—in fact, equally whether countries are at peace or at war—let us assume that out of that come consequences unforeseen, which make it necessary at a sudden moment that, in defense of vital British interests, we shall go to war; and let us assume which is quite possible—that Italy, who is now neutral—because, as I understand, she considers that this war is an aggressive war, and the Triple Alliance being a defensive alliance her obligation did not arise—let us assume that consequences which are not yet foreseen and which, perfectly legitimately consulting her own interests, make Italy depart from her attitude of neutrality at a time when we are forced in defense of vital British interest ourselves to fight—what then will be the position in the Mediterranean? It might be that at some critical moment those consequences would be forced upon us because our trade routes in the Mediterranean might be vital to this country.

Nobody can say that in the course of the next few weeks there is any particular trade route, the keeping (2115) open of which may not be vital to this country. What will be our position then? We have not kept a fleet in the Mediterranean which is equal to dealing alone with a combination of other fleets in the Mediterranean. It would be the very moment when we could not detach more ships to the Mediterranean, and we might have exposed this country from our negative attitude at the present moment to the most appalling risk. I say that from the point of view of British interest. We feel strongly that France was entitled to know—and to know at once—whether or not in the event of attack upon her unprotected northern and western coasts she could depend upon British support. In that emergency and in these compelling circumstances, yesterday afternoon I gave to the French Ambassador the following statement:

“I am authorized to give an assurance that if the German fleet comes into the Channel or through the North Sea to undertake hostile operations against the French coasts or shipping, the British fleet will give all the protection in its power. This assurance is, of course, subject to the policy of his Majesty’s Government receiving the support of Parliament, and must not be taken as binding his Majesty’s Government to take any action until the above contingency of action by the German fleet takes place.”

I read that to the House, not as a declaration of war on our part, not as entailing immediate aggressive action on our part, but as binding us to take aggressive action should that contingency arise. Things move very hurriedly from hour to hour. French news comes in, and I cannot give this in any very formal way; but I understand that the German Government would be prepared, if we would pledge ourselves to neutrality, to agree that its fleet would not attack the northern coast of France. I have only heard that shortly before I came to the House, but it is far too narrow an engagement for us. And, Sir, there is the more serious consideration—becoming more serious every hour—there is the question of the neutrality of Belgium. . . .

I will read to the House what took place last week on this subject. When mobilization was beginning, I knew that this question must be a most important element in our policy—a most important subject for the House of Commons. I telegraphed at the same time in similar terms to both Paris and Berlin to say that it was essential for us to know whether the French and German Governments, respectively, were prepared to undertake an engagement to respect the neutrality of Belgium. These are the replies. I got from the French Government this reply:

“The French Government are resolved to respect the neutrality of Belgium, and it would only be in the event of some other power violating that neutrality that France might find herself under the necessity, in order to assure the defense of her security, to act otherwise. This assurance has been given several times. The President of the Republic spoke of it to the King of the Belgians, and the French Minister at Brussels has spontaneously renewed the assurance to the Belgian Minister of Foreign Affairs to-day.”

From the German Government the reply was:

“The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs could not possibly give an answer before consulting the Emperor and the Imperial Chancellor.”

[British Ambassador in Berlin] Sir Edward Goschen, to whom I had said it was important to have an answer soon, said he hoped the answer would not be too long delayed. The German Minister for Foreign Affairs then gave Sir Edward Goschen to understand that he rather doubted whether they could answer at all, as any reply they might give could not fail, in the event of war, to have the undesirable effect of disclosing, to a certain extent, part of their plan of campaign. I telegraphed at the same time to Brussels to the Belgian Government, and I got the following reply from Sir Francis Villiers:

“Belgium expects and desires that other powers will observe and uphold her neutrality, which she intends to maintain to the utmost of her power. In so informing me, Minister for Foreign Affairs said that, in the event of the violation of the neutrality of their territory, they believed that they were in a position to defend themselves against intrusion. The relations between Belgium and her neighbour were excellent, and there was no reason to suspect their intention; but he thought it well, nevertheless, to be prepared against emergencies.”

(2116)

It now appears from the news I have received today—which has come quite recently, and I am not yet quite sure how far it has reached me in an accurate form—that an ultimatum has been given to Belgium by Germany, the object of which was to offer Belgium friendly relations with Germany on condition that she would facilitate the passage of German troops through Belgium. [Ironical laughter] Well, Sir, until one has these things absolutely definite, up to the last moment I do not wish to say all that one would say if one were in a position to give the House full, complete and absolute information upon the point. We were sounded in the course of last week as to whether, if a guarantee were

given that, after the war, Belgian integrity would be preserved, that would content us. We replied that we could not bargain away whatever interests or obligations we had in Belgian neutrality. [Cheers.]

Shortly before I reached the House I was informed that the following telegram had been received from the King of the Belgians by our King—King George:

“Remembering the numerous proofs of your Majesty’s friendship and that of your predecessors, and the friendly attitude of England in 1870, and the proof of friendship she has just given us again, I make a supreme appeal to the diplomatic intervention of your Majesty’s Government to safeguard the integrity of Belgium.”

Diplomatic intervention took place last week on our part. What can diplomatic intervention do now? We have great and vital interests in the independence—and integrity is the least part—of Belgium. [Loud cheers.] If Belgium is compelled to submit to allow her neutrality to be violated, of course the situation is clear. Even if by agreement she admitted the violation of her neutrality, it is clear she could only do so under duress. The smaller States in that region of Europe ask but one thing. Their one desire is that they should be left alone and independent. The one thing they fear is, I think, not so much that their integrity but that their independence should be interfered with. If in this war, which is before Europe, the neutrality of those countries is violated, if the troops of one of the combatants violate its neutrality and no action be taken to resent it, at the end of war, whatever the integrity may be, the independence will be gone. [Cheers.]

No, Sir, if it be the case that there has been anything in the nature of an ultimatum to Belgium, asking her to compromise or violate her neutrality, whatever may have been offered to her in return, her independence is gone if that holds. If her independence goes, the independence of Holland will follow. I ask the House from the point of view of British interests to consider what may be at stake. If France is beaten in a struggle of life and death, beaten to her knees, loses her position as a great power, becomes subordinate to the will and power of one greater than herself, consequences which I do not anticipate, because I am sure that France has the power to defend herself with all the energy and ability and patriotism which she has shown so often [Loud cheers.]—still, if that were to happen and if Belgium fell under the same dominating influence, and then Holland, and then Denmark, then would not Mr. Gladstone’s words come true, that just opposite to us there would be a common interest against the unmeasured aggrandizement of any power? [Loud cheers.]

It may be said, I suppose, that we might stand aside, husband our strength, and that, whatever happened in the course of this war, at the end of it intervene with effect to put things right, and to adjust them to our own point of view. If, in a crisis like this, we run away [Loud cheers.] from those obligations of honor and interest as regards the Belgian treaty, I doubt whether, whatever material force we might have at the end, it would be of very much value in face of the respect that we should have lost. And I do not believe, whether a great power stands outside this war or not, it is going to be in a position at the end of it to exert its superior strength. For us, with a powerful fleet, which we believe able to protect our commerce, to protect our shores, and to protect our interests, if we are engaged in war, we shall suffer but little more than we shall suffer even if we stand aside.

We are going to suffer, I am afraid, terribly in this war, whether we are in it or whether we stand aside. Foreign trade is going to stop, not because the trade routes are closed, but because there is no trade at the other end. Continental nations engaged in war, all their populations, all their energies, all their wealth, engaged in a desperate struggle—they cannot carry on the trade with us that they are carrying on in times of peace, whether we are parties to the war or whether we are (2117) not. I do not believe for a moment that at the end of this war, even if we stood aside and remained aside, we should be in a position, a material position, to use our force decisively to undo what had happened in the course of the war, to prevent the whole of the west of Europe opposite to us—if that had been the result of the war—falling under the domination of a single power, and I am quite sure that our moral position would be such as—[the rest of the sentence—“to have lost us all respect.”—was lost in a loud outburst of cheering]. I can only say that I have put the question of Belgium somewhat hypothetically, because I am not yet sure of all the facts, but, if the facts turn out to be as they have reached us at present, it is quite clear that there is an obligation on this country to do its utmost to prevent the consequences to which those facts will lead if they are undisputed.

What other policy is there before the House? There is but one way in which the Government could make certain at the present moment of keeping outside this war, and that would be that it should immediately issue a proclamation of unconditional neutrality. We cannot do that [Cheers]; we have made the commitment to France that I have read to the House which prevents us doing that. We have got the consideration of Belgium which prevents us also from any unconditional neutrality, and, without these conditions absolutely satisfied and satisfactory, we are bound not to shrink from proceeding to the use of all the forces in our power. If we did take that line by saying, “We will have

nothing whatever to do with this matter” under no conditions—the Belgian treaty obligations, the possible position in the Mediterranean, with damage to British interests, and what may happen to France from our failure to support France—if we were to say that all those things matter nothing, were as nothing, and to say we would stand aside, we should, I believe, sacrifice our respect and good name and reputation before the world, and should not escape the most serious and grave economic consequences. [Cheers and a voice, “No.”] . . .

My object has been to explain the view of the government, and to place before the House the issue and the choice. I do not for a moment conceal, after what I have said, and after the information, incomplete as it is, that I have given to the House with regard to Belgium, that we must be prepared, and we are prepared, for the consequences of having to use all the strength we have at any moment—we know not how soon—to defend ourselves and to take our part. We know, if the facts all be as I have stated them, though I have announced no intending aggressive action on our part, no final decision to resort to force at a moment’s notice, until we know the whole of the case, that the use of it may be forced upon us. As far as the forces of the Crown are concerned, we are ready. I believe the Prime Minister [Herbert H. Asquith] and my right honorable friend, the First Lord of the Admiralty [Winston Churchill], have no doubt whatever that the readiness and the efficiency of those forces were never at a higher mark than they are to-day, and never was there a time when confidence was more justified in the power of the Navy to protect our commerce and to protect our shores. The thought is with us always of the suffering and misery entailed, from which no country in Europe will escape by abstention, and from which no neutrality will save us. The amount of harm that must be done by an enemy ship to our trade is infinitesimal, compared with the amount of harm that must be done by the economic condition that is caused on the Continent.

The most awful responsibility is resting upon the Government in deciding what to advise the House of Commons to do. We have disclosed our minds to the House of Commons. We have disclosed the issue, the information which we have, and made clear to the House, I trust, that we are prepared to face that situation, and that should it develop, as probably it may develop, we will face it. We worked for peace up to the last moment, and beyond the last moment. How hard, how persistently, and how earnestly we strove for peace last week the House will see from the papers that will be before it.

But that is over, as far as the peace of Europe is concerned. We are now face to face with a situation and all the consequences which it may yet have to unfold. We believe we shall have the support of the House at large in proceeding to whatever the consequences may be and whatever measures may be forced upon

us by the development of facts or action taken by others. I believe the country, so quickly has the situation been forced upon it, has not had time to realize the issue. It perhaps is still thinking of the quarrel between Austria and Serbia, and not the complications of this matter which have grown out of the quarrel (2118) between Austria and Serbia. Russia and Germany we know are at war. We do not yet know officially that Austria, the ally whom Germany is to support, is yet at war with Russia. We know that a good deal has been happening on the French frontier. We do not know that the German Ambassador has left Paris.

The situation has developed so rapidly that technically, as regards the condition of the war, it is most difficult to describe what has actually happened. I wanted to bring out the underlying issues which would affect our own conduct and our own policy, and to put them clearly. I have now put the vital facts before the House, and if, as seems not improbable, we are forced, and rapidly forced, to take our stand upon those issues, then I believe, when the country realizes what is at stake, what the real issues are, the magnitude of the impending dangers in the west of Europe, which I have endeavored to describe to the House, we shall be supported throughout, not only by the House of Commons, but by the determination, the resolution the courage, and the endurance of the whole country.

Source

Great Britain, *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, Fifth Series, Vol. LXV, 1914, pp. 1809–1827 (indicated comments in original).

Sir Edward Grey (1862–1933)

The well-connected Grey was born in Northumberland into an aristocratic Liberal family that over several generations had produced a prime minister and several other eminent politicians. He followed family tradition by winning election to the British Parliament in 1892. In 1895 the venerable Prime Minister William Ewart Gladstone appointed Grey minister of state, or second-in-command at the Foreign Office, a position he held until 1895. He became foreign secretary when the Liberals returned to power in 1905. Grey was a most active incumbent, realigning Britain with Russia and France and entering into obligations with France that he felt bound Britain in honor, though not necessarily legally, to come to France's defense in World War I. Grey's somewhat austere reputation as a man of principle perhaps concealed the fact that he believed such action was in Britain's own strategic interests.

A major European war was nonetheless deeply unwelcome to Grey, who had hoped that international mediation would end this crisis, as it had so many similar previous European imbroglios, and believed that a general war would destroy European civilization. As dusk fell on 3 August 1914, Grey famously prophesied: “The lamps are going out all over Europe; we shall not see them lit again in our life-time.” This remark may have poignantly reflected Grey’s personal difficulties; he suffered from deteriorating eyesight and eventually went blind. Grey subsequently became one of the Liberal government’s strongest supporters of the postwar creation of an international organization that would prevent future wars, a cause to which he became even more committed after he left office in late 1916. In an unsuccessful effort by the British government to persuade the United States, whose government was deadlocked on the issue, to enter the new institution, in 1919–1920 he briefly served as ambassador to that country. In retirement Grey wrote his memoirs, which deftly minimized his prewar commitment to the maintenance of a European balance of power favorable to Britain.

About The Document

Grey’s speech in the House of Commons was pivotal in winning parliamentary consent to British intervention in the war. It was delivered to a packed chamber on 3 August 1914, on the evening of the day on which Germany had announced its intention of violating Belgian neutrality, when Grey’s audience was in a volatile emotional state. For the previous ten days Grey himself had ridden an emotional roller coaster as the prospect of war repeatedly loomed larger and then apparently receded, and his speech was inevitably prepared in some haste under stressful conditions. Even though he sought to maintain the balance of power and British national interests, Grey refrained from arguing the strategic case for intervention, which his listeners might have found unappealing. Instead, bearing in mind his audience—many of whom, especially radicals from his own party and the small number of Labour members, despised arguments of national self-interest—he emphasized three points, all of them focusing on his country’s honor: that Britain had a moral though not a legal commitment to France; that Britain had a legal obligation to defend Belgian neutrality; and that if Britain failed to defend its obligations, it would face international shame, obloquy, and disgrace. He (2119) also stressed “[h]ow hard, how persistently, and how earnestly” the government had sought peace over the previous ten days. Grey shrewdly told his audience that the war would involve great sacrifices and suffering but that given the unpropitious international situation, these would necessarily be great in any case, and he appealed to them to support whatever measures the British government might

find it necessary to take to meet the German threat. A blunt and straightforward mixture of practicality and emotion, written in haste and delivered by a man widely respected for his integrity who, despite his commitment to realist policies, was known to regret deeply the resort to war, Grey's speech fulfilled its purpose—to win parliamentary endorsement for Britain's entry into a controversial conflict.

Further Reading

Charmley, John. *Splendid Isolation? Britain, the Balance of Power, and the Origins of the First World War*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1999.

Ferguson, Niall. *The Pity of War*. London: Allen Lane, 1998.

Grey of Fallodon, Viscount. *Twenty-Five Years, 1892–1916*. 2 vols. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1925.

Hinsley, F. H., ed. *British Foreign Policy under Sir Edward Grey*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977.

Howard, Michael. *The First World War*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Massie, Robert K. *Dreadnought: Britain, Germany, and the Coming of the Great War*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1992.

Miller, Steven E., Sean M. Lynn-Jones, and Stephen Van Evera. *Military Strategy and the Origins of World War I*. Rev. ed. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991.

Robbins, Keith. *Sir Edward Grey: A Biography of Lord Grey of Fallodon*. London: Cassell, 1971.

Steiner, Zara S., and Keith Neilson. *Britain and the Origins of the First World War*. 2nd ed. New York: Palgrave, 2003.

Williamson, Samuel R., Jr. *The Politics of Grand Strategy: Britain and France Prepare for War, 1904–1914*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969.

MLA

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "8. Great Britain Chooses War." *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*, ABC-CLIO, 2005, pp. . *ABC-CLIO eBook Collection*, legacy.abc-clio.com/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2044.

Chicago Manual of Style

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "8. Great Britain Chooses War." In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005. <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2044>.

APA

Roberts, P. M., S. C. Tucker (2005). 8. Great Britain Chooses War. In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia* (pp.). Retrieved from <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2044>

Essay 9. War as Romantic Fulfillment

War as Romantic Fulfillment?

When the war began, in Britain, France, Germany, and Austria alike a cohort of young men in their twenties volunteered for the armed forces in a spirit of relief and exultation. Historians have sometimes suggested that their enthusiasm for war represented the outlook of an entire generation of young European men, disenchanted with the limited opportunities that industrial, commercial, bourgeois society seemed to offer them and seeking to lose themselves in a great and all-consuming cause. In each of the belligerent countries such individuals undoubtedly existed, men drawn primarily from the middle- and upper-class elites for whom wartime military service provided a sense of purpose, meaning, and exhilaration they had found missing from Western peacetime life. In Vienna even the much older psychologist Sigmund Freud discovered in himself a temporary but intense reaction of exaltation over the outbreak of war.

Such men's joyous reaction to war won considerable publicity, attention, and acclaim at the time. In France, for example, in the two years before war began a substantial number of young literary intellectuals, who perceived themselves as a group, had consciously begun to reject what they perceived as decadence, seeking national regeneration and rejuvenation in patriotism, the Roman Catholic Church, country life, and strenuous physical exercise. Almost contemporaneously, in Germany a broadly similar youth movement sought to promote cultural renewal and recapture older German values they perceived as threatened by unification, industrialization, the growth of big cities, and the rise of socialism. They attempted to create a sense of community by turning to the countryside through such pursuits as hiking and camping and nostalgically tried to recapture the chivalrous virtues of a romanticized long-past era. In both France and Germany, the adherents of these movements consciously perceived themselves as a new and coherent generation, entrusted with the mission of national restoration of their own country. The majority of their young male supporters joined up immediately when the war began, and many were soon killed in action. Other young European intellectuals, many still in their teens in 1914, likewise found that the experience of war gave them a sense of personal freedom and fulfillment. Whether they were typical of their generation was another matter. The British letters and poems included here suggest that while a significant number of young men from the social elite undoubtedly regarded the war in this light, they were by no means typical of all or even most of those who went to war in August 1914.

(2120)

Rupert Brooke to John Drinkwater, 18–25 January 1915

It was ignoble of me not to answer. But one becomes ignoble at this game. Or, at least, brutish. The mind becomes, not unpleasantly, submerged. The days go by. I plough through mud: march: drill: eat and sleep: and do not question more. There was some affair at Antwerp, I remember. I have a recollection of a burning city, the din of cannonades, a shattered railway-station, my sailors bivouacking in the grounds of a deserted château, refugees coming out of the darkness. . . . But most of the time I was thinking of food, or marching straight, or what to say to the men, or, mostly, not thinking at all. It was rather exhilarating, and rather terrible. But I don't think one is very swift to sensations in these parts of life. Still, it's the only life for me, just now. The training is a bloody bore. But on service one has a great feeling of fellowship, and a fine thrill, like nothing else in the world. And I'd not be able to exist, for torment, if I weren't doing it. Not a bad place and time to die, Belgium, 1915? I want to kill my Prussian first. Better than coughing out a civilian soul amid bedclothes and disinfectant and gulping medicines in 1950. The world'll be tame enough after the war, for those that see it. I had hopes that England'd get on her legs again, achieve youth and merriment, and slough the things I loathe—capitalism and feminism and hermaphroditism and the rest. But on maturer consideration, pursued over muddy miles of Dorset, I think there'll not be much change. What there is for the better, though. Certain sleepers have awoken in the heart.

Come and die. It'll be great fun. And there's great health in the preparation.

Source

Geoffrey Keynes, ed., *The Letters of Rupert Brooke* (London: Faber and Faber, 1968), 654–655.

War Poems by Rupert Brooke**Peace**

Now, God be thanked Who has matched us with His hour,
And caught our youth, and wakened us from sleeping,
With hand made sure, clear eye, and sharpened power,

To turn, as swimmers into cleanness leaping,
 Glad from a world grown old and cold and weary,
 Leave the sick hearts that honour could not move,
 And half-men, and their dirty songs and dreary,
 And all the little emptiness of love!
 Oh! we, who have known shame, we have found release there,
 Where there's no ill, no grief, but sleep has mending,
 Naught broken save this body, lost but breath;
 Nothing to shake the laughing heart's long peace there
 But only agony, and that has ending;
 And the worst friend and enemy is but Death.

The Dead

Blow out, you bugles, over the rich Dead!
 There's none of these so lonely and poor of old,
 But, dying, has made us rarer gifts than gold.
 These laid the world away; poured out the red
 Sweet wine of youth; gave up the years to be
 Of work and joy, and that unhopèd serene,
 That men call age; and those who would have been,
 Their sons, they gave, their immortality.
 Blow, bugles, blow! They brought us, for our dearth,
 Holiness, lacked so long, and Love, and Pain.
 Honour has come back, as a king, to earth,

And paid his subjects with a royal wage;
And nobleness walks in our ways again;
And we have come into our heritage.

The Soldier

If I should die, think only this of me:
That there's some corner of a foreign field
That is for ever England. There shall be
In that rich earth a richer dust concealed;
A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,
Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam,
A body of England's, breathing English air,
Washed by the rivers, blest by suns of home.

(2121)

And think, this heart, all evil shed away,
A pulse in the eternal mind, no less
Gives somewhere back the thoughts by England given;
Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day;
And laughter, learnt of friends; and gentleness,
In hearts at peace, under an English heaven.

Source

Rupert Brooke, *The Collected Poems* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1943), 101–105.

Julian Grenfell on World War I

Grenfell to His Mother, 27 October 1914

We've been in the trenches for two days and nights since I started this. . . . I've got my half troop, 12 men, in a trench in a root field with the rest of the squadron about 100 yards each side of us and a farm half knocked down by shells just behind. We get our rations sent up once a day in the dark and two men creep out to cook us tea in the quiet intervals. Tea is the great mainstay on service, as it was on manoeuvres and treks. The men are *splendid* and as happy as schoolboys. We've got plenty of straw in the bottom of the trench, which is better than any feather-bed. We only had one bad night, when it pelted with rain for 6 hrs. It's not *very* cold yet, and we've had 2 or 3 fine days. . . .

Our first day's real close-up fighting was Monday 19th. We cavalry went on about a day and a half in front of the infantry. We got into a village and our advance patrols started fighting hard, with a certain amount of fire from everywhere in front of us. Our advanced patrols gained the first groups of houses, and we joined them. Firing came from a farm in front of us, and then a man came out and waved a white flag. I yelled '200—white flag—rapid fire'; but Hardwick stopped me shooting. Then the squadron advanced across the root fields towards the farm (dismounted, in open order) and they opened a sharp fire on us from the farm and the next fields. We took three prisoners in the roots, and retired to the houses again. That was our first experience of them—the white flag dodge. We lost 2 men and 1 wounded.

Then I got leave to make a dash across a field for another farm, where they were sniping at us. I could only get half way, my sergeant was killed, and my corporal hit. We lay down; luckily it was high roots and we were out of sight. But they had fairly got our range and the bullets kept knocking the dirt into one's face and all around. We just lay doggo for about ½ hour, and then the firing slackened, and we crawled back to the houses and the rest of the squadron.

I was pleased with my troop under bad fire. They used the most filthy language, talking quite quietly and laughing all the time, even after men were knocked over within a yard of them. I longed to be able to say that I liked it, after all one has heard of being under fire for the first time. But it's bloody. I pretended to myself for a bit that I liked it; but it was no good; it only made one careless and

unwatchful and self-absorbed. But when one acknowledged to oneself that it was bloody, one became all right again, and cool.

After the firing had slackened we advanced again a bit into the next group of houses which were the edge of the village proper. I can't tell you how *muddling* it is. We did not know which was our front: we did not know whether our own troops had come round us on the flanks or whether they had stopped behind and were firing into us. And besides, a lot of German snipers were left in the houses we had come through, and every now and then bullets came singing by from God knows where. Four of us were talking and laughing in the road when about a dozen bullets came with a whistle. We all dived for the nearest door, which happened to be a lav[atory], and fell over each other, *yelling* with laughter. . . .

I *adore* war. It is like a big picnic without the objectlessness of a picnic. I've never been so well or so happy. No one grumbles at one for being dirty. I've only had my boots off once in the last ten days, and only washed twice. We are up and standing to our rifles by 5 a.m. when doing this infantry work, and saddled up by 4.30 a.m. when with our horses. Our poor horses don't get their saddles off when we are in the trenches.

The wretched inhabitants here have got practically no food left. It is miserable to see them leaving their houses and trekking away with great bundles and children in their hands. And the dogs and cats left in the deserted villages are piteous.

Grenfell to His Mother, 18 November 1914

We've been doing all shelled trench work lately and it's horrible; you just lie there, hunched up, and all day (2122) long the shells burst—just outside the trench if you're lucky and just inside if you're unlucky. Anyhow the noise is appalling and one's head is rocking with it by the end of the day. About the shells; after a day of them, one's nerves are really absolutely beaten down. I can understand now why our infantry have to retreat sometimes; a sight which came as a shock to one at first, after being brought up in the belief that the English infantry cannot retreat. . . .

We had been awfully worried by their snipers all along; and I had always been asking for leave to go out and have a try myself. Well on Tuesday 16th, day before yesterday, they gave me leave. Only after great difficulty. They told me to take a section with me, and I said I would sooner cut my throat and have done with it. So they let me go alone. Off I crawled, through the sodden clay and branches, going about a yard a minute and listening and looking as I

thought it was not possible to look and listen. I went out to the right of our lines, where the 10th were and where the Germans were nearest. I took about 30 minutes to do 30 yards. Then I saw the Hun trench, and I waited for a long time, but could see or hear nothing. It was about 10 yards from me. Then I heard some Germans talking, and saw one put his head up over some bushes over 10 yards behind the trench. I could not get a shot at him; I was too low down; and of course I couldn't get up. So I crawled on again very slowly to the parapet of their trench. It was very exciting. I was not *sure* that there might not have been someone there—or a little further along the trench. I peered through their loophole, and saw nobody in the trench. Then the German behind put his head up again. He was laughing and talking. I saw his teeth glisten against my foresight, and I pulled the trigger very steady. He just gave a grunt and crumpled up. The others got up and whispered to each other. I don't know which were most frightened, they or me. I think there were 4 or 5 of them. They couldn't place the shot. I was flat behind their parapet and hidden. I just had the nerve not to move a muscle and stay there. My heart was fairly hammering. They did not come forward, and I could not see them, as they were behind some bushes and trees. So I crept back, inch by inch.

I went out again in the afternoon, in front of our bit of the line. About 60 yards off I found their trench again. I waited there for an hour, but saw nobody. Then I went back, because I did not want to get inside some of their patrols who might have been placed forward. I reported the trench empty.

The next day, just before dawn, I crawled out there again, and found it empty again. Then a single German came through the woods towards the trench. I saw him fifty yards off. He was coming along upright and careless, making a great noise. I heard him before I saw him. I let him get within 25 yards and then shot him in the heart. He never made a sound. Nothing for 10 minutes; then there was noise and talking and a lot of them came along through the wood behind the trench about 40 yards from me. I counted about 20, and there were more coming. They halted in front, and I picked out the one I thought was the officer or sergeant. He stood facing the other way, and I had a steady shot at him behind the shoulders. He went down, and that was all I saw—I went back at a sort of galloping crawl to our lines and sent a message to the 10th that the Germans were moving up their way in some numbers. Half an hour later they attacked the 10th and our right in massed formation, advancing slowly to within 10 yards of the trenches. We simply mowed them down; it was rather horrible. I was too far to the left. They did not attack our part of the line, but the 10th told me in the evening that they counted 200 dead in a little bit of the line, and the 10th and us only lost ten.

They have made quite a ridiculous fuss about me stalking, and getting the message through. I believe they are going to send me up to our General, and all sorts. It was only up to someone to do it, instead of leaving it all to the Germans, and losing two officers a day through snipers. All our men have started it now, it's the popular amusement.

In late April 1915 Grenfell wrote the poem Into Battle, which effectively served as his epitaph.

The naked earth is warm with spring,
 And with green grass and bursting trees
 Leans to the sun's kiss glorying,
 And quivers in the loving breeze;
 And Life is Colour and Warmth and Light
 And a striving evermore for these;
 And he is dead who will not fight;
 And who dies fighting has increase.

(2123)

The fighting man shall from the sun
 Take warmth, and life from the glowing earth;
 Speed with the light-foot winds to run,
 And with the trees a newer birth;
 And when his fighting shall be done,
 Great rest, and fulness after dearth.
 All the bright company of Heaven
 Hold him in their high comradeship—

The Dog-star and the Sisters Seven,
Orion's belt and sworded hip.
The woodland trees that stand together,
They stand to him each one a friend;
They gently speak in the windy weather,
They guide to valley and ridge's end.
The kestrel hovering by day,
And the little owls that call by night,
Bid him be swift and keen as they—
As keen of sound, as swift of sight.
The blackbird sings to him 'Brother, brother,
If this be the last song you sing,
Sing well, for you will not sing another;
Brother, sing!'
In dreary doubtful waiting hours,
Before the brazen frenzy starts,
The horses show him nobler powers;
O patient eyes, courageous hearts!
And when the burning moment breaks,
And all things else are out of mind,
And Joy of Battle only takes
Him by the throat, and makes him blind—

Through joy and blindness he shall know,
 Not caring much to know, that still
 Not lead nor steel shall reach him so
 That it be not the Destined Will.
 The thundering line of battle stands,
 And in the air Death moans and sings;
 And Day shall clasp him with strong hands,
 And Night shall fold him in soft wings.

Source

Nicholas Mosley, *Julian Grenfell: His Life and the Times of His Death, 1888–1915* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1976), 238–243, 256–257.

Patrick Shaw Stewart on War, Gallipoli, 1915

I saw a man this morning
 Who did not wish to die;
 I ask, and cannot answer
 If otherwise wish I.
 Fair broke the day this morning
 Against the Dardanelles;
 The breeze blew soft, the morn's cheeks
 Were cold as cold sea-shells
 But other shells are waiting
 Across the Aegean sea,

Shrapnel and high explosive,

Shells and hells for me.

Oh hell of ships and cities,

Hell of men like me;

Fatal second Helen,

Must I follow thee?

Achilles came to Troyland

And I to Chersonese;

He turned from wrath to battle

And I from three days' peace.

Was it so hard, Achilles?

So very hard to die?

Thou knowest and I know not—

So much the happier I.

I will go back this morning

From Imbros over the sea;

Stand in the trench, Achilles,

Flame-capped, and shout for me.

Source

Balliol College, University of Oxford,

<http://web.balliol.ox.ac.uk/history/miscellany/shawstewart/index.asp>.

(2124)

Rupert Brooke (1887–1915), Julian Grenfell (1888–1915), and Patrick Shaw-Stewart (1888–1917)

Dissatisfaction with the options that peacetime life appeared to offer seems to have been particularly prevalent among young men in their twenties, whose university education was behind them and who now faced the prospect of deciding on some kind of career. This was certainly true of Rupert Brooke, who became by far the most popular contemporary British poet of World War I, his five sonnets on the conflict massively outselling any other war poetry. Brooke, once described by the Irish poet W. B. Yeats as “the handsomest young man in England,” was the son of a master at Rugby School and had been educated at King’s College, Cambridge, which awarded him a fellowship after he received his degree. A small private income gave him the freedom to follow his own inclinations, but he found considerable difficulty in settling on any career. He was generally considered to belong to the group of young British poets known as the Georgians, and his early writings were well received, although not enthusiastically. Brooke, already widely considered one of the leaders of his generation, spread the gospel of invigorating country living, exercise, healthful food, and the rejection of book learning and intellectualism. His friend Frances Darwin (Cornford) poetically, albeit half-jokingly, described him as “a young Apollo, golden-haired,” one who was “magnificently unprepared for the long littleness of life.” After Cambridge, he traveled extensively in North America and the South Seas and clearly found a peripatetic, unsettled life deeply attractive in many ways, even though he also contemplated marrying and having a family. Various unhappy love affairs left him disenchanted with femininity, and he also developed grave reservations regarding Fabian socialism, then extremely popular among young intellectuals.

Initially, the outbreak of war sent Brooke into a state of speechless depression as he contemplated the prospect that the conflict would destroy everything he considered to be civilized life. Soon, however, he decided that “it’ll probably be the people who hold out longest who win. So the best one can do is to try to keep things going levelly and sensibly.” At first, Brooke considered becoming a war correspondent but quickly chose to enlist, pulling strings to enable him to join the Royal Naval Volunteer Division in September 1914. The next month he saw active service in Belgium, where his division took part for one day in the futile effort to save Antwerp from capture by German forces. The experience helped to give him a passionate enthusiasm for the war, which now furnished him with the sense of purpose he had previously lacked. In February

1915 his division was sent to the Dardanelles to form part of the Anglo-French expeditionary force that landed at Gallipoli and unsuccessfully attempted to take the Dardanelles from Ottoman Turkey. Brooke, however, never reached Turkey. He died on the journey after an infected mosquito bite developed into septicemia, and he was buried on the Greek island of Skyros. His five sonnets on World War I had been published after he left England. Catching the British imagination, they made him into an instant national celebrity, encapsulating as they did the high heroic view of the war, their appeal only heightened by Brooke's tragic death. For the rather self-conscious and dissatisfied Brooke, the experience of war service filled a perceived emptiness and futility in his life, to which a heroic death seemed an attractive alternative. He exemplified those in each warring country for whom, at least initially, war seemed an uplifting and noble undertaking, furnishing something missing in everyday life.

Much the same was true of the strikingly handsome young British aristocrat Julian Grenfell (1896–1915). Unlike Brooke, however, Grenfell was a professional soldier when the war began, an officer in the Royal Dragoons and a man for whom war was therefore his ultimate *raison d'être*. Son of the notable sportsman Willy Grenfell, later Lord Desborough, and his wife Henrietta (Ettie), one of the era's most prominent hostesses and a key figure in the group of elite Edwardian political families known as "The Souls," Grenfell was an intelligent man and excellent athlete who nonetheless found it enormously difficult to meet his mother's vague but demanding expectations that he make something outstanding and distinguished of his life. Throughout school and university, illness and depression had dogged him at both Eton and Balliol College, Oxford, where his academic record had been disappointing.

Although he joined the army in 1910 primarily at his family's behest and later showed some interest in a political career, war seems to have been a release for (2125) Grenfell. He sailed with his regiment from South Africa to France, where they took part in trench fighting during the First Battle of Ypres. Grenfell won the Distinguished Service Order in late 1914 for a recklessly brave individual feat of heroism. Afterward, he noted the number of assorted German soldiers he had killed in the game book where he normally recorded the animals he had shot for sport. Grenfell clearly found the experience of war exhilarating; it also enabled him to please his well-connected mother, who basked in her son's accomplishments. She sent some of his letters exulting in the conflict to the London *Times*, which published several of them anonymously, even writing an editorial on one in which he enthused: "Isn't it luck for me to have been born so as to be just the right age and just in the right place?" On 13 May 1915 a shell splinter wounded Grenfell in the head; he

initially appeared likely to survive brain surgery but died on 26 May. His younger brother Billy died in action on 30 July. Memorialized by their proud though grieving mother, the two became symbols of the losses the war inflicted on the British upper classes.

For both Brooke and Grenfell, their involvement in World War I seems to have settled unresolved tensions in their prewar lives. This was far less true of their exact contemporary Patrick Shaw-Stewart, who commanded the firing party at Brooke's funeral and was a close Eton and Oxford friend of Grenfell, with whose mother he conducted a lengthy, possibly platonic love affair. Shaw-Stewart, who came from a modest but well-connected Scottish military family, exemplified the young Scotsman on the make. A brilliant scholar, he swept all the available academic honors at both Eton and Balliol College while using charm, talent, and hard work to ingratiate himself—despite what was apparently his real physical ugliness—with relatives and friends whose patronage might assist his career. In 1910 he joined Barings Bank, where he became managing director in 1913. Barings's only reservation regarding him was that he devoted so much effort to his social life, staying up almost every night until three or four in the morning attending parties. He was a close friend of Lady Diana Manners (later Cooper) and the group around her known as the "Coterie," most of whom were the children of the earlier generation's "Souls."

Shaw-Stewart, a man whose life already had sufficient goals and purposes, felt little urge to die in combat and enlisted in the Royal Naval Volunteer Division in September 1914 primarily because this was what all single young men of his background were almost automatically expected to do. His attitude toward war was apparently ambivalent. Although he showed considerable courage when fighting, much of his work at Gallipoli was liaison duties with the French, which he continued to undertake throughout 1916 in Salonika, Greece. Returning in early 1917 to a relatively safe staff position on the Western Front, Shaw-Stewart lobbied to return to the Hood Battalion in France, which he did in May that year. He died in action on 30 December 1917. Reflecting on the losses their firm had suffered, one of the Barings partners ruminated sadly that it "seem[ed] a senseless waste that such abilities as his should be lost to his country in a service which hundreds of thousands of other and ordinary mortals could probably have performed as well. But he would have scorned to have had it otherwise and to have taken the safe job at home which he might have had for the asking. It is hard to say whether he would have ever trained on to become a first rate man of business, but in the times of reconstruction that are before us when the war is over the best abilities of every kind will be wanted, and in

some capacity or another he would have been certain to have found his place and would have been at the top.”

Shaw-Stewart did not share the near intoxication with the idea of death demonstrated by his more famous contemporaries, Rupert Brooke and Julian Grenfell. In the intervals of fighting at Gallipoli in 1915, near the site of the epic war between Greece and Troy that the conventional classical education of the British upper classes had made deeply familiar to him, Shaw-Stewart wrote a haunting poem full of references to the long-dead heroes of *The Iliad*. The only such literary effort of his that has stood up to the test of posterity, it expressed his hope that rather than emulating the great Greek warrior Achilles by dying in battle, he would manage to survive the war. Shaw-Stewart’s attitude toward war was, moreover, by no means unique among his contemporaries. The slightly older Raymond Asquith (1878–1916), academically brilliant and much admired son of Herbert H. Asquith, British prime minister when the war began, like Brooke experienced some difficulty in settling on a career that would satisfy him and largely eschewed the political (2126) world that would undoubtedly have been open to one who combined family connections and genuine ability. Happily married with several young children, Asquith enlisted primarily as a matter of duty to his country, and maybe too because of the potential political consequences for his father if he failed to do so. An efficient and courageous officer who died in the final stages of the Somme offensive in mid-September 1916, he nonetheless apparently found little exhilaration or fulfillment in war; it was something to be endured but not a matter for exultation. It is possible and perhaps even likely that the matter-of-fact attitude demonstrated by Asquith and Shaw-Stewart was just as typical, if not more so, of those slightly older British men—and, perhaps, their counterparts in other European countries—from the social elite who joined up in 1914 as was the rather overheated glorification of war demonstrated by Brooke and Grenfell.

About The Documents

The letters and poems included here were all written early in the war, before its first year was over. It has been suggested that had Brooke lived longer, he would have emulated other poets such as Siegfried Sassoon, whose early enthusiasm for war soon turned to disillusionment and satire. Forty years later Brooke’s friend Geoffrey Keynes, who edited his letters, claimed that his “youthful idealis[m], . . . combined with the utter ignorance . . . of what war really meant, tricked him into accepting it with the lyrical enthusiasm of the War Sonnets. . . . It was the mood of the moment and it would have turned into disillusionment and revulsion had he lived.”

More than almost any other conflict, at least in Britain, World War I generated haunting poetry that caught the general imagination and became part of the broader canon of writing on the war. Brooke's five *1914* sonnets, written in late 1914, appeared in early 1915, seven or eight months after the beginning of the war, and were quickly taken up and publicized by officials in the British government. His death, if not quite in action at least during war service, yet appropriately enough on St. George's Day in April 1915, made it possible for such admirers as First Lord of the Admiralty Winston Churchill to eulogize him as a fallen hero whose ultimate legacy for Great Britain was his small number of war sonnets, depicting the war in high-flown literary terms as a noble undertaking that could provide a focal point for a once-divided nation. Beautifully and elegantly written, though somewhat overblown to later tastes, they elicited enthusiastic admiration from such young people as Vera Brittain and the four young men in her life, who cited them repeatedly during the war without any sense of incongruity. Although more unromantic poets, such as Charles Sorley, found the sonnets less attractive, they appealed to Allied sympathizers throughout the British Dominions and in the United States. Throughout the war and beyond, copies of Brooke's poems that included the *Sonnets* sold by the hundreds of thousands, winning him short-term fame but compromising his subsequent literary reputation. Brooke himself may well have regarded these as his testament and undoubtedly employed all his considerable technical skills and knowledge of British poetry of the past to craft sonnets—themselves a traditional British poetic form—that would resonate in the popular imagination if the possibility that he might die during the war became reality. He may even have been conscious that he was producing them at precisely the right psychological moment, when the British government and public were seeking an unofficial poet laureate whose words would embody the heroic view of the war.

The poems by Grenfell and Shaw-Stewart were more impromptu efforts. Interestingly, each man wrote only one poem that future generations have considered sufficiently outstanding to remember and admit to the accepted canon. Each of these poems was provoked by particular circumstances: Grenfell's by the anticipation of "going over the top," an endeavor in which he did ultimately die, and Shaw-Stewart's during an interval of leave from the trench fighting at Gallipoli. Grenfell's poem accepts the possibility of death as being in the hands of fate and makes much of the natural beauties of the English countryside, while that of the academic high-flyer Shaw-Stewart evokes the legends of Troy, when the Greeks besieged Troy to regain "fatal" Helen, the adulterous wife of King Menelaus of Sparta. Grenfell wrote his poem in April 1915 and sent it to his mother, stating "I rather like it" and

telling her that if she wished she might try to arrange for its publication. Each poetic work is fundamentally an entirely personal and individual statement of what war at that particular time meant to the author, a major reason each poem has survived. In the entire (2127) range of British wartime poetry, there is nothing else quite like either of these.

Brooke and Grenfell also wrote letters setting forth their own reactions to war. Brooke, who was still in military training, was writing to a fellow poet and playwright, John Drinkwater, describing the one day he spent in besieged Antwerp during his earlier service in Belgium and his current occupation. At least in part, he was probably writing to impress; Brooke's earlier letters show someone who liked to strike attitudes. His letter nonetheless conveys the sense of a man who, however boring the training and drilling, had found peace in military life, even though combat had until then been notably absent. Grenfell, by contrast, was describing actual fighting service to his mother, a woman whose approval and admiration he had always—though often unavailingly—sought to win. The cynical might suggest that the two were finally locked in a mutually codependent relationship where he told her—with, of course, appropriate modesty—of his exploits against the Germans, and she approved and, when she felt it appropriate, speedily passed edited versions of his letters on to her influential friends among the British press. At this stage of the war, the publication of such letters not only reflected—if only among a small, select circle—on the reputation of the mother of those writing them, it was also perceived as boosting British morale. Even so, one should perhaps give Grenfell the benefit of the doubt and suggest that he wrote to his often critical mother not as part of a deliberate publicity campaign but simply to give her some sense of his own wartime experiences. He comes across as a straightforward man who, at least most of the time, clearly enjoyed the fighting but was not too proud to admit to episodes of fear or discomfort. The use to which she and such newspapers as *The Times* subsequently put Grenfell's letters was her responsibility rather than that of the happy warrior he had become. It is worth noting, however, that although she kept all his letters to her from childhood onward, even those that were uncomplimentary, when Ettie Desborough compiled a family journal in memory of her two dead sons, on occasion she added sentences to Julian's letters as a young boy to her providing memories of herself that she thought should have been there, and she made minor modifications to the poem "Into Battle." The image of their dead that grieving relatives chose to remember was itself often carefully crafted, designed at least as much to comfort the living as it was to revitalize any real likeness of the dead.

Further Reading

Bond, Brian. *The Unquiet Western Front: Britain's Role in Literature and History*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Eksteins, Modris. *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age*. London: Bantam, 1989.

Fussell, Paul. *The Great War and Modern Memory*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1975.

Girouard, Mark. *The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981.

Hassall, Christopher. *Rupert Brooke: A Biography*. London: Faber, 1972.

Hynes, Samuel. *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture*. London: Bodley Head, 1990.

Jolliffe, John. *Raymond Asquith: Life and Letters*. London: Collins, 1980.

MacKenzie, Jeanne. *The Children of the Souls: A Tragedy of the First World War*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1986.

Mosley, Nicholas. *Julian Grenfell: His Life and the Times of His Death, 1888–1915*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1976.

Rutherford, Jonathan. *Forever England: Reflections on Race, Masculinity and Empire*. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1997.

MLA

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "9. War as Romantic Fulfillment." *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*, ABC-CLIO, 2005, pp. . *ABC-CLIO eBook Collection*, legacy.abc-clio.com/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2049.

Chicago Manual of Style

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "9. War as Romantic Fulfillment." In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005. <http://legacy.abc-clio.com/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2049>.

clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2049.

APA

Roberts, P. M., S. C. Tucker (2005). 9. War as Romantic Fulfillment. In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia* (pp.). Retrieved from <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2049>

Essay 10. The British “Lost Generation”: Vera Brittain

The British “Lost Generation” of World War I

Within a decade after World War I, it became almost a truism that the best and the brightest of the young men of the British upper and professional classes enlisted as officers and died in the trenches of Flanders during the conflict. Some subsequent historians have sought to question this myth. The historian Niall Ferguson went so far as to suggest that aristocratic and upper-middle-class youths were well employed as wartime officers and that in terms of long-term economic damage inflicted upon the country, the heavy casualties suffered by the skilled British working class were far more significant. Nonetheless, since until (2128) 1916 the British military recruiting system relied on voluntary enlistments, young public school men from the higher professional classes and the aristocracy joined the forces in disproportionate numbers during the war's early years, and the casualties these social groups suffered were also considerably in excess of the general population. Some historians have even gone so far as to blame the absence of outstanding British political leadership between the wars and even into the 1950s on the fact that the best of what would have become the country's governing elite was killed during the First World War.

A significant factor propelling young British men or public (that is, private) schoolboys, often still only in their late teens or very early twenties, into the armed forces was a romanticization and idealization of war that became pervasive throughout the Western world around the turn of the century. As societies became increasingly industrialized, the experience of full-scale war became only an increasingly distant memory. The most recent great European war had ended in 1815, with the defeat of the Emperor Napoleon, and the last major conflicts involving substantial armies, as opposed to relatively small-scale colonial actions, were the Crimean War of the 1850s and the American Civil War of the 1860s. Such wars as Europe saw during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were relatively brief. As international tensions spiraled around the turn of the century, and perhaps, too, in reaction to the prosaic realities of bourgeois commercialism that were coming to dominate most Western nations, a cult of chivalry and heroic warfare spread through the upper levels of society and among intellectuals. Late Victorian pre-Raphaelite British artists and authors—among them Dante Gabriel Rossetti, William Morris, and the poet laureate Alfred, Lord Tennyson—purveyed an extremely popular version of the past depicting medieval knights and the court of King Arthur as the epitome of selfless, courtly, chivalric warriors. At British public

schools such as Rugby, Harrow, and Uppingham, the latter of which Vera Brittain's brother and fiancé and their best friend attended, pupils were encouraged to join the Officer Training Corps and acquire at least some rudimentary military skills. The same was true in other countries, perhaps more so in France and Germany where elites believed that war with the other might well occur in the near future.

In a Social Darwinist age when political philosophers and popular pundits argued that only the hardiest and fittest nations would triumph in international competition, many public figures argued that national service and military training were required to combat the increasingly sedentary lifestyle of modern youth and also to promote ideals of good citizenship and patriotic duty to one's country. In the early twentieth century, U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt, whose own political career profited enormously from his combat service in the brief Spanish-American War of 1898, proclaimed the desirability of what he termed "the strenuous life" of physical hardship and his belief that war might well promote the health of the state, inculcating characteristics of national unity and individual and collective hardihood that the demands of contemporary life might otherwise discourage. French and German military and intellectual leaders sounded similar themes, promoting military training in the schools as a means of national rejuvenation and regeneration.

When war began in August 1914, well-educated British, French, and German young men in their late teens and early twenties all flocked to enlist in their respective countries' armed forces. Although in both absolute terms and as a proportion of the population British casualties were lower than for either France or Germany, the British upper classes were hit particularly hard. Five of every nine of those British middle- and upper-class men who volunteered were killed, wounded, or missing in action during the war. The elite Oxford University college of Christ Church numbered among its dead the equivalent of three years' intake of young men, and overall deaths among Oxford and Cambridge graduates were 50 percent higher than the average for the British armed forces. On the whole, the younger the junior officer and the more privileged his education, the greater his chances of being killed. Often extremely articulate, many left caches of letters, diaries, and poems, and their grieving families had the literary skills and financial means to memorialize those fallen soldiers. Of the 700,000 British dead in World War I, a mere 37,452 were officers, yet such circumstances meant that these became by far the best (2129) remembered, a golden "lost generation" whose promise had never been fulfilled.

Vera Brittain, Diary Entries

Monday, 3 August 1914

To-day has been far too exciting to enable me to feel at all like sleep—in fact it is one of the most thrilling I have ever lived through, though without doubt there are many more to come. That which has been so long anticipated by some & scoffed at by others has come to pass at last—Armageddon in Europe! On Saturday evening Germany declared war upon Russia & also started advancing towards the French frontier. . . . The great fear now is that our bungling Government will declare England's neutrality. If we at this critical juncture were to refuse to help our friend France, we should be guilty of the grossest treachery & sacrifice our credit for ever. Besides we should gain nothing, for if we were to stand aside & let France be wiped out, a terrible retribution would fall upon us from a strengthened & victorious Germany.

Tuesday, 4 August 1914

Late as it is & almost too excited to write as I am, I must make some effort to chronicle the stupendous events of this remarkable day. The situation is absolutely unparalleled in the history of the world. Never before has the war strength of each individual nation been of such great extent, even though all the nations of Europe, the dominant continent, have been armed before. It is estimated that when the war begins *14 millions* of men will be engaged in the conflict. Attack is possible by earth, water & air, & the destruction attainable by the modern war machines used by the armies is unthinkable & past imagination. . . .

I could not rest indoors so got Mother & Daddy to come out with me to look for further news. In the town the groups of people had increased, and suppressed excitement was everywhere in the air. . . . We next went to the station & found there that a last edition of the *Chronicle* had been issued but all the copies were sold. However Smith the foreman, who told us his son had gone to the front, gave us his copy. It contained the thrilling news that Germany has formally declared war on Belgium! This looks like an answer to our ultimatum, & will perhaps free us from the necessity of waiting until midnight for our answer. Stupendous events come so thick & fast after one another that it is impossible to realise to any extent their full import. One feels as if one were dreaming, or reading a chapter out of one of H. G. Wells' books like *The War of the Worlds*. To me, who have never known the meaning of war, as I can scarcely remember the South African even, it is incredible to think that there *can* be fighting off the coast of Yorkshire. . . .

To sum up the situation in any way is impossible, every hour brings fresh & momentous events & one must stand still & await catastrophes each even more terrible than the last. All the nations of this continent are ready with their swords drawn, & Germany the aggressor with her weaker ally Austria stands alone facing an armed Europe united against her. She has broken treaty after treaty & disregarded every honourable tie with other nations. Italy, her old ally, has reaffirmed her neutrality, & thus assists our side by remaining out of the conflict. This conflict is a mortal struggle between herself & France; life to the one will mean death to the other. Indeed this war is a matter of life & death to us, & Daddy says the key to the whole situation is the British navy & that as that stands or falls the fate of Europe will be decided.

Friday, 7 August 1914

[D]uring [breakfast] Daddy worked himself into a thorough temper, raved away at us, & said he would not allow Edward [Brittain's brother, and his only son] to go abroad whatever happened—"Whatever you do, don't volunteer until you're *quite* sure there's no danger," sort of thing. Edward replied quite calmly that no one could prevent him serving his country in any way he wanted to. . . .

. . . E. said that Daddy, not being a public school man or having had any training, could not possibly understand the impossibility of remaining in inglorious safety while others, scarcely older than he, were offering their all. E. is of course rather young to volunteer really, being only eighteen. [His schoolfriend and fellow would-be volunteer] Maurice was nineteen to-day. E. faces the prospect of whatever he may have to do with perfect tranquility, & says that even death can only come once. We spoke of the entire absence of future prospects which war seems to produce; E. said (2130) that but for this he would have been eagerly speculating about Oxford, but now he scarcely thought of it at all. Intellect, except in very high places, seems scarcely to count at all in time of war—the ordinary average soldier fights just as well for his ignorance as any cultured man for his knowledge. And then the value of human life becomes so cheap, so that while the loss of ten men under tragic circumstances amid ordinary conditions would fill the whole country with horror, the news of the loss of thousands is now regarded with a philosophical calm and an unmoved countenance. My beloved brother! What will become of him? But as I told him this evening, dreary as life is without his presence here, dreary as are the prospects of what may lie before him, yet I would not have his decision back, or keep him here.

Wednesday, 2 September 1914

After dinner we all discussed again Daddy's refusal to let Edward go into the Army, & the unmanliness of it, especially after we read in *The Times* of a mother who said to her hesitating son "My boy I don't want you to go, but if I were you I should!" We saw Mrs Ellinger later & she seems very strongly to disapprove of Daddy. Not that other people's opinions matter to us, only they represent prestige & it is hard luck on Edward to be misjudged for what is not his fault. Mrs Ellinger however contradicts every rumour she hears unfavourable to Edward. Daddy does not care about E.'s honour or courage or so long as he is safe. It is left to Edward & I to live up to our name of "Brittain."

Thursday, 3 September 1914

With this account of British losses [in France], & the call for 500,000 men to arms, any British subjects possibly available, should be. E. is feeling depressed & miserable because Daddy withholds him from doing his duty but being only 18 can do nothing without Daddy's consent. . . . Edward after dinner definitely asked again if he might go & they had a conversation about it. Daddy was distinctly hostile, saying that if Edward went it would be the death of him, that he thought E. very unkind after the education he had etc. etc. Both Mother and I however talked it over & tried to make him see it from the point of view of honour. At present he is still on the refusal side, but has promised to consult Dr Hannah about Edward's health & general physical stamina.

So there is after all a chance of his going. I will not say anything but that I am glad, but I cannot pretend not to be sorry. Oxford will not be the same if he is not there. It is strange how the very fact of going to Oxford, which I thought so hard a thing to be able to do, so full of just the kind of happiness—that of work & companionship—which I most love, instead of preserving the glory that I saw in the vision of it, is transformed by the same grey despondent mist that alters everything now. "Despondent" is not quite the word, for we are too proud to be really that. So it seems that "that sad word, Joy" must be banished from our vocabularies, & that if it is ever reinstated it will be sadder than ever because of the toll of lives that will have been paid for it. This is no longer a time to see how much enjoyment one can get out of life, but to see how much courage & strength one can give to it. Not self-satisfaction, but self-sacrifice, is the order of the day. And I am determined to give up the now futile attempt to see what happiness I can get for myself out of Oxford, & instead to see what *use* I can be both to it & the world in general—by acting directly on behalf of war claims when I can do so, & when I cannot, by helping in the more indirect

way of advising the perplexed & comforting the distressed. There are only two things possible now—to act when that can be done—& to endure—to endure grief & disappointment with patience & courage, & with a brave cheerfulness which will make other people's burdens seem more bearable to them. . . .

Friday, 4 September 1914

The morning opened in gloom, owing to Daddy's unconquerable aversion to Edward's doing anything for his country. He would scarcely speak, but he did inform Mother that he would put no more opposition in the way of Edward's departure, only we were going in direct opposition to his wishes. . . .

Friday, 11 September 1914

Edward went off this morning to Oxford to appear before the O.T.C. [Officer Training Corps] nomination committee. He left himself the slightest possible margin of time for catching his train, & ran off roaring with laughter at Mother's anxiety on his behalf. We have said "He must depart" & he has departed, leaving home laughing, with a delighted sense that he is not to be one of those men who will be branded for life (2131) because they have not taken part in the greatest struggle of modern times.

Vera Brittain Letters

Vera Brittain to Roland Leighton (later her fiancé), 1 October 1914

I don't know whether your feelings about war are those of a militarist or not; I always call myself a non-militarist, yet the raging of these elemental forces fascinates me, horribly yet powerfully, as it does you. You find beauty in it too; certainly war seems to bring out all that is noble in human nature, but against that you can say it brings out all the barbarous too. But whether it is noble or barbarous I am quite sure that had I been a boy I should have gone off to take part in it long ago; indeed I have wasted many moments regretting that I am a girl. Women get all the dreariness of war and none of its exhilaration. . . .

Vera Brittain to Roland Leighton, Written from Oxford, 25 April 1915

The terrible things you mention & describe fill me, when the first horror is over, with a sort of infinite pity I have never felt before. . . . Is it really all for nothing,—for an empty name—an ideal? Last time I saw you it was I who said that & you who denied it. Was I really right, & will the issue really not be worth one of the lives that have been sacrificed for it? Or did we need this

gigantic catastrophe to wake up all that was dead within us? You can judge best of us two now. In the light of all that you have seen, tell me what you really think. Is it an ideal for which you personally are fighting, & is it one which justifies all the blood that has been and is to be shed?

I suppose you know that a most terrible battle is raging just about 10 miles north of you—& may possibly spread south. . . . All the Allies have fallen back. If this is to go on it seems the war must be interminable. Even the papers admit a decisive victory to the enemy so it must be a tremendous one. Surely, surely it is a worthy ideal—to fight that you may save your country's freedom from falling into the hands of this terrible & ruthless foe! It is awful to think that the very progress of civilization has made this war what it is—particularly intellectual progress, without a corresponding moral progress. Just to think that we have got to the stage of motors, aeroplanes, telephones & 17 inch shells, & yet have not passed the stage of killing one another.

Vera Brittain to Roland Leighton, 29 July 1915

Do you ever see the Times History of the War? There is an excellent account of the Battle of Neuve Chapelle in this week's number though I can hardly bear to read about it, for the thought that you or Edward might get mixed up in a similar barbarous and sanguinary business. It all seems so wicked too—just a pure orgy of slaughter, of terrible and impersonal death, with nothing in the purpose and certainly nothing in the result to justify the perpetration of anything so horrible. War does bring to light the fundamental contradictions of human nature in a state of semi-civilization such as ours. It is quite impossible to understand how we can be such strong individualists, so insistent on the rights and claims of every human soul, and yet at the same time countenance (& if we are English, even take quite calmly) this wholesale murder, which if it were applied to animals or birds or indeed anything but men would fill us with a sickness and repulsion greater than we could endure. I suppose it makes matters worse to have such thoughts, but when you think how easily that pile of disfigured dead is heaped up in a few minutes by a sharp Artillery fire, and yet what an immense and permanent difference each single unit thus shamefully cut off makes to a whole circle of individuals, you feel that if you are not mad already, the sooner you become so and lose the power to realise, the better. It is no wonder that so many women laugh with such bitterness at the criminal folly of men. It is only because these immense catastrophes are run entirely by men that they are allowed to happen.

Vera Brittain to Roland Leighton, 7 November 1915

I have only one wish in life now and that is for the ending of the War. I wonder how much really all you have seen and done has changed you. Personally, after seeing some of the dreadful things I have to see here [as a hospital nurse], I feel I shall never be the same person again, and wonder if, when the War does end, I shall have forgotten how to laugh. The other day I did involuntarily laugh at something & it felt quite strange.

(2132)

Some of the things in our ward are so horrible that it seems as if no merciful dispensation of the Universe could allow them and one's consciousness to exist at the same time. One day last week I came away from a really terrible amputation dressing I had been assisting at—it was the first after the operation—with my hands covered with blood and my mind full of a passionate fury at the wickedness of the war, and I wished I had never been born.

Vera Brittain to Edward Brittain, 31 May 1916

I must admit that when, as I am doing at present, I have to deal with men who have only half a face left & the other side bashed in out of recognition, or part of their skull torn away, or both feet off, or an arm blown off at the shoulder, & all these done only a few days ago, it makes me begin to question the existence of a merciful God. . . .

. . . War is an immense Purgation—the “washing out” as the Master of the Temple said recently, “of the sins of the world in streams of innocent blood.” Of course it is all terrible for individuals, who are sacrificed in apparently disregarded numbers, tortured & made mad, & seemingly lost sight of in the Great Immensity; but one can only hope that in some Hereafter these, & those who lost them, will one day realise the Whole and see what it all meant, & understand their own part in it. . . . Perhaps the Great Force we call God means us & our Allies to be the special instruments of its progress & knew we should only be worthy to be this after the tremendous ordeal we are going through now. And perhaps we are not only making ourselves worthy but are preparing a double work—that of making an end to War at the same time. For “they that live by the sword shall perish by the sword” and so War could only be abolished by War itself.

Vera Brittain to Edward Brittain, Malta, 17 April 1917

The longer the War goes on, the more one's concern in the whole immense business seems to centre itself upon the few beings still left that one cares

about, & the less upon the general issue of the struggle. One's personal interest wears one's patriotism rather threadbare by this time. After all, it is a garment one has had to wear for a very long time, so there's not much wonder if it is beginning to get a little shabby!

Vera Brittain wrote numerous poems on the war. In May 1917 she learned that Geoffrey Thurlow, her brother's closest wartime friend, had been killed in action. The next month Victor Richardson, who with her brother and fiancé, Roland Leighton, had constituted "The Three Musketeers" when all were at Uppingham School, died of wounds received two months earlier. The poem she wrote to commemorate his death suggests a woman whose emotional resources had been completely drained. Shortly afterward, Brittain ceased to write anymore in her wartime diary. At this point her brother Edward still remained alive, and in 1918 she wrote two poems to him. He had been wounded on the first day of the Somme offensive of July 1916 and won the Military Cross for bravery. Four days after she wrote the first of these, he died in Italy, an event Brittain marked with yet another poem.

"Sic Transit—"

(V.R., Died of Wounds, 2nd London General Hospital, Chelsea, June 9th, 1917)

—Written June 1917

I am so tired.

The dying sun incarnadines the West,

And every window with its gold is fired,

And all I loved the best

Is gone, and every good that I desired

Passes away, an idle hopeless quest;

Even the Highest whereto I aspired

Has vanished with the rest.

I am so tired.

TO MY BROTHER (IN MEMORY OF JULY 1ST, 1916)

Your battle-wounds are scars upon my heart,
 Received when in that grand and tragic “show”
 You played your part
 Two years ago,
 And silver in the summer morning sun
 I see the symbol of your courage glow—
 That Cross you won
 Two years ago.

(2133)

Though now again you watch the shrapnel fly,
 And hear the guns that daily louder grow,
 As in July
 Two years ago,
 May you endure to lead the Last Advance
 And with your men pursue the flying foe
 As once in France
 Two years ago.

**THAT WHICH REMAINETH (IN MEMORY OF CAPTAIN E. H.
 BRITAIN, M.C.)**

Only the thought of a merry smile,
 The wistful dreaming of sad brown eyes—
 A brave young warrior, face aglow

With the light of a lofty enterprise.
 Only the hope of a gallant heart,
 The steady strife for a deathless crown,
 In Memory's treasures, radiant now
 With the gleam of a goal beyond renown.
 Only the tale of a dream fulfilled,
 A strenuous day and a well-fought fight,
 A fearless leader who laughed at Death,
 And the fitting end of a gentle knight.
 Only a cross on a mountain side,
 The close of a journey short and rough,
 A sword laid down and a stainless shield—
 No more—and yet, is it not enough?

Source

Vera Brittain, *Chronicle of Youth: The War Diary, 1913–1917*, ed. Alan Bishop (New York: William Morrow, 1982), 84–87, 89–90, 101–103, 106–107; Alan Bishop and Mark Bostridge, eds., *Letters from a Lost Generation: First World War Letters of Vera Brittain and Four Friends* (London: Little, Brown, 1998), 31, 89–90, 136, 184, 259–260, 335; Vera M. Brittain, *Verses of a V.A.D. and Other War Poems* (London: Imperial War Museum, 1995; reprint of 1918 edition, London: E. Macdonald).

Excerpts from the writings of Vera Brittain are included by permission of Mark Bostridge and Rebecca Williams, her literary executors together with full publication details of the individual works.

Vera Brittain (1893–1970)

Brittain, a British author, feminist, and pacifist, published *Testament of Youth* (1933), one of the earliest accounts of World War I from a woman's perspective, that quickly became a classic and would eventually be dramatized as a British television series. The daughter of a prosperous paper manufacturer from Newcastle-under-Lyme, she rejected the still conventional path of marriage and family in favor of feminist education and a writer's career. Overcoming some parental skepticism, in 1914 she passed the entrance examination for Somerville College, Oxford, where she began her studies in October that year.

Although Brittain went up to Oxford that autumn, the outbreak of World War I in August 1914 completely disrupted her studies and life. She had expected to enter Oxford simultaneously with her younger brother Edward and his closest friend from Uppingham School, Roland Leighton, to whom she was already seriously attracted. Instead, that autumn the two young men, together with a third schoolfellow, Victor Richardson, joined the army, a decision Brittain initially romanticized and applauded. All three had apparently imbibed the view of war as a healthful purgative for society as part of the indoctrination given in their school's Officer Training Corps, in which Leighton was color-sergeant. Informing Brittain of his decision to enlist rather than go up to Oxford, Leighton told her that he could not "easily bring myself to endure a secluded life of scholastic vegetation," which, to him, "would seem a somewhat cowardly shirking of my obvious duty." He continued: "I feel, however, that I am meant to take some active part in this war. It is to me a very fascinating thing—something, if often horrible, yet very ennobling and very beautiful, something whose elemental reality raises it above the reach of all cold theorizing. You will call me a militarist. You may be right." After Leighton's death, Richardson told Brittain: "All through the last part of his time at Uppingham he seemed to look and long for the stern reality of War and the elemental principles that War involves. He considered that in War lay our one hope of salvation as a Nation, War where all the things that do not matter are swept rudely aside and one gets down to the rock-bottom of the elementary facts of life."

(2134)

All three friends soon had the opportunity to discover whether this was true. Within a few months all except Richardson, who fell ill with meningitis, were sent to fight in France, and before he left for the front Leighton and Brittain became engaged. In summer 1915 Brittain temporarily dropped her Oxford

studies to join the Volunteer Aid Detachment (VAD) nursing wounded soldiers. Later in the war she experienced considerable danger while serving in both Malta and France. In December 1915 Leighton, whom she expected on Christmas leave, was wounded in action. He died shortly afterward in the hospital, leaving her as one of those the historian Robert Wohl memorably described as “wasted women who had become widows before becoming wives.” Over the next three years Geoffrey Thurlow (another young volunteer officer who had become Edward Brittain’s closest friend), Richardson, and finally in June 1918 her brother all likewise died in action. Almost two decades later, she discovered that her brother might well have deliberately sought death in action rather than face a court-martial for homosexual relations with enlisted men, something she never mentioned in her published memoirs, though a character in a novel she published later in the 1930s exposes himself to death in similar circumstances. Vera Brittain died in 1970, and her ashes were scattered close to Edward’s grave on the Asiago Plateau.

After the war Brittain would live a busy and productive life, making a career as a respected professional writer who produced numerous books and articles and eventually marrying a slightly younger academic with whom she had two children. Even so, she never entirely recovered from the damage the war had inflicted upon her. Devastated by her successive losses, Brittain returned to Oxford, where she finished her history degree in 1920 and formed a close friendship with Winifred Holtby, a fellow student who shared her goal of becoming a professional writer. In the 1920s both women lived in London, became well-known journalists, and published novels, including one Brittain based on her own war experiences. Brittain also became a staunch pacifist and a strong supporter of the League of Nations. With the publication in 1933 of the autobiographical *Testament of Youth*, based on her wartime diaries, she won real fame as a prominent voice of the wartime “lost generation.” Throughout her life she remained a dedicated pacifist, opposing British and U.S. intervention in World War II and publicly condemning the brutal Allied wartime firebombing tactics against German and Japanese cities, unpopular wartime stances that provoked considerable hostility toward Brittain from the British government.

About The Documents

Vera Brittain’s memoir of World War I was intended in part to memorialize those she had lost during the war: her brother, her fiancé, and their two closest friends. By the time she produced it, she had become a convinced pacifist, and this may have been one reason that, although she claimed it was based upon the diaries and letters she wrote during the war, she depicted her younger self as

having been far less enthusiastic for the war than had been the case. In some places, Brittain undoubtedly omitted material, especially from her correspondence with Roland Leighton, at the request of his bereaved mother and sister. (Marie Leighton, a professional writer, had already published a memoir of her son, including some of his own writings, that appeared within a few months of his death.)

More interesting, however, was the degree to which in her published works Brittain minimized her own romanticization and glamorization of the war during its early stages, something her diaries and letters from the time make clear. Like many other young men and women among her contemporaries, initially she was excited by the prospect of war; she was even apprehensive that, rather than joining the conflict, Britain would remain neutral. She actively encouraged her brother in his wish to join up, something she did not mention in her published memoir, which also made little of her early glorification of the war. Brittain also minimized the personal satisfaction that at least one of her brother's friends, Victor Richardson, found in his own experience of warfare, to the point that he decided to remain in the military when the war was over. Brittain's subsequent pacifist convictions may well have been partly responsible for these modifications of the past, but quite possibly guilt was an equally strong reason. Although wounded on 1 July 1916 during the first day of the Somme offensive, where he was merely one among 60,000 British casualties, her brother survived (2135) almost four years of war before he finally fell victim to a sniper's bullet. Eventually he would almost certainly have been conscripted, but even so Brittain may well have found it unbearable to remember her personal responsibility in supporting him in his plans.

Brittain was sometimes criticized for lacking a sense of humor and taking herself too seriously. Greater self-awareness and the strength to treat her experiences more ironically would probably have strengthened the story she had to tell and improved her immensely popular book artistically. At least when she was writing it, however, producing such a narrative was probably something Brittain found emotionally beyond her. Brittain's subsequent editing of the story, told by her diaries and letters, to suit her own purposes neatly illustrates the pitfalls that lie in wait for the historian who relies on individuals' own recollections and memoirs. She was particularly unfortunate in her roll call of losses, with all the four young men to whom she was closest dying in action or of their wounds, and many might sympathize with her decision to revise her version of the past and so perhaps make it more bearable. As a general rule, diaries and letters are more reliable if left unmediated, and this was certainly true of hers.

It is also worth mentioning that Brittain's own perspectives on the war and her assessment of its worth did not change definitively until it had ended. The diary excerpts, letters, and poems selected here reveal how as early as 1915 she went through occasions when she questioned the justification of the war but how she nonetheless tried to reassure herself that it was part of a great struggle for a higher cause. In practice, although she sometimes wavered, Brittain kept much of her faith in the conflict's validity until the end; indeed, had it vanished entirely she might well have been unable psychologically to continue with her wartime nursing. One of her letters rather suggests that she and her fiancé almost took it in turns to condemn the war's waste and savagery, and some of his letters to her certainly questioned the justifications given for the deaths involved. Contemporaries also suggested that when she resumed her studies at Oxford after the war, she was not the recluse haunted by her wartime experiences depicted in her memoirs, and her later embrace of pacifism greatly influenced her portrayal of herself at that time. Again, Brittain's published memoirs did not do full justice to the complexities of her response to the war over time.

Further Reading

Berry, Paul, and Mark Bostridge. *Vera Brittain: A Life*. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2002.

Brittain, Vera. *Chronicle of Youth: The War Diary, 1913–1917*, ed. Alan Bishop with Terry Smart. New York: William Morrow, 1982.

———. *Testament of Youth: An Autobiographical Study of the Years, 1900–1925*. London: Gollancz, 1933.

Eby, Cecil D. *The Road to Armageddon: The Martial Spirit in English Popular Literature, 1870–1914*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1987.

Gorham, Deborah. *Vera Brittain: A Feminist Life*. Cambridge, UK: Blackwell, 1996.

Leighton, Marie [published anonymously]. *Boy of My Heart*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1916.

Mangan, J. A., and James Walvin, eds. *Manliness and Morality: Middle-Class Masculinity in Britain and America, 1880–1940*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987.

Mosse, G. *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990.

Parker, Peter. *The Old Lie: The Great War and the Public School Ethos*. London: Constable, 1987.

Watson, Janet S. K. *Fighting Different Wars: Experience, Memory, and the First World War in Britain*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

MLA

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "10. The British "Lost Generation"." *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*, ABC-CLIO, 2005, pp. . *ABC-CLIO eBook Collection*, legacy.abc-clio.com/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2057.

Chicago Manual of Style

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "10. The British "Lost Generation"." In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005. <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2057>.

APA

Roberts, P. M., S. C. Tucker (2005). 10. The British "Lost Generation". In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia* (pp.). Retrieved from <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2057>

(2136)

This page intentionally left blank

(2137)

SECTION TWO

FIGHTING THE WAR

Section Two: Fighting the War

11. Conclusions of the Committee on Alleged German Atrocities (The Bryce Report), 1915 pp. 140-152

12. A German Deserter's Experience of Trench Warfare in France Following the First Battle of the Marne, 1914–1915 pp. 153-165

13. Alan Seeger on Trench Warfare pp. 166-182

14. The Western Front Verdun and the Somme pp. 183-212

15. New Weapons Chemical Warfare and the Use of Poison Gas pp. 213-224

16. The Gallipoli Campaign pp. 225-238

17. The Siege of Kut, 7 December 1915–29 April, 1916 pp. 239-255

18. The Soldier's Experience Herbert G. Boorer and Victor Richardson pp. 256-269

19. The Soldier's Reaction to War pp. 270-286

20. The French Mutinies of 1917 pp. 287-303

Essay 11. Conclusions of the Committee on Alleged German Atrocities (The Bryce Report), 1915

German Atrocities in Belgium, 1914

The behavior of German troops when they invaded Belgium in August 1914 has been a controversial subject from that date to the present. At the time, Allied propaganda made much of the brutality with which the Germans behaved, both when encountering civilian resistance upon their first entry into Belgium in defiance of the country's neutrality and then during their subsequent occupation. German intellectuals deeply resented these charges, which they felt reflected on their country's standing and reputation as a leading civilized nation of the modern world. After the war, revelations that the Allies had exaggerated the scale of German depredations in Belgium generated enormous popular skepticism regarding all the charges laid against German troops in Belgium. Stories of crucified Canadian or other soldiers, babies and children spitted on (2138) German pikes, women mutilated and raped, and mass slaughters of civilians, including nuns and the elderly, were in many cases revealed to have been inaccurate. In recent years, however, historians have investigated these stories once more. Since the Cold War ended, several well-publicized episodes of war-related genocide, ethnic cleansing, and maltreatment of civilians have led historians to reassess German actions in Belgium and to view it as an ominous precursor of much subsequent politically motivated military misbehavior.

German brutality and oppression in subduing and occupying Belgium were undoubtedly small scale compared with recent examples of genocide or even Turkish massacres of Armenians during the Great War. This did not, however, mean that they were insignificant, even though German maltreatment of the civilian population of Belgium and other occupied countries was far worse during the Second than the First World War, and the contemporary Allied press greatly exaggerated the scale of German atrocities in Belgium. German military records and individual soldiers' diaries reveal that in Belgium—and in France and Italy and on the Eastern Front in Galicia and Russia—German troops executed women and priests, advanced behind the shelter of civilians whom they used as human shields, and destroyed large numbers of villages. In Belgium, the German army killed approximately 5,500 civilians, the great majority between 18 and 28 August 1914. Many of these died during and in the aftermath of the sacking of the historic city of Louvain that began on 25 August, during which German troops destroyed Louvain's renowned library of ancient books and manuscripts and razed about one-fifth of the city. Similar

tactics of destruction were used against other Belgian cities, such as Dinant. In both Belgium and northern France, substantial numbers of women were raped, and at least one was bayoneted to death.

The unrepentant German military justified their resort to tactics of terror by claiming that their soldiers were only responding to attacks against them by nonuniformed Belgian guerrillas. In at least some cases, such claims were only cover for the actions of young, jumpy, and inexperienced German troops who responded to imaginary dangers or who retaliated against the Belgians in retribution for misdirected friendly fire from the German side. Even so, wherever they invaded, German and Austrian forces treated civilians badly, though they probably behaved no worse than did Russian armies in comparable circumstances. In the early months of the conflict, as the fortunes of war moved back and forth on the Eastern Front, Russian troops entered East Prussia and Austrian regions of Galicia, while Austro-Hungarian forces invaded Russian portions of Galicia, as well as opening the war with an invasion of Serbia. Although some historians argue that Russian troops only killed 22 Galician civilians in the war's first nine months, others put the numbers of civilians killed there and in East Prussia far higher, well over 1,000 in the second instance. The populations of both areas also endured widespread looting, pillaging, arson, and rape at the hands of unruly Cossacks and other Russian troops. Austro-Hungarian soldiers were likewise responsible for around 1,000 Serb civilian deaths. At least on the part of Germany, such tactics represented a deliberate use of *Schrecklichkeit* (frightfulness) as a means of intimidating and cowering the civilian population in occupied areas, especially Belgium, which was then exploited to support the German war effort, with the imposition of burdensome indemnities, the takeover of much heavy industry, and the eventual conscription and deportation of many civilians to work in German factories and agriculture. To many in Europe and North America, the methods a self-proclaimed "civilized" Western state was prepared to use against other Western nationals undercut its avowal to embody the proclaimed high ideals of German *Kultur* and ran counter to several decades of international efforts to make warfare more humane and to protect the rights of neutrals and civilians. From this perspective, German behavior represented a relapse into barbarism and an attempt to proclaim the rule that might meant right. The insensitive indignation with which German leaders, including prominent academics and scientists, rebutted charges that they had abandoned all civilized standards, and almost automatically assumed that all other nations should subordinate their own interests and acquiesce in Germany's desire to use all means possible to defeat its enemies, further tarnished German international credibility.

Conclusions to the Bryce Report

We may now sum up and endeavour to explain the character and significance of the wrongful acts done by the German army in Belgium.

(2139)

If a line is drawn on a map from the Belgian frontier to Liege and continued to Charleroi, and a second line drawn from Liege to Malines, a sort of figure resembling an irregular Y will be formed. It is along this Y that most of the systematic (as opposed to isolated) outrages were committed. If the period from August 4th to August 30th is taken it will be found to cover most of these organised outrages. Termonde and Alost extend, it is true beyond the Y lines, and they belong to the month of September. Murder, rape, arson, and pillage began from the moment when the German army crossed the frontier. For the first fortnight of the war the towns and villages near Liege were the chief sufferers. From the 19th of August to the end of the month, outrages spread in the directions of Charleroi and Malines and reach their period of greatest intensity. There is a certain significance in the fact that the outrages round Liege coincide with the unexpected resistance of the Belgian army in that district, and that the slaughter which reigned from the 19th August to the end of the month is contemporaneous with the period when the German army's need for a quick passage through Belgium at all costs was deemed imperative.

Here let a distinction be drawn between two classes of outrages.

Individual acts of brutality treatment of civilians, rape, plunder, and the like—were very widely committed. These are more numerous and more shocking than would be expected in warfare between civilised Powers, but they differ rather in extent than in kind from what has happened in previous though not recent wars.

In all wars many shocking and outrageous acts must be expected, for in every large army there must be a proportion of men of criminal instincts whose worst passions are unloosed by the immunity which the conditions of warfare afford. Drunkenness, moreover, may turn even a soldier who has no criminal habits into a brute, who may commit outrages at which he would himself be shocked in his sober moments, and there is evidence that intoxication was extremely prevalent among the German army, both in Belgium and in France, for plenty of wine was to be found in the villages and country houses which were pillaged. Many of the worst outrages appear to have been perpetrated by men

under the influence of drink. Unfortunately little seems to have been done to repress this source of danger.

In the present war, however—and this is the gravest charge against the German army—the evidence shows that the killing of non-combatants was carried out to an extent for which no previous war between nations claiming to be civilised (for such cases as the atrocities perpetrated by the Turks on the Bulgarian Christians in 1876, and on the Armenian Christians in 1895 and 1896, do not belong to that category) furnishes any precedent. That this killing was done as part of a deliberate plan is clear from the facts herein before set forth regarding Louvain, Aerschot, Dinant, and other towns. The killing was done under orders in each place. It began at a certain fixed date, and stopped (with some few exceptions) at another fixed date. Some of the officers who carried out the work did it reluctantly, and said they were obeying directions from their chiefs. The same remarks apply to the destruction of property. House burning was part of the programme; and villages, even large parts of a city, were given to the flames as part of the terrorising policy.

Citizens of neutral states who visited Belgium in December and January report that the German authorities do not deny that non-combatants were systematically killed in large numbers during the first weeks of the invasion, and this, so far as we know, has never been officially denied. If it were denied, the flight and continued voluntary exile of thousands of Belgian refugees would go far to contradict a denial, for there is no historical parallel in modern times for the flight of a large part of a nation before an invader.

The German Government have, however, sought to justify their severities on the grounds of military necessity, and have excused them as retaliation for cases in which civilians fired on German troops. There may have been cases in which such firing occurred, but no proof has ever been given, or, to our knowledge, attempted to be given, of such cases, nor of the stories of shocking outrages perpetrated by Belgian men and women on German soldiers.

The inherent improbability of the German contention is shown by the fact that after the first few days of the invasion every possible precaution had been taken by the Belgian authorities, by way of placards and hand-bills, to warn the civilian population not to intervene in hostilities. Throughout Belgium steps had been taken to secure the handing over of all firearms in the possession of civilians before the German army (2140) arrived. These steps were sometimes taken by the police and sometimes by the military authorities.

The invaders appear to have proceeded upon the theory that any chance shot coming from an unexpected place was fired by civilians. One favourite form of this allegation was that priests had fired from the church tower. In many instances the soldiers of the allied armies used church towers and private houses as cover for their operations. At Aerschot, where the Belgian soldiers were stationed in the church tower and fired upon the Germans as they advanced, it was at once alleged by the Germans when they entered the town, and with difficulty disproved, that the firing had come from civilians. Thus one elementary error creeps at once into the German argument, for they were likely to confound, and did in some instances certainly confound, legitimate military operations with the hostile intervention of civilians.

Troops belonging to the same army often fire by mistake upon each other. That the German army was no exception to this rule is proved not only by many Belgian witnesses but by the most irrefragable kind of evidence, the admission of German soldiers themselves recorded in their war diaries. Thus Otto Clepp, 2nd Company of the Reserve, says, under date 2nd of August: "3 a.m. Two infantry regiments shot at each other—9 dead and 50 wounded—fault not yet ascertained." In this connection the diaries of Kurt Hoffmann, and a soldier of the 112th Regiment (diary No. 14) will repay study. In such cases the obvious interest of the soldier is to conceal his mistake, and a convenient method of doing so is to raise the cry of "francs-tireurs."

Doubtless the German soldiers often believed that the civilian population, naturally hostile, had in fact attacked them. This attitude of mind may have been fostered by the German authorities themselves before the troops passed the frontier, and thereafter stories of alleged atrocities committed by Belgians upon Germans such as the myth referred to in one of the diaries relating to Liege, were circulated amongst the troops and aroused their anger.

The diary of Barthel when still in Germany on the 10th of August shows that he believed that the Oberburgomaster of Liege had murdered a surgeon-general. The fact is that no violence was inflicted on the inhabitants at Liege until the 19th, and no one who studies these pages can have any doubt that Liege would immediately have been given over to murder and destruction if any such incident had occurred.

Letters written to their homes which have been found on the bodies of dead Germans, bear witness, in a way that now sounds pathetic, to the kindness with which they were received by the civil population. Their evident surprise at this reception was due to the stories which had been dinned into their ears of soldiers with their eyes gouged out, treacherous murder, and poisoned food,

stories which may have been encouraged by the higher military authorities in order to impress the mind of the troops as well as for the sake of justifying the measures which they took to terrify the civil population. If there is any truth in such stories, no attempt has been made to establish it. For instance, the Chancellor of the German Empire, in a communication made to the press on September 2 and printed in the "Nord Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung," of September 21, said as follows: "Belgian girls gouged out the eyes of the German wounded. Officials of Belgian cities have invited our officers to dinner and shot and killed them across the table. Contrary to all international law, the whole civilian population of Belgium was called out, and after having at first shown friendliness, carried on in the rear of our troops terrible warfare with concealed weapons. Belgian women cut the throats of soldiers whom they had quartered in their homes while they were sleeping."

No evidence whatever seems to have been adduced to prove these tales, and though there may be cases in which individual Belgians fired on the Germans, the statement that "the whole civilian population of Belgium was called out" is utterly opposed to the fact.

An invading army may be entitled to shoot at sight a civilian caught red-handed, or anyone who though not caught red-handed is proved guilty on enquiry. But this was not the practice followed by the German troops. They do not seem to have made any enquiry. They seized the civilians of the village indiscriminately and killed them, or such as they selected from among them, without the least regard to guilt or innocence. The mere cry "Civilisten haben geschossen" [Civilians have been shooting] was enough to hand over a whole village or district and even outlying places to ruthless slaughter.

We gladly record the instances where the evidence shows that humanity had not wholly disappeared from (2141) some members; of the German army, and that they realised that the responsible heads of that organisation were employing them, not in war but in butchery: "I am merely executing orders, and I should be shot if I did not execute them," said an officer to a witness at Louvain. In Brussels another officer says: "I have not done one hundredth part of what we have been ordered to do by the High German military authorities."

As we have already observed, it would be unjust to charge upon the German army generally acts of cruelty which, whether due to drunkenness or not, were done by men of brutal instincts and unbridled passions. Such crimes were sometimes punished by the officers. They were in some cases offset by acts of humanity and kindliness. But when an army is directed or permitted to kill non-combatants on a large scale, the ferocity of the worst natures spring into fuller

life, and both lust and the thirst of blood become more widespread and more formidable. Had less licence been allowed to the soldiers, and had they not been set to work to slaughter civilians, there would have been fewer of those painful cases in which a depraved and morbid cruelty appears.

Two classes of murders in particular require special mention, because one of them is almost new, and the other altogether unprecedented. The former is the seizure of peaceful citizens as so-called hostages to be kept as a pledge for the conduct of the civil population, or as a means to secure some military advantage, or to compel the payment of a contribution, the hostages being shot if the condition imposed by the arbitrary will of the invader is not fulfilled. Such hostage taking, with the penalty of death attached, has now and then happened, the most notable case being the shooting of the Archbishop of Paris and some of his clergy by the Communards of Paris in 1871, but it is opposed both to the rule of war and to every principle of justice and humanity. The latter kind of murder is the killing of the innocent inhabitants of a village because shots have been fired, or are alleged to have been fired, on the troops by someone in the village. For this practice no previous example and no justification have been or can be pleaded. Soldiers suppressing an insurrection may have sometimes slain civilians mingled with insurgents, and Napoleon's forces in Spain are said to have now and then killed promiscuously when trying to clear guerillas out of a village. But in Belgium large bodies of men, sometimes including the burgomaster and the priest were seized, marched by officers to a spot chosen for the purpose, and there shot in cold blood, without any attempt at trial or even inquiry, under the pretence of inflicting punishment upon the village, though these unhappy victims were not even charged with having themselves committed any wrongful act, and though, in some cases at least, the village authorities had done all in their power to prevent any molestation of the invading force. Such acts are no part of war, for innocence is entitled to respect even in war. They are mere murders, just as the drowning of the innocent passengers and crews on a merchant ship is murder and not an act of war.

That these acts should have been perpetrated on the peaceful population of an unoffending country which was not at war with invaders but merely defending its own neutrality, guaranteed by the invading Power, may excite amazement and even incredulity. It was with amazement and almost with incredulity that the Committee first read the depositions relating to such acts. But when the evidence regarding Liege was followed by that regarding Aerschot, Louvain, Andenne, Dinant, and the other towns and villages, the cumulative effect of such a mass of concurrent testimony became irresistible, and we were driven to

the conclusion that the things described had really happened. The question then arose how they could have happened. Not from mere military licence, for the discipline of the German army is proverbially stringent, and its obedience implicit. Not from any special ferocity of the troops, for whoever has travelled among the German peasantry knows that they are as kindly and good-natured as any people in Europe, and those who can recall the war of 1870 will remember that no charges resembling those proved by these depositions were then established. The excesses recently committed in Belgium were, moreover, too widespread and too uniform in their character to be mere sporadic outbursts of passion or rapacity.

The explanation seems to be that these excesses were committed—in some cases ordered, in others allowed—on a system and in pursuance of a set purpose. That purpose was to strike terror into the civil population and dishearten the Belgian troops, so as to crush down resistance and extinguish the very spirit of self-defence. The pretext that civilians had fired upon (2142) the invading troops was used to justify not merely the shooting of individual *francs-tireurs* [guerrilla sharpshooters], but the murder of large numbers of innocent civilians, an act absolutely forbidden by the rules of civilised warfare. . . .

In the minds of Prussian officers War seems to have become a sort of sacred mission, one of the highest functions of the omnipotent State, which is itself as much an Army as a State. Ordinary morality and the ordinary sentiment of pity vanish in its presence, superseded by a new standard which justifies to the soldier every means that can conduce to success, however shocking to a natural sense of justice and humanity, however revolting to his own feelings. The Spirit of War is deified. Obedience to the State and its War Lord leaves no room for any other duty or feeling. Cruelty becomes legitimate when it promises victory. Proclaimed by the heads of the army, this doctrine would seem to have permeated the officers and affected even the private soldiers, leading them to justify the killing of non-combatants as an act of war, and so accustoming them to slaughter that even women and children become at last the victims. It cannot be supposed to be a national doctrine for it neither springs from nor reflects the mind and feeling of the German people as they have heretofore been known to other nations. It is a specifically military doctrine, the outcome of theory held by a ruling caste who have brooded and thought and written and talked and dreamed about War until they have fallen under its obsession and been hypnotised by its spirit.

The doctrine is plainly set forth in the German Official Monograph on the usages of War on land, issued under the direction of the German staff. This

book is pervaded throughout by the view that whatever military needs suggest becomes thereby lawful, and upon this principle . . . the German officers acted.

If this explanation be the true one, the mystery is solved, and that which seemed scarcely credible becomes more intelligible though not less pernicious. This is not the only case that history records in which a false theory, disguising itself as loyalty to a State or to a Church, has perverted the conception of Duty, and become a source of danger to the world.

Source

FirstWorldWar.com: The War to End All Wars,
<http://www.firstworldwar.com/source/brycereport.htm>.

James, Viscount Bryce (1838–1922)

To investigate the allegations then circulating on German atrocities, in September 1914 the British government established a committee of historians and lawyers headed by Lord Bryce, a venerable Liberal statesman who had been an immensely popular British ambassador to the United States from 1907 until 1913, a country with which he had already developed many close ties over his long life. Scottish by birth, Bryce trained as a lawyer and spent some time as a professor of civil law at Oxford University, where he published well-received works on history, politics, and jurisprudence. His best-known treatise was the magisterial study *The American Commonwealth* (1888), a classic still in use even today and by far the most knowledgeable British study of the U.S. political system when it appeared. Bryce was also an expert on the history of the Holy Roman Empire and had traveled extensively in Russia, the Caucasus, and the Balkans. Active in Liberal politics, Bryce spent many years as a member of Parliament, holding various second-rank government posts including president of the Board of Trade and chief secretary for Ireland. In recognition of his work in the United States, in 1914 Bryce was created a peer.

A Gladstonian Liberal who supported the gradual extension of international law over the waging of warfare, Bryce personally deplored all maltreatment of civilians in the course of war. After publishing his influential report on Belgium, in 1916 he headed a similar British inquiry into the far more extensive wartime massacres of Armenians living in the Ottoman Empire. From early in the war Bryce was also active in Anglo-American efforts to establish a postwar international organization to arbitrate disputes between states and prevent future conflicts.

About The Document

Bryce was appointed to head the inquiry into alleged German atrocities in Belgium because he was a widely respected scholar, known for his impartiality, whose standing was particularly high in the United States, where he enjoyed an enormous circle of prominent friends with considerable ability to influence public opinion. British officials were eager to convince the U.S. government and the American people of the justice of their cause, in part because they sought to persuade the United States to acquiesce in their naval (2143) blockade of Germany, and also to assure the Allies continued access to vital U.S. war supplies and the funds with which to purchase these. Bryce also had the advantage that, whether pro- or antiwar, British politicians drawn from across the entire liberal spectrum thought highly of his integrity and judgment and consulted him on a wide array of questions.

Like many British scholars of his generation, Bryce had studied in Germany, an experience that left him with happy memories of Heidelberg University, a deep respect for German scholarship, and even a sense that the British Empire, the United States, and Germany shared a common heritage and ideals of “Teutonic freedom,” which should impel them to act as a united bloc in international affairs. The German invasion of Belgium in defiance of international treaties was therefore particularly shocking to Bryce. He regarded it as proof positive that the German government was wedded to the militaristic ideals and policies advanced by such well-publicized German writers as the army officer General Friedrich von Bernhardi and the historian Friedrich von Treitschke. Bryce’s official biographer, the academic and politician H. A. L. Fisher, who also served on the Bryce Committee, believed that Bryce approached his assignment with a determination to sift the evidence carefully and to be objective and fair toward the Germans in Belgium. Fisher even believed that Bryce hoped to be able to acquit the German troops of the allegations made against them if at all possible. Over time, his growing belief that a substantial number of the atrocity reports were founded in truth apparently left Bryce deeply depressed, since these findings seemed to call into question the fundamental premise underpinning his lifelong belief in progress—that society was progressively evolving in the direction of greater freedom, justice, and humanity.

With few means of checking on testimony at its disposal, the Bryce Committee probably included in its report descriptions of some atrocities that either never occurred or had been greatly exaggerated in the telling, and it tended to highlight the more sensational of such episodes. (It did, however, also note quite correctly that many women who had suffered rape were reluctant to add to their shame by coming forward as witnesses.) Much of the report consisted

of accounts of individual incidents, some purportedly given by eyewitnesses, others secondhand testimony, and the authors themselves admitted that in the majority of cases it had for practical reasons been impossible to verify the details of such allegations. The report's conclusions were nonetheless damning not just to the alleged perpetrators but to the German army as a whole. While accepting that in all wars individual soldiers committed atrocities, especially when, as was very common in Belgium, troops had overindulged in alcohol, the Bryce Committee contended that in many cases what had occurred in Belgium represented a systematic and deliberate policy on the part of the German military to employ tactics of terror in order to subjugate the country they had invaded. Most of the troops who took part in such "outrages" had, the committee concluded, only been following orders, in consequence of which "the killing of non-combatants was carried out to an extent for which no previous war between nations claiming to be civilised . . . furnishes any precedent." The committee especially condemned the "seizure of peaceful citizens as so-called hostages" and brutal reprisals wreaked on the populations of entire villages and towns, whether guilty or not of any action against occupying forces, acts it described as "no part of war" but "mere murders." The root cause of such actions, the report charged, was that "[i]n the minds of Prussian officers War seems to have become a sort of sacred mission," banishing "[o]rdinary morality and the ordinary sentiment of pity" and replacing them with "a new standard which justifies to the soldier every means that can conduce to success." The report placed the blame for this squarely upon the leadership of the German army, "a ruling caste who have brooded and thought and written and talked and dreamed about War until they have fallen under its obsession and been hypnotised by its spirit."

Although after the war ended many came to regard the Bryce Committee's findings as unsubstantiated propaganda, there was, it seems, more than sufficient evidence that many such atrocities had occurred. The report's conclusions reflected in part the genuine shock such breaches of the then accepted code of humane warfare provoked, the sense that under the stress of war civilized nations could only too easily revert to barbarism. Undoubtedly, the committee deliberately targeted its report at undecided neutral opinion, particularly in the United States where it had (2144) a considerable impact, even though skeptics questioned the inherent contrast it drew between state-sponsored German "frightfulness" and Allied virtue. It was almost certainly not coincidental that the report appeared five days after a German submarine sank the passenger liner the *Lusitania* without warning, causing the deaths of 1,198 passengers, including 128 Americans and 80 children, an event that generated public outrage in the United States. The Bryce Report appositely stated that

“the drowning of the innocent passengers and crews on a merchant ship is murder and not an act of war.” By comparison with the millions of civilians killed, sometimes deliberately, sometimes as collateral damage, in World War II and in many subsequent conflicts, to modern eyes the subjection of Belgian noncombatants in 1914 to tactics of terrorism and retaliation seems relatively small in scale and the committee’s reaction perhaps disproportionate. It is perhaps fairer, however, to regard the report as a quixotic and ultimately unsuccessful effort to regain the standards of a prewar—and still, it seemed in spring 1915, retrievable—international system that had seemed to be moving toward the institution of humane rules of warfare and the arbitration of disputes between states, standards that effectively disappeared during World War I, just a few among the many casualties of the Armageddon unleashed in August 1914.

Further Reading

Akçam, Taner. *From Empire to Republic: Turkish Nationalism and the Armenian Genocide*. New York: Zed, 2004.

Ferguson, Niall. *The Pity of War*. London: Allen Lane, 1998.

Fisher, H. A. L. *James Bryce (Viscount Bryce of Dechmont, O.M.)*. 2 vols. London: Macmillan, 1927.

Horne, John, and Alan Kramer. *German Atrocities, 1914: A History of Denial*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001.

Ions, Edmund. *James Bryce and American Democracy, 1870–1922*. London: Macmillan, 1968.

McPhail, Helen. *The Long Silence: Civilian Life under the German Occupation of Northern France*. London: I. B. Tauris, 1999.

Robbins, Keith. *Politicians, Diplomacy, and War in Modern British History*. London: Hambledon, 1994.

Sanders, M. L., and Philip M. Taylor. *British Propaganda during the First World War, 1914–18*. London: Macmillan, 1982.

Tulloch, Hugh. *James Bryce’s American Commonwealth: The Anglo-American Commonwealth*. Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell, 1988.

Zuckerman, Larry. *The Rape of Belgium: The Untold Story of World War I*. New York: New York University Press, 2004.

MLA

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "11. Conclusions of the Committee on Alleged German Atrocities (The Bryce Report), 1915." *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*, ABC-CLIO, 2005, pp. . *ABC-CLIO eBook Collection*, legacy.abc-clio.com/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2065.

Chicago Manual of Style

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "11. Conclusions of the Committee on Alleged German Atrocities (The Bryce Report), 1915." In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005. <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2065>.

APA

Roberts, P. M., S. C. Tucker (2005). 11. Conclusions of the Committee on Alleged German Atrocities (The Bryce Report), 1915. In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia* (pp.). Retrieved from <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2065>

Essay 12. A German Deserter's Experience of Trench Warfare in France Following the First Battle of the Marne, 1914–1915

Morale in the Trenches: The German Experience

By late 1914 the German gamble of a quick victory in France had failed. The war on the Western Front switched from one of rapid movement to one of trench warfare in which each side dug itself into a huge system of earthworks and shelters reinforced with barbed wire, machine-gun posts, and traps to stall an enemy assault. German and Allied war memoirs alike told similar tales of the trenches, not just of the danger of sudden death through casual shell fire or a lucky sniper hit, but of the squalid daily reality of mud, rats, lice, fleas, and other vermin; rudimentary or nonexistent sanitation; cold, damp, illness, hunger, and thirst; and the constant macabre presence of dead bodies or gruesome body parts of men or animals. Life in the trenches was decidedly unhealthy; at any given time, for example, more than 8 percent of the German army's fighting effectives were liable to be on sick leave. Enlisted men, whether British tommy, French *poilu* (hairy one) or German *Frontschwein* (front pig), had comparable experiences of frontline service. Numerous war memoirs, whatever the nationality of the writers, also depicted a yawning gulf between the men in the front line and the staff officers, generally ensconced in relative comfort well behind the lines of trenches, directing the war with what often seemed little comprehension of the reality of warfare for those entrusted with fighting it, and unconcerned with the cost in human terms of the strategies they devised.

It was perhaps not surprising that for the most part stolid acceptance of the war, as opposed to great enthusiasm for it, became the hallmark of the armies in the trenches, British, French, and German, conscript and volunteer alike. Yet among those who actually had to fight the war, levels of genuine dissent from the conflict, as opposed to routine grumbling over food, pay, (2145) and conditions, remained remarkably low. Loyalty to a soldier's particular unit was often a strong motivating force, as was an implicit belief that one's country was fighting a just war for national survival and a good cause. In the early years of the war, moreover, desertion rates were rather low, though among the Germans they rose from a mere 1 in 10,000 to 10 percent or more from late 1917 onward. Not until the end of the war did radicalism gain a hold among the German military. Even then, the majority of returning soldiers considered left-wing agitators to be traitors to their country and their comrades. In the course

of the war only 266 British soldiers were shot for desertion, and several hundred others suffered less severe penalties. When forty-nine French divisions mutinied in summer 1917, refusing to obey orders, disillusionment with their commanders after the failed Nivelle offensive and immediate grievances, including restrictive leave policies, poor food, and distant and incompetent officers, were more to blame than political radicalism. This was equally true of the limited German naval mutiny that same summer, when sailors complained of poor pay and food, long hours, and the privileges of their officers. A small-scale mutiny by three British divisions at Étaples in September 1917 was largely a reaction to the overzealous attitudes of the military police.

Acquiescence in war service, however unpleasant the conditions, was the rule, though this clearly did not preclude isolated acts of defiance by individual soldiers.

Unlike their well-known British counterparts, the majority of German war memoirs and novels took a fundamentally affirmative view of the conflict, suggesting that the men who fought it had not been destroyed by war but, rather, that their unique shared experiences had welded frontline troops into a united community, marked by comradeship, leadership, and sacrifice. The suggestion, taken up by Adolf Hitler and other right-wing nationalists, was that this group was uniquely well qualified to transform Germany and reverse the humiliations of defeat in 1918. Those who presented an alternative view were very much in the minority, though the parallels between what is for most British and U.S. readers by far the best-known German work on the war, Erich Maria Remarque's classic novel *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1929), and the British literature of wartime disillusionment have tended to obscure this. Indeed, upon its publication in Berlin, Remarque's best-selling novel sparked an enormous controversy, as numerous other veterans charged that it focused entirely on the unpleasant physical aspects of wartime service while ignoring its spiritual value and maturing impact on those who endured it. Allegations that Remarque had misrepresented his own military record and that his total frontline service amounted to a mere few weeks in June and July 1917 further complicated the argument.

Although somewhat atypical of German veterans, Remarque was by no means unique in depicting the war unfavorably, nor was he the first German writer to emphasize the loss, suffering, and irrationality of the war. During and immediately after the war, writers from or influenced by the German expressionist literary movement, at its peak from 1910 to 1918, and its antiwar followers in the political world published antiwar poems and war narratives. Prominent among those taking a pacifist and humanitarian view of the war's

impact were the bohemian aristocrat Fritz von Unruh's fictionalized memoir *Way of Sacrifice* (*Opfergang*), written in 1916 after service at Verdun but not published until 1919 due to official censorship policies, and Leonard Frank's more utopian novel *Man Is Good* (*Der Mensch ist Gut*) in which universal brotherhood and peace eventually drive out militarism. Subsequent prominent liberal German works on the war included Ludwig Renn's memoirs, *War* (1928) and *Afterwar* (1930), and the novelist Arnold Zweig's tetralogy, *The Great War of the White Men* (1931–1938). All these works implicitly sought to make some sense of damage the war had inflicted by using the experience to argue that never again should the world's nations or peoples consider such a conflict acceptable. This outlook also characterized much of the pacifist propaganda writing of the wartime period, including the work excerpted here.

The Christmas Truce, 24–25 December 1914

The first wartime Christmas was one in which, on the German as well as the Allied side, supplies of food and other goods were still plentiful; the war was less than five months old. German, British, and French troops confronting each other along the newly constructed frontline trench system all celebrated the Christmas holiday in traditional style, with parcels of food and other comforts from home, the exchange of gifts, and (2146) festive meals. Temperatures fell below freezing, solidifying the ubiquitous mud. Numerous German units even acquired Christmas trees, positioned to rise above their trenches, where they lit fires and celebrated Christmas Eve by singing hymns and carols, often to applause from their opposite numbers. That evening and the next day, which was cold and sunny, numerous spontaneous incidents of fraternization occurred between the German troops and the British and French soldiers facing them. Such contacts were especially common between the British and Germans but were also widespread in the French portion of the line, though some fighting continued in all sectors. In some cases officers on both sides encouraged these contacts as a useful means of obtaining information on enemy positions, numbers, and the like, but most incidents were unplanned and often unauthorized. Men met in no-man's-land, sometimes even in the enemy trenches, to exchange gifts and celebrate Christmas together, sometimes holding joint services and sharing entertainments and meals. Tobacco, British bully beef, jam, chocolates, and even sheepskin jackets were bartered for German helmets and insignia. The holiday also gave an opportunity for burial parties to gather the dead from no-man's-land. In some areas of the front the truce lasted until New Year's Day, or even later into January; in others it was quickly broken by an unexpected resumption of hostilities, often against unprotected men. The truce was not repeated in later years. Enmities and

resentments had grown more bitter, provisions were in shorter supply, and the military authorities took stern measures to prevent subsequent fraternization.

A German Deserter's Experience of Trench Warfare in France Following the First Battle of the Marne, 1914–1915

The evening I had got off I employed to undertake a reconnoitering expedition through the surrounding country in the company of several soldiers. We spoke about the various incidents of the day and the night, and, to the surprise, I daresay, of every one of us, we discovered that very little was left of the overflowing enthusiasm and patriotism that had seized so many during the first days of the war. Most of the soldiers made no attempt to conceal the feeling that we poor devils had absolutely nothing to gain in this war, that we had only to lose our lives or, which was still worse, that we should sit at some street corner as crippled “war veterans” trying to arouse the pity of passers-by by means of some squeaking organ. . . .

It was getting light, and as yet we had not seen much of the enemy. Slowly the mist began to disappear, and now we observed the French occupying positions some hundred yards in front of us. They had made themselves new positions during the night exactly as we had done. Immediately firing became lively on both sides. Our opponent left his trench and attempted an attack, but our great mass of machine-guns literally mowed down his ranks. An infernal firing had set in, and the attack was beaten off after only a few steps had been made by the opposing troops. The French renewed their attack again and again, and when at noon we had beaten back eight assaults of that kind hundreds upon hundreds of dead Frenchmen were covering the ground between our trenches and theirs. The enemy had come to the conclusion that it was impossible to break down our iron wall and stopped his attacks.

At that time we had no idea that this was to be the beginning of a murderous exhausting war of position, the beginning of a slow, systematic, and useless slaughter. For months and months we were to fight on in the same trench, without gaining or losing ground, sent forward again and again to murder like raving beasts and driven back again. Perhaps it was well that we did not know at that time that hundreds of thousands of men were to lose their lives in that senseless slaughter.

The wounded men between the trenches had to perish miserably. Nobody dared help them as the opposing side kept up their fire. They perished slowly, quite slowly. Their cries died away after long hours, one after the other. One man after the other had lain down to sleep, never to awake again. Some we could

hear for days; night and day they begged and implored one to assist them, but nobody could help. Their cries became softer and softer until at last they died away—all suffering had ceased. There was no possibility of burying the dead. They remained where they fell for weeks. The bodies began to decompose and spread pestilential stench, but nobody dared to come and bury the dead. If a Frenchman showed himself to look for a friend or a brother among the dead he was fired at (2147) from all directions. His life was dearer to him and he never tried again. We had exactly the same experience. The French tried the red cross flag. We laughed and shot it to pieces. The impulse to shoot down the “enemy” suppressed every feeling of humanity, and the “red cross” had lost its significance when raised by a Frenchman. Suspicion was nourished artificially, so that we thought the “enemy” was only abusing the flag; and that was why we wanted to shoot him and the flag to bits.

But we ourselves took the French for barbarians because they paid us back in kind and prevented us from removing our own wounded men to safety. The dead remained where they were, and when ten weeks later we were sent to another part of the front they were still there.

We had been fortunate in beating back all attacks and had inflicted enormous losses upon the enemy without having ourselves lost many dead or wounded men. Under those circumstances no further attack was to be expected for the time being. So we employed all our strength to fortify our position as strongly as possible. Half of the men remained in their places, and the other half made the trenches wider and deeper. But both sides maintained a continuous lively fire. The losses we suffered that day were not especially large, but most of the men who were hit were struck in the head, for the rest of the body was protected by the trench. . . .

Up to that time it had been comparatively quiet at the front. We had protected our position with wide wire entanglements. Quite a maze of trenches, a thing that defies description, had been constructed. One must have seen it in order to comprehend what immense masses of soil had been dug up.

Our principal position consisted of from 6 to 8 trenches, one behind the other and each provided with strong parapets and barbed wire entanglements; each trench had been separately fortified. The distance between the various trenches was sometimes 20 yards, sometimes a hundred and more, all according to the requirements of the terrain. All those positions were joined by lines of approach. Those connecting roads are not wide, are only used by the relieving troops and for transporting purposes, and are constructed in a way that prevents the enemy from enfilading them; they run in a zigzag course. To the rear of the

communication trenches are the shelters of the resting troops (reserves). Two companies of infantry, for instance, will have to defend in the first trench a section of the front measuring some two hundred yards. One company is always on duty, whilst the other is resting in the rear. However, the company at rest must ever be ready for the firing line and is likely to be alarmed at any minute for service at a moment's notice should the enemy attack. The company is in telephonic communication with the one doing trench duty. Wherever the country (as on swampy ground) does not permit the construction of several trenches and the housing of the reserves the latter are stationed far in the rear, often in the nearest village. In such places, relieving operations, though carried out only at night are very difficult and almost always accompanied by casualties.

Relief is not brought up at fixed hours, for the enemy must be deceived. But the enemy will be informed of local conditions by his fliers, patrols or the statements of prisoners, and will keep the country under a continual heavy curtain fire, so that the relieving troops coming up across the open field almost always suffer losses. Food and ammunition are also forwarded at night. . . .

[One] day an assault on the enemy's position had been ordered, and we had to be in our places at seven o'clock in the morning. The 67th regiment was to attack punctually at half past eight, the sappers taking the lead. The latter had been provided with hand grenades for that purpose. We were only some twenty yards away from the enemy. Those attacks, which were repeated every week, were prepared by artillery fire half an hour before the assault began. The artillery had to calculate their fire very carefully, because the distance between the trench and that of the enemy was very small. That distance varied from three to a hundred yards, it was nowhere more than that. At our place it was twenty yards. Punctually at eight o'clock the artillery began to thunder forth. The first three shots struck our own trench, but those following squarely hit the mark, i.e., the French trench. The artillery had got the exact range and then the volleys of whole batteries began to scream above our heads. Every time the enemy's trench or the roads leading to it were hit with wonderful accuracy. One could hear the wounded cry, a sign that many a one had already been crippled. An artillery officer made observations in the first trench and directed the fire by telephone.

(2148)

The artillery became silent exactly at half past eight, and we passed to the assault. But the 11th company of regiment No. 67, of which I spoke before, found itself in such a violent machine-gun fire that eighteen men had been

killed a few paces from our trench. The dead and wounded had got entangled in the wild jumble of the trees and branches encumbering the ground. Whoever could run tried to reach the enemy's trench as quickly as possible. Some of the enemy defended themselves desperately in their trench, which was filled with mud and water, and violent hand to hand fighting ensued. We stood in the water up to our knees, killing the rest of our opponents. Seriously wounded men were lying flat in the mud with only their mouths and noses showing above the water. But what did we care! They were stamped deeper in the mud, for we could not see where we were stepping; and so we rolled up the whole trench. Thereupon the conquered position was fortified as well as it could be done in all haste. Again we had won a few yards of the Argonnes at the price of many lives. That trench had changed its owners innumerable times before, a matter of course in the Argonnes, and we awaited the usual counter attack.

.....

WINTER had arrived and it was icy cold. The trenches, all of which had underground water, had been turned into mere mud holes. The cold at night was intense, and we had to do 48 hours' work with 12 hours' sleep. Every week we had to make an attack the result of which was in no proportion to the immense losses. During the entire four months that I was in the Argonnes we had a gain of terrain some 400 yards deep. The following fact will show the high price that was paid in human life for that little piece of France. All the regiments (some of these were the infantry regiments Nos. 145, 67, 173, and the Hirschberg sharpshooting battalion No. 5) had their own cemetery. When we were relieved in the Argonnes there were more dead in our cemetery than our regiment counted men. The 67th regiment had buried more than 2000 men in its cemetery, all of whom, with the exception of a few sappers, had belonged to regiment No. 67. Not a day passed without the loss of human lives, and on a "storming day" death had an extraordinarily rich harvest. Each day had its victims, sometimes more, sometimes fewer. It must appear quite natural that under such conditions the soldiers were not in the best of moods. The men were all completely stupefied. Just as they formerly went to work regularly to feed the wife and children they now went to the trenches in just the same regular way. That business of slaughtering and working had become an every day affair. When they conversed it was always the army leaders, the Crown Prince and Lieutenant-General von Mudra, the general in command of the 16th Army Corps, that were most criticized.

The troops in the Argonnes belonged to the 16th Army Corps, to the 33rd and 34th division of infantry. Neither of the two leaders, neither the Crown Prince nor von Mudra, have I ever seen in the trenches. The staff of the Crown Prince

had among its members the old General-Fieldmarshal Count von Haeseler, the former commander of the 16th Army Corps, a man who in times of peace was already known as a relentless slave driver. The “triplets,” as we called the trio, the Crown Prince, von Mudra, and Count von Haeseler, were more hated by most of the soldiers than the Frenchman who was out with his gun to take our miserable life.

Many miles behind the front the scion of the Hohenzollerns found no difficulty to spout his “knock them hard!” and, at the price of thousands of human lives, to make himself popular with the patriots at home who were sitting there behind the snug stove or at the beer table complaining that we did not advance fast enough. Von Mudra got the order “Pour le mérite”; they did not think of his soldiers who had not seen a bed, nor taken off their trousers or boots for months; these were provided with food and shells, and were almost being eaten up by vermin.

That we were covered with body lice was not to be wondered at, for we had scarcely enough water for drinking purposes, and could not think of having a wash. We had worn our clothes for months without changing them; the hair on our heads and our beards had grown to great length. When we had some hours in which to rest, the lice would not let us sleep.

The air in the shelters was downright pestiferous, and to that foul stench of perspiration and putrefaction was added the plague of lice. At times one was sitting up for hours and could not sleep, though one was dead tired. One could catch lice, and the more one caught the worse they got. We were urgently in want of sleep, but it was impossible to close the eyes on account of (2149) the vermin. We led a loathsome, pitiful life, and at times we said to one another that nobody at home even suspected the condition we were in. We often told one another that if later on we should relate to our families the facts as they really were they would not believe them. . . .

It was in the month of December and the weather was extremely cold. At times we often stood in the trenches with the mud running into our trousers' pockets. In those icy cold nights we used to sit in the trenches almost frozen to a lump of ice, and when utter exhaustion sometimes vanquished us and put us to sleep we found our boots frozen to the ground on waking up. Quite a number of soldiers suffered from frost-bitten limbs; it was mostly their toes that were frost-bitten. They had to be taken to the hospital. The soldiers on duty fired incessantly so as to keep their fingers warm. . . .

Christmas came along, and we still found ourselves at the same place without any hope of a change. We received all kinds of gifts from our relations at home and other people. We were at last able to change our underwear which we had worn for months.

Christmas in the trenches! It was bitterly cold. We had procured a pine tree, for there were no fir trees to be had. We had decorated the tree with candles and cookies, and had imitated the snow with wadding.

Christmas trees were burning everywhere in the trenches, and at midnight all the trees were lifted on to the parapet with their burning candles, and along the whole line German soldiers began to sing Christmas songs in chorus. "O, thou blissful, O, thou joyous, mercy bringing Christmas time!" Hundreds of men were singing the song in that fearful wood. Not a shot was fired; the French had ceased firing along the whole line. That night I was with a company that was only five paces away from the enemy. The Christmas candles were burning brightly, and were renewed again and again. For the first time we heard no shots.

From everywhere, throughout the forest, one could hear powerful carols come floating over "Peace on earth—"

The French left their trenches and stood on the parapet without any fear. There they stood, quite overpowered by emotion, and all of them with cap in hand. We, too, had issued from our trenches. We exchanged gifts with the French—chocolate, cigarettes, etc. They were all laughing, and so were we; why, we did not know. Then everybody went back to his trench, and incessantly the carol resounded, ever more solemnly, ever more longingly—"O, thou blissful—"

All around silence reigned; even the murdered trees seemed to listen; the charm continued, and one scarcely dared to speak. Why could it not always be as peaceful? We thought and thought, we were as dreamers, and had forgotten everything about us. Suddenly a shot rang out; then another one was fired somewhere. The spell was broken. All rushed to their rifles. A rolling fire. Our Christmas was over.

Source

A German Deserter's War Experience (New York: Huebsch, 1917), from The World War I Document Archive,
<http://www.lib.byu.edu/~rdh/wwi/memoir/Deserter/German4.htm>.

About The Document

A German Deserter's Wartime Experience was published in both New York and London in 1917. Its author is not named, nor can his identity be discovered from the Library of Congress catalog, which frequently includes such information even when the publishers have withheld it. According to the preface written by its translator, Julius Koettgen, the book was the work of an unnamed German miner, a Socialist who was in his second year of required military service in 1914, working as a sapper or engineer. He took part in the initial invasion of Belgium and the First Battle of the Marne, and then settled down to trench warfare. Detesting the experience of fighting and despising his superiors, in late 1915 he took home leave and deserted from the German ranks, obtained false papers, and crossed into Holland. He found temporary refuge there and in spring 1916 traveled on a small Dutch steamer as a stowaway to the then still neutral United States. Upon arrival, he was taken in by the staunchly antiwar German-American Socialist community of New York.

The book states that the narrator's identity had been concealed so as to safeguard his German family from potential reprisals. One assumes that this deserter did indeed exist, but it is always possible that his recollections of the war were a convenient fiction, albeit one drawing on the experiences of other soldiers. In late 1916 a close presidential election was in progress in the United States, and one of the most controversial (2150) issues was whether the Democratic administration of President Woodrow Wilson would be able to avoid entering the war, as he had since August 1914. Most German Americans were particularly eager to avert such an outcome, which would pit their own nation against the country to which they traced their roots. American Socialists also normally strongly opposed U.S. intervention on the grounds that the European war was the product of capitalism and imperialism, that it would encourage militarism and domestic repression in the United States, and that it might well be detrimental to progressive reform efforts. More broadly, given that the European war was by far the greatest international event of its time, an American audience clearly existed for frank depictions of the ordinary soldier's war, whether from the exalted viewpoint of the poet Alan Seeger or the more gruesome and disillusioned perspective of this anonymous narrator. The deserter's story was first serialized in articles in the German-language Socialist

newspaper, the *New Yorker Volkszeitung*, and then translated in 1917 to appear as a book. The translator frankly admitted that it was intended as an antiwar tract, stating his own hopes “that this little book will contribute in combating one of the forces that make for war—popular ignorance of war’s realities,” arguing that, if “each individual [could] fully grasp and understand the misery, degradation, and destruction that await him in war, [then] the barbarous ordeal by carnage will quickly become the most unpopular institution on earth.” More immediately, its original newspaper publication in 1916 was probably intended to influence the outcome of the presidential election, most likely by encouraging support for the antiwar Socialist candidate, Eugene V. Debs.

The portrayal of trench warfare was intended, the translator stated, to provide “destructive, annihilating criticism of the romance and fabled virtues of war.” It gave what was for Socialists an almost stereotypical portrayal of a poorly officered army, a brutal and irrational bureaucracy led by upper-class incompetents whose men soon found their sensibilities blunted by war and quickly degenerated into machinelike inhumanity. The horror and degradation of war were vividly depicted, including the way in which the narrator himself and his comrades were rapidly brutalized into mere killing machines, showing no mercy to their French opponents when the latter sought to bring in their wounded. Massacres of enemy troops who tried to surrender were vividly described. German military morale was depicted as poor, something that was rarely the truth, and the narrator soon lost faith in the arguments he at first used to rationalize to himself his “murderous trade” and his involvement in the war, that he “had to defend a home and protect it from devastation.” German atrocities and looting against Belgian civilians were graphically recounted, including at least one episode when the narrator had to participate in a firing squad that executed several Belgian civilians for firing on German forces. Aristocratic military officers—both the kaiser’s son and other top commanders, sheltering in comfortable safety at a good distance from the front—and those who were supposed to lead the troops were invariably depicted as incompetent cowards, liable to be shot surreptitiously by their own men in revenge for the harsh discipline they imposed, including excessive punishments for insubordination and minor infractions of regulations. The narrator caustically noted that in September 1915, after a year’s fighting in which his regiment “had lost several times the number of men on our muster-roll, . . . all our officers were still in good physical condition.” Featured set pieces included his descriptions of the German invasion of Belgium, the retreat from the Marne, the construction of trenches, the reality of trench warfare, and the Christmas truce. His overriding purpose was invariably to prove that war was pointless, hellish, destructive, and degrading to all concerned.

From a historical perspective, it seems that in some respects, notably the caliber of German officers and the level of military morale, the narrator may well have allowed his own prejudices to color his narrative. Or he may have deliberately tailored what he wrote so that it would best convey the message he wished to deliver. He concluded the book by stating his intention “to take up again in the ranks of the American Socialists the fight against capitalism the extirpation of which must be the aim of every class-conscious worker. A relentless struggle to the bitter end is necessary to show the ruling war provoking capitalist caste who is the stronger, so that it no longer may be in the power of that class to provoke such a murderous war as that in which the working-class of Europe is now bleeding to death.” One is left speculating as to his subsequent fate. As an enemy alien, he (2151) would not have been subject to the draft once the United States declared war on Germany in April 1917. He might, however, have fallen victim to the deportations of radical and supposedly subversive aliens from the United States during the Red Scare of 1919. One can only wonder whether he subsequently returned to Germany and his family, perhaps to join in the Spartacist Uprising of January 1919 or to form part of the left-wing Socialist or Communist movement under the Weimar Republic.

Further Reading

Cobley, Evelyn. *Representing War: Form and Ideology in the First World War Narratives*. Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1993.

Eksteins, Modris. *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age*. New York: Bantam, 1989.

Leed, Eric J. *No Man's Land: Combat and Ideology in World War I*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979.

Linder, Ann. *Princes of the Trenches: Narrating German Experience of the First World War*. London: Camden House, 1997.

Natter, Wolfgang. *Literature at War, 1914–1940: Representing the “Time of Greatness” in Germany*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999.

Passingham, Ian. *All the Kaiser's Men: The Life and Death of the German Army on the Western Front, 1914–1918*. Stroud, Gloucestershire: Sutton, 2004.

Travers, Martin. *German Novels on the First World War and Their Ideological Implications, 1918–1933*. Stuttgart: H.-D. Heinz, 1982.

Weintraub, Stanley. *Silent Night: The Story of World War I Christmas Truce*. New York: Free Press, 2001.

Welch, David. *Germany, Propaganda and Total War: The Sins of Omission*. London: Athlone, 2000.

Wohl, Robert. *The Generation of 1914*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979.

MLA

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "12. A German Deserter's Experience of Trench Warfare in France Following the First Battle of the Marne, 1914–1915." *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*, ABC-CLIO, 2005, pp. . *ABC-CLIO eBook Collection*, legacy.abc-clio.com/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2070.

Chicago Manual of Style

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "12. A German Deserter's Experience of Trench Warfare in France Following the First Battle of the Marne, 1914–1915." In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005. <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2070>.

APA

Roberts, P. M., S. C. Tucker (2005). 12. A German Deserter's Experience of Trench Warfare in France Following the First Battle of the Marne, 1914–1915. In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia* (pp.). Retrieved from <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2070>

Essay 13. Alan Seeger on Trench Warfare

Trench Warfare

At least on the Western Front in France and Belgium, where most British and French and many German soldiers were deployed, trench warfare became the archetypal World War I fighting experience. The German forces that invaded France and Belgium in August 1914 initially gambled on winning a quick, sweeping victory with a knockout blow before British troops in any numbers could come to the assistance of their allies. The small, four-division British Expeditionary Force dispatched to Belgium and northern France in mid-August was insufficient to tip the balance, but the combination dogged Belgian and British resistance at the Battle of Mons in late August, and the French rally at the First Battle of the Marne in early September blocked further German advances. Thereafter the Germans fell back toward the River Aisne, where Allied forces failed to dislodge them in stubborn mid-September fighting. On 7 October 1914 German forces took Antwerp, and subsequently for most of the war, they controlled about nine-tenths of Belgium and approximately one-tenth of France, though not the vital French channel ports of Boulogne, Calais, and Dunkerque. After the early months of rapid movement, by late October the war in western Europe had begun to settle into one of attrition, as German and Entente forces each lacked the strength to overcome the other, a pattern that held until mid-1918.

With little prospect of progress and winter fast approaching, both German and Allied forces began to entrench themselves, each excavating enormous systems of earthworks that soon stretched from northern Belgium to the Swiss Alps. They comprised frontline trenches, support lines, and reserve trenches, usually separated by 2,000 to 3,000 yards apiece. Beyond them was the rear, where rest was usually possible. The frontline trenches were the most dangerous, usually no more than at best a few hundred yards from their enemy counterparts, protected by machine-gun posts and barriers of barbed wire and separated by a disputed area known as no-man's-land, across which attacks took place. Frontline troops normally lived in dugouts, cellars excavated 8 to 20 feet underground, along the line of the trenches. Supplies were brought up from the support trenches via a system of communication trenches. Casual shelling by heavy guns, often several miles away, was a constant feature; even on "quiet" days of the war, an average of 5,000–6,000 troops died or were wounded each day, for the most part victims of random shell, machine-gun, and sniper fire. From time to time raiding parties mounted minor attacks on the enemy, and during the day snipers were often ready to pick off any soldier unwary enough

to expose himself. While experienced soldiers had better chances of survival, simple chance and sheer luck also helped to determine whether any individual lived or died.

Trench warfare was squalid and wearing, differing entirely from the concept of quick and rapid wars of (2152) movement current in Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to which the relatively brief European and colonial wars of that period had given rise. For most of the time, soldiers rarely saw the enemy, except for occasional glimpses at stand-to each dawn and sundown. The majority of deaths and other casualties were caused by shell fire from heavy guns at a great distance. Units usually rotated through frontline trenches, support and reserve lines, and rest areas at three- to six-day intervals, though in time of emergency tours of duty could be longer. Most work, including inspecting barbed wire, building or shoring up trenches, and bringing up supplies, took place at night, while by day no-man's-land and the front at first sight appeared almost uninhabited. The landscape degenerated into a depressing, gloomy morass of muddy, dangerous shell holes and ravaged trees and buildings, crisscrossed with barbed wire and dotted with corpses, whole or partial, of men and animals, especially the horses that still transported large portions of both armies' supplies. German trenches tended to be cleaner, more comfortable, and more efficient than their British and French counterparts, and German soldiers even sometimes commented disapprovingly on what they considered the shoddy standards of captured enemy trenches.

Even in the most agreeable trenches, however, life was far from pleasant. On 10 November 1914 the young American poet Alan Seeger wrote in his diary: "Fifth day of our second period in the trenches. Five days and nights of pure misery. . . . The increasing cold will make this kind of existence insupportable, with its accompaniments of vermin and dysentery. Could we only attack or be attacked! I would hear the order with delight. The real courage of the soldier is not facing the balls, but the fatigue and discomfort and misery." Throughout the war torrential rain often left trenches and the entire front knee-deep in water and viscous mud, making the transport of provisions difficult. In winter, cold was often intense, sometimes reaching the point where bully beef froze in the tins. The frigid temperatures compounded the misery of the damp, often making it impossible for men to get themselves dry and warm. Sleep was limited and often nonexistent, disturbed by night duties and the constant random shelling. Rats, lice, and other vermin afflicted all soldiers, as did ailments such as trench foot, colds, influenza, fevers, malaria, and gastric complaints. Sanitation was at best primitive, with corpses and body parts buried in shallow graves or even forming part of the actual earthworks in which men

lived and worked, and with latrines adding their unsavory contribution to the general ordure. Food and drinkable water were often in short supply at the front, further straining already stressed immune systems, though serious illness was far more prevalent among Russian troops than the British, French, or German armies, a tribute to the efficacy of the drugs their military medical services deployed in efforts to combat such epidemic scourges as typhus. Critics of the war charged that the best-educated generation of young people from the world's most civilized and advanced countries had been reduced to living like rats in the mud, while each side devoted its vaunted intelligence and industrial prowess to the effort of killing as many as possible of the enemy's men. For the most part, however, the soldiers of all sides themselves tolerated these conditions with remarkably little real complaint or resistance, as opposed to the standard grumbling against the military's bureaucracy and high-level leadership characteristic of almost any war and, indeed, virtually any large organization. Mutinies were few, the figures for desertion low, and officers and private soldiers alike showed remarkable stoicism in enduring the misery of frontline service.

Alan Seeger to *The New York Sun*, 8 December 1914

This is our fourth period of service in the trenches since coming to the front a month ago. . . . Our position is excellent this time, a high crest, with open land sloping down from the trenches and plenty of barbed wire strung along immediately in front. It would be a hard task to carry such a line, and there is not much danger that the enemy will try.

With increasing daylight the sentinel takes a sheltered position and surveys his new environment through little gaps where the mounds have been crenellated and covered with branches. Suddenly he starts as a metallic bang rings out from the woods immediately behind him. It is the unmistakable voice of a French 75 starting the day's artillery duel. By the time the sentinel is relieved, in broad daylight, the cannonade is general all along the line. He surrenders (2153) his post to a comrade and crawls down into his bombproof dugout almost reluctantly for the long day of inactive waiting has commenced.

Rather than imitate my comrades, who are filling the chamber with all the various noises of profound slumber, I shall try to while away some of its tedium by giving you a description of the life of a volunteer in the French army at one of the least exciting points of the present front—that is the mid-centre.

After the brilliant French victory in the battle of the Marne, the Germans, defeated in their attack on Paris, fell back to a line about midway between the

capital and the frontier and intrenched themselves strongly along the crests well to the north of the River Aisne. The French, following close on their heels, took up whatever positions they could find or win immediately behind and sat down no less strongly fortified along a line separated from that of the enemy by distances of usually only a few hundred meters. A deadlock ensued here, and the theatre of critical activity shifted to the north, where the issue is still at stake in the tremendous battle for the possession of the seaboard and the base for an enveloping movement which may be decisive. Toward the east the operations have become pretty much confined to the artillery, pending the result of the fighting in the north, which must be decided before an advance can be undertaken by either side on other points of the line.

True, occasionally a violent fusillade to the right or left of us shows that attacks are being made and at any moment are likely to be made, but these are only local struggles for position, and in general the infantry on the centre are being utilized only to support the long line of batteries that all along this immense front are harrying each other at short distances across field and forest and vineyard.

This style of warfare is extremely modern and for the artilleryman is doubtless very interesting, but for the poor common soldier it is anything but romantic. His rôle is simply to dig himself a hole in the ground and to keep hidden in it as tightly as possible. Continually under the fire of the opposing batteries, he is yet never allowed to get a glimpse of the enemy. Exposed to all the dangers of war, but with none of its enthusiasms or splendid *élan*, he is condemned to sit like an animal in its burrow and hear the shells whistle over his head and take their little daily toll from his comrades.

The winter morning dawns with gray skies and the hoar frost on the fields. His feet are numb, his canteen frozen, but he is not allowed to make a fire. The winter night falls, with its prospect of sentry duty and the continual apprehension of the hurried call to arms; he is not even permitted to light a candle, but must fold himself in his blanket and lie down cramped in the dirty straw to sleep as best he may. How different from the popular notion of the evening campfire, the songs and good cheer.

Cramped quarters breed ill temper and disputes. The impossibility of the simplest kind of personal cleanliness makes vermin a universal ill, against which there is no remedy. Cold, dirt, discomfort are the ever present conditions, and the soldier's life comes to mean to him simply the test of the most misery that the human organism can support. He longs for an attack, to face the barbed

wire and the mitrailleuse [machine gun], anything for a little freedom and function for body and soul. . . .

Amid the monotony of this kind of existence the matter of eating assumes an importance altogether amusing to one who gives it only very secondary consideration in time of peace. It is in fact the supreme if not the only event of the day. In France the soldier is very well cared for in this respect. In cantonment and under all normal conditions he receives ordinarily coffee and an ample day's ration of good bread the first thing in the morning; then at 10 and at 5 he is served with soup, meat and a vegetable, excellently cooked, coffee and wine, not to mention such little occasional luxuries as chocolate, confitures, brandy, etc.

In the trenches this programme is necessarily modified by the distance from the kitchens and the impossibility of passing back and forth in daylight on account of the artillery fire. When we first came to the trenches we made the mistake of having our kitchen too near in the woods. Whether it was the smoke that gave it away or one of the hostile aeroplanes that buzz continually over our heads the Germans soon found its range and with one man killed and half a dozen wounded the cooking brigade was forced to move back to the château and take up its quarters at a point in the woods at three or four kilometers from the line of the trenches.

Since then the matter of *ravitaillement* is arranged as follows: every morning at 3 o'clock a squad of men leaves the trenches and returns before daybreak with (2154) the day's provisions—bread and coffee, cheese and preserved foods, such as cold meat, pâtés, sardines, etc. The ration is very small, but the nature of life in the trenches is not such as to sharpen one's appetite. In the evening another squad leaves immediately after sundown. Every one waits eagerly to hear the clink of the pails returning in the dark. It is a good meal, a soup, or stew of some kind, as hot as can be expected in view of the distance from the kitchen fires, coffee and wine, and we all gather about with our little tins for distribution.

These nightly trips to the kitchen are sometimes a matter of considerable difficulty, for frequent changes of position often find us unfamiliar with the course of the paths through the woods, which are newly cut, impassably muddy and ill defined. Notwithstanding the danger of going astray in swamp and thicket and the labor of bringing back a heavy load in the dark it is considered a privilege to be assigned to this duty because it gives a little activity to relieve the day's tedium. Single file, with rifle strapped to shoulders, we flounder on, wet to the ankles, the black forest all around, each man carrying half a dozen

canteens besides his other burdens. Our water comes from a spring down by the château.

To supplement the regular rations with little luxuries such as butter, cheese, preserves and especially chocolate is a matter that occupies more of the young soldier's thoughts than the invisible enemy. Our corporal told us the other day that there wasn't a man in the squad who wouldn't exchange his rifle for a jar of jam. It is true that we think more about securing these trifles than we do about keeping our rifles clean. Nor it is an easy matter to get such things. The country where we are now has been thoroughly fought over, so that the poor inhabitants and their stocks of goods have suffered severely from the continual passing of troops in action. The countryside is stripped as a field by locusts.

In the village where we are billeted during our intervals of rest between periods in the trenches there is not a thing to be had for any price. Our pocket money is so much waste paper. By sending to remote towns, paying commissions and exorbitant prices, one can manage to get a few things. Once in the trenches these articles are precious beyond gold. In the course of bartering services are paid for in chocolate, for money is held as worthless for wages.

Though modern warfare does not allow us to think more about fighting than eating, still we do not actually forget that we are on a battle line. Ever over our heads goes on the precise and scientific struggle of the artillery. Packed elbow to elbow in these obscure galleries one might be content to squat all day long, auditor of the magnificent orchestra of battle, were it not that one becomes so soon habituated to it that it is no longer magnificent. We hear the voices of cannon of all calibres and at all distances. We learn to read the score and distinguish the instruments. Near us are field batteries; far away are siege guns. Over all there is the unmistakable, sharp, metallic twang of the French 75, the whistle of its shell and the lesser report of its explosion. When the German batteries answer the whistle and explosion outdistance the voice of the cannon.

When one hears the *sifflement* the danger has already passed. The shells which burst immediately overhead and rattle on the roof of our bombproof dugout come unheralded. Sometimes they come singly, sometimes in rapid salvos of two or three or four. Shrapnel's explosive report is followed by the whiz of the flying balls. Contact shells or *marmites* explode more impressively, so that the earth trembles. Shrapnel shatters trees and snaps good sized trunks as if they were twigs; contact shells dig holes eight or ten feet across all over fields. When lines are close, as ours are now, sniping goes on all the time, especially from the German side. At night sometimes a violent fusillade will bring us to arms; out of our burrows we tumble to find the hillside ablaze with the Bengal

lights from the German trenches, where our enemies are as alert and mystified and uneasy as we are.

None of these alarms has come to anything where we were, but we hear prolonged roars of rifle fire, punctuated with steady booming of artillery, from the line alongside us sometimes, which makes us realize that a desperate attack is always possible.

In clear weather aeroplanes buzz overhead all day long. Both sides bombard at them with shrapnel, which makes a queer little whir when it explodes high in the air. Never have I seen the lines bring an airman down, for the puffs of yellow smoke break too low, and high up in the clouds the machine goes humming on, contemptuously dropping its signal fuses. A few days (2155) ago I did see a German aeroplane sent to the ground by a French monoplane.

We were in camp in the woods behind the lines when the familiar outline of a Taube [German airplane] against the winter sky drove us into hiding in our cabin. Suddenly, without having noticed its approach, I saw a French aeroplane close with its enemy. There was the popping volley of a mitrailleuse and the wounded German machine dropped abruptly and came down in a long volplane, but I could not see whether the pilot had height enough to make his own lines before his wheels struck the ground.

It is toward evening that the cannonade is always fiercest. With darkness it almost completely subsides. Then the sleepy soldiers, cramped and dishevelled, crawl out of their holes, rouse themselves, stretch their legs and take the air. Everybody turns out like factory workmen at 5 o'clock. The kitchen squad departs, others set to work repairing smashed defensive earthworks and the night's first sentinels go on duty.

Sentry duty, which may be all that is melancholy if the night is bad and the winter wind moans through the pines, may bring moments of exaltation if the cloud banks roll back, if the moonlight breaks over the windless hills or the heavens blaze with the beauty of the northern stars. It has been so for these last few nights, since I commenced these notes. A cold wave has frozen all the bad ways; a light snow has fallen and at night the moonlight flooding out of a frosty sky illumines all the wide landscape to its utmost horizons. In the hollow the white shell and chimneys of the ruined château stand out among the black pine groves; on the crest opposite one can trace clear as in daylight the groves and walls and roadways among which wind the silent and uncertain lines of the enemy's trenches.

Standing facing them from his ramparts the sentinel has ample time for reflection. Alone under the stars, war in its cosmic rather than its moral aspect reveals itself to him. Regarded from this more abstract plane the question of right and wrong disappears. Peoples war because strife is the law of nature and force the ultimate arbitrament among humanity no less than in the rest of the universe. He is on the side he is fighting for, not in the last analysis from ethical motives at all, but because destiny has set him in such a constellation. The sense of his responsibility is strong upon him. Playing a part in the life of nations he is taking part in the largest movement his planet allows him.

He thrills with the sense of filling an appointed necessary place in the conflict of hosts, and facing the enemy's crest above which the great Bear wheels upward to the zenith, he feels, with a sublimity of enthusiasm that he has never before known, a kind of companionship with the stars!

Six days is the regular period for service in the trenches under normal conditions. Often enough it seems close to the limit of physical and moral strain which a man can bear. The last night the company packs up its belongings and either in the twilight of evening or dawn assembles and waits for the shadowy arrival of the relieving sections, to whom the position is surrendered without regret. We march back over the wretched roads and pass our three days' interval of so-called rest either billeted in the stables and haylofts of the village or encamped in the woods around the château. . . .

Alan Seeger to *The New York Sun*, 14 December 1914

Guerre des tranchées [Trench warfare]! What is it that this word "trench" conveys to those who read it continually in the war bulletins—those who are disinterested, with curiosity; those whose hearts are at the front, with anguish? Probably much of what it would have conveyed to me before the war—a kind of open irrigation ditch where the soldiers had to fight up to their knees in water, how they slept and how they ate being questions I did not ask myself. Certainly the condition of the combatants is not anything like this, yet on the other hand the comfort and elaborate construction of some of these works of defence, such as I have seen them described by soldiers in their letters home, are of examples which I at least have never had the good fortune to inhabit.

The typical trench dugout resembles catacombs more than anything else. A long gallery is cut in the ground with pick and shovel. Its dimensions are about those of the cages which Louis XI [King of France] devised for those of his prisoners whom he wished especially to torture, that is, the height is not great enough to permit a man to stand up and the breadth does not allow him to

stretch out. Down the length of (2156) one curving wall the soldiers sit huddled, pressed close, elbow to elbow. They are smoking, eating morsels of dry bread or staring blankly at the wall in front of them. Their legs are wrapped in blankets, their heads in mufflers.

Slung or piled about them, filling every inch of extra space, are rifles, sacks, cartridge belts and other equipment. A villainous draught sweeps by. Tobacco smoke and steaming breath show how swiftly it drives through. The floors are covered with straw, in which vermin breed. The straw is always caked with mud left by boots which come in loaded down and go out clean. To get new straw we sometimes make a patrol in the night to the outskirts of a ruined village in front of our lines and take what we need from a deserted stable. It is our most exciting diversion just now.

The roof of the dugout is built by laying long logs across the top of the excavation; felling trees for those coverings occupies a large part of our rest intervals. On the completeness with which these beams are covered with earth depends the comfort and safety of the trench. Wicker screens are often made and laid across the logs, sods are fitted over the screens so as to make a tight covering and then loose earth is thrown back on top. This is an effective protection against all but the heaviest shells. If the roof is badly made, out of branches, for instance, the rain drips through and makes life even more miserable inside.

Where the lines run close together the soldiers sleep in the simple trenches and fire through small holes in the wall of the combined trench and dugout. Generally, there is room to build the trenches out in front of the dugout or alongside. There is a section of a company of infantry for each trench, and between the trenches there are deep communication ditches.

Alan Seeger to *The New York Sun*, 28 April 1915

We went out, fifteen men, a few nights ago to reconnoitre a new ditch that had appeared on the face of the hillside high up under the German lines. The moon in its first quarter, highly veiled by clouds, made the conditions good. We left about 9 o'clock, marching by twos down the wood road to C_____. Once more the familiar passage through its barricaded streets, between its riddled walls and skeleton roofs and we walked on beyond and up the hill through a communication ditch to the outer trenches. Here a few brief instructions were given and the *chef de poste* was advised to tell his sentinels of our sortie and so we waded out over the barbed wire, for all the world like launching off over the surf from the security of land into the perilous unknown beyond.

The night was warm and windless. There were fruit trees all about this part of the hillside. They were clouded with bloom, reminding one of Japanese prints. But another odor as we advanced mingled with that of the blossoms, an odor that, congealed all through the winter, is becoming more and more intense and pervasive as the warm weather increases. Among the breaths of April, fragrant of love and the rebirth of life, it intrudes, the sickening antithesis—pungent, penetrating, exciting to madness and ferocity, as the other to tenderness and desire—the odor of carrion and of death.

We had not gone fifty steps when they began to appear, these disturbing relics of the great battle that terminated here on September 20 last, when these hillsides ran with blood. From that day, when our present lines were established, not a living soul had been in this area in daylight, and the rare few who have crossed it at night have been only the fugitive patrols like our own. What wonder then if the dead lie as they fell in the fighting seven months ago. Shapeless, dark masses as one approaches them in the dim moonlight, they come out suddenly at a few steps off in their disfigured humanity, and peering down one can distinguish arms and legs and, last and most unspeakable, the features.

Single or in heaps or files they lie—in attitudes of heroism or fear, of anguish or of pity—some shielding their heads with their sacks from the hail of shrapnel, many with the little “first aid” package of bandages in their hands. Frenchmen and Germans alike, rigid bundles of soaked cloth, filling the thickets, sodden into the muddy beet fields, bare and exposed around the trenches on the bleak upper slopes and amid sacks, broken guns and all the litter of the battlefield.

The sight is one which may well be unnerving the first time, but one soon gets used to it, and comes to look upon these images of death with no more emotion than on the empty cartridge cases around them—which, indeed, in a way they do resemble. Having served their purpose the material shell remains, while their vitality has been dispersed into the universe to enter into new combinations in that eternal conservation of energy which is the scientist’s faith and that (2157) imperishability of anything that is beautiful in the human personality, which is the poet’s.

Alan Seeger to His Mother, 3 July 1915

Had I the choice I would be nowhere else in the world than where I am. Even had I the chance to be liberated, I would not take it. Do not be sorrowful then. It is the shirkers and slackers alone in this war who are to be lamented. The tears

for those who take part in it and who do not return should be sweetened by the sense that their death was the death which beyond all others they would have chosen for themselves, that they went to it smiling and without regret, feeling that whatever value their continued presence in the world might be to humanity, it could not be greater than the example and inspiration they were to it in departing. We to whom the idea of death is familiar, walking always among the little mounds and crosses of the men "*mort au champ d'honneur*" know what this means. If I thought that you could feel about me as I feel about them, the single self-reproach I have, that of causing you possible unhappiness, would be mitigated.

I do not say this not because I do not expect, eight chances out of ten, to come back safe and sound, but because it is always well to fortify oneself against the undesired event, for by so doing you will make that, if it happens, easier to bear and also you will make the desired, if it occurs, doubly sweet.

Alan Seeger to His Mother, 4 June 1916

We are back again from another six days in the trenches,—back, I say, but not very far,—about 500 metres from first line perhaps, in the big quarry that I think I have already described to you. The six days went off fairly peacefully, though the Germans became aggressive at times and approaching our posts under cover of the forest in broad daylight took pot shots at our sentinels, without however doing any damage. This sector has one exciting feature which I have not found in others: the deep woods allow patrols to circulate between the lines in daylight. There are frequent encounters and ambushes. This is very good sport.

I hardly think that we are to be here much longer. The enemy are so pushing the game along all the fronts that our reserves will soon have to be thrown in. There is this comfort, that when we go, it will not be to sit in a ditch, wait, and be deluged with shells, but we will go directly into action, magnificently, unexpectedly, and probably victoriously, in some dashing charge, even if it be only of local importance. In that moment, trust, as I do, in the great god, Chance, that brings us in life, not only our misfortunes, but our greatest bits of happiness, too. Think of so many who are ingloriously stricken by accident in time of peace. War is another kind of life insurance; whereas the ordinary kind assures a man that his death will mean money to someone, this assures him that it will mean honor to himself, which from a certain point of view is much more satisfactory.

Alan Seeger, “I Have a Rendezvous with Death,” 1916

I have a rendezvous with Death
At some disputed barricade
When Spring comes round with rustling shade
And apple blossoms fill the air—
I have a rendezvous with Death
When Spring brings back blue days and fair.
It may be he shall take my hand
And lead me into his dark land
And close my eyes and quench my breath—
It may be I shall pass him still.

I have a rendezvous with Death
On some scarred slope of battered hill,
When Spring comes round again this year
And the first meadow flowers appear.
God knows ‘twere better to be deep
Pillowed in silk and scented down,
Where love throbs out in blissful sleep,
Pulse nigh to pulse, and breath to breath,
Where hushed awakenings are dear . . .
But I’ve a rendezvous with Death

At midnight in some flaming town,
 When Spring trips north again this year,
 And I to my pledged word am true,
 I shall not fail that rendezvous.

Source

Alan Seeger, *Letters and Diary* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1917), 26–39, 44–47, 93–96, 126–127, 204–205; “I (2158) Have a Rendezvous with Death,” [Bartleby.com](http://www.bartleby.com/104/121.html): Great Books Online, <http://www.bartleby.com/104/121.html>.

Alan Seeger (1888–1916)

The cosmopolitan young Alan Seeger, much of whose childhood was spent in Mexico, graduated from Harvard in 1910 and then spent two years enjoying a bohemian life as a poet in Greenwich Village, New York. He moved to Paris in 1912. Determined to take part in the conflict even though he was an American citizen, at the beginning of World War I Seeger defied his upper-class New York family's opposition and with about forty other Americans joined the French Foreign Legion in 1914. At the end of September 1914 he told his mother how he had been working twelve hours a day “at very hard drilling” designed to enable new enlistees to learn “in six weeks what the ordinary recruit in times of peace takes all his two years at.” His early experience of trench warfare, already the norm on the Western Front by the time his training ended, came as a shock to him. Seeger fought at the Battle of Champagne in December 1914, where he was misreported as having been killed in action, and was awarded two French decorations, the Croix de Guerre and the Médaille Militaire. On 4 July 1916 he died in action, falling victim to the lengthy German Verdun offensive, which inflicted a total of 760,000 casualties on French forces, after its resumption in June 1916.

About The Documents

While serving in France, Seeger kept a diary and continued to write poetry. He also regularly sent letters to his family and to the newspaper *The New York Sun*. Each type of document had a slightly different purpose.

Seeger's lengthy series of letters to *The New York Sun* were submitted in his capacity as a journalist. American readers followed the course of the European war with great interest, albeit in many cases with a strong sense of relief that more than 3,000 miles separated their country from the hostilities. In December 1914 trench warfare was something very new, and Seeger sought to convey the reality of life in what he admitted was a quiet sector of the trenches to his audience. He did not attempt to minimize the strain of this kind of warfare, hunkered down "like an animal in its burrow" in cramped conditions and subject to constant sporadic artillery bombardment, readily admitting that "for the poor common soldier [this kind of war was] anything but romantic." Addressing readers who might not be entirely familiar with the course of the war to date, Seeger carefully summarized the reasons both sides had been forced to resort to trench warfare, though, like most military strategists of the time, he regarded this as only a temporary check before a new advance. He sought to give some sense of the troops' mundane daily experience of war and how they quickly became expert at distinguishing different types of shells and barrages from each other. He also told of the constant presence of airplanes, both friendly and enemy, and described an episode in which a French machine damaged a German aircraft. Prosaically, Seeger emphasized the importance of decent food as the high point of the frontline trench soldier's existence. The physical layout of the French trenches, the still rudimentary nature of those where he had been on duty to date, the vermin and mud, "the odor of carrion and death" produced by the numerous unburied corpses seven months old by April 1915, were all unflinchingly described, as were evening stand-to, the nightly routine, and sentry duty.

In his letters for *The New York Sun*, Seeger was also to some extent a propagandist, seeking to promote the Allied cause in the United States. It was perhaps for this reason that he played down slightly his first shock at encountering the reality of trench warfare. Although some Americans, notably the upper-class elite of the East Coast, were fiercely anti-German and pro-Allied, many were indifferent to the conflict, their primary concern being that the United States should not be drawn into it. Writing for a popular New York newspaper with a large readership, Seeger undoubtedly hoped to win his countrymen over to support Britain and France, if not with military assistance at least by acquiescing in anti-German naval blockades and by permitting the Allies to purchase supplies in the United States. He suggested that from a "cosmic" perspective, "destiny" had sent him to the front in France, a somewhat ironical stance given that the American Seeger was under no obligation whatsoever to join up. He may have hoped this high-flown attitude would impel some wavering Americans to support the Allies. Whatever his

reasons, in personal terms this was an outlook he clearly found highly congenial.

Although Seeger's *New York Sun* dispatches were designed for public consumption, his parents and other (2159) relatives no doubt read them greedily. The information they contained was supplemented by more intimate letters to his mother, justifying his involvement in the war, telling her that there was "nowhere else in the world" he would rather be, and stating that even if he should die he would have no regrets. He apparently enjoyed the routine of military life, and the danger only gave it added spice; in Seeger's view the "frequent encounters and ambushes" with enemy troops in his sector in June 1916 provided "very good sport." His high-flown and rhetorical glorification of his possible death were notes sounded repeatedly throughout his time in France, as demonstrated by these letters written a year apart, the last only a month before his death, when Seeger clearly anticipated that his unit would probably be called upon to take part in the Verdun battle. Although no doubt commendably frank, these were not the most reassuring letters to send a loving and anxious mother, and one suspects that Seeger's character included a substantial streak of egoism and self-dramatization. Like a fair number of other contemporary Western literary intellectuals, Seeger apparently regarded death as the ultimate adventure and experience. Both Seeger's family letters and his poem "I Have a Rendezvous with Death," which he produced a few months before his death, suggest that rather than fearing death in action, he almost welcomed the prospect as one that would "mean honor" and perhaps, too, permanently preserve his romantic literary reputation. On another occasion in 1915 he wrote of death: "If it must be, let it come in the heat of action. Why flinch? It is by far the noblest form in which death can come. It is in a sense almost a privilege."

Interestingly, by the time he died, Seeger's attitudes toward the war had already become somewhat dated. Reviewing what he termed Seeger's "high-flown, heavily decorated and solemn" *Poems* in 1917, the modernist poet T. S. Eliot, a Harvard classmate, described them as "well done, and so much out of date as to be almost a positive quality." In all these respects, Eliot believed, they were true to Seeger's own character. Collected and published posthumously, Seeger's letters, diaries, and poems nonetheless successfully made him into an emblematic doomed hero, his last poem later to be much admired and quoted by President John F. Kennedy, another romantic twentieth-century figure who suffered an untimely death.

Further Reading

Ashworth, Tony. *Trench Warfare, 1914–1918: The Live and Let Live System*. New York: Holmes and Meier, 1980.

Audoin-Rouzeau, Stéphane. *Men at War, 1914–1918: National Sentiment and Trench Journalism in France during the First World War*. Trans. Helen McPhail. Providence, RI: Berg, 1992.

Braudy, Leo. *From Chivalry to Terrorism: War and the Changing Nature of Masculinity*. New York: Knopf, 2003.

Bruce, Robert B. *A Fraternity of Arms: America and France in the Great War*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2003.

Dunn, J. C. *The War the Infantry Knew, 1914–1919*. Reprint ed. London: Abacus, 1994.

Ellis, John. *Eye-Deep in Hell: Trench Warfare in World War I*. New York: Pantheon, 1976.

Horne, Alistair. *The Price of Glory: Verdun, 1916*. New York: Macmillan, 1962.

Keegan, John. *The Face of Battle*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1976.

Simpson, Andy, ed. *Hot Blood and Cold Steel: Life and Death in the Trenches of the First World War*. Staplehurst, Kent: Spellmount, 2002.

Werstein, Irving. *Sound No Trumpet: The Life and Death of Alan Seeger*. New York: Crowell, 1967.

MLA

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "13. Alan Seeger on Trench Warfare." *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*, ABC-CLIO, 2005, pp. . *ABC-CLIO eBook Collection*, legacy.abc-clio.com/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2075.

Chicago Manual of Style

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "13. Alan Seeger on Trench Warfare." In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005. <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2075>.

APA

Roberts, P. M., S. C. Tucker (2005). 13. Alan Seeger on Trench Warfare. In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia* (pp.). Retrieved from <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2075>

Essay 14. The Western Front: Verdun and the Somme

The War of Attrition on the Western Front

By late 1914, the war on the Western Front in Flanders and France had settled down into one of attrition. Both sides dug themselves down into trenches from which they could confront each other, able to hold their own positions but only able to advance against the other at enormous cost in terms of casualties. Commanders brought up to believe that success in battle depended on taking the offensive found this static warfare of “wearing-down” extremely frustrating. Yet almost invariably, in any assault the advantage in terms of losses in killed and wounded lay with the defenders, however unpleasant they might find the massive artillery bombardments that preceded and accompanied any such offensive.

As a rule, until at least mid-1917 and despite some reservations on the part of their commanders, the (2160) British were obliged to subordinate their strategy to that of their French allies, whose troops far outnumbered their own. Throughout 1915, a period in which munitions shortages bedeviled the British Expeditionary Force, Anglo-French forces sought to unlock the stalemate through all-out attacks against German forces that would enable them to break through German lines and begin a war of movement again. The British First Army, commanded by General Sir Douglas Haig, launched four offensives that year: at Neuve Chapelle, 10–12 March 1915; at Aubert Ridge, 9 May 1915; at Festubert, 15–27 May 1915; and at Loos, 25 September–8 October 1915. All were meticulously and carefully planned by Haig, yet none were successful. Men tended to walk across no-man’s-land in straight lines, making themselves easy targets. Barbed wire defenses confronting them had often not been cut by bombardments and still represented formidable barriers where attacking troops became easy targets. Although British forces at Neuve-Chapelle and Loos stormed through the German front lines as planned, without backup they were in an exposed position, where they then fell victim to machine guns on the second German lines of defense. Reserves were not brought up in a timely manner to exploit the breakthrough. After Loos, Haig protested when British commander-in-chief Sir Douglas French wrote a seriously inaccurate dispatch on the battle concealing these flaws in planning and execution, which was published in *The Times*. Shortly afterward, Haig replaced French, remaining British commander-in-chief until the war ended in November 1918.

For both British and Germans, the acme of the gigantic offensive came in 1916 when munitions stocks had accumulated and each in turn pursued the elusive

prospect of a great breakthrough, which would wear down the enemy and allow their own forces to take the offensive again. In February 1916 German troops began a major assault on the symbolically significant French stronghold of Verdun, at that time reputedly the most powerful in the world, commanding the Meuse River. The campaign, which lasted almost a year until December 1916, caused a total of more than 700,000 casualties on a battlefield of less than 10 square kilometers. The assault was launched by General Erich von Falkenhayn, the German chief of staff and commander-in-chief, in the hope that this would become the turning point in the war, setting German forces on the road to victory. Working on the assumption that France would never abandon historic Verdun but make it a symbol of resistance, he hoped to use superior German firepower and battle tactics to hollow out opposing French forces. According to one eyewitness:

Over the roads leading towards Verdun artillery and ammunition were brought up in such quantities as the history of war has never seen on such a small space. The country was covered with guns. We could hardly believe what we saw round Verdun. Long rows of guns as in old battle pictures, set up in open fields with gunners standing about them, and on the hill-tops observation-posts with their great telescopes uncovered. When I shut my eyes I still see before me those curved lines, row upon row in endless array, with gunners moving about them in the open battlefield.

Although German troops made substantial early gains of ground, within a week their opponents had rallied, and the campaign settled into a lengthy stalemate. In the process, approximately 420,000 men died, equivalent numbers were wounded, and a further 400,000 were gassed. After the offensive's failure, Erich von Falkenhayn resigned as the Imperial German army's chief of staff, to be replaced by Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg, the victor of the 1914 Battle of Tannenberg.

On 1 July 1916 the British launched the Somme offensive, a major counterattack against German forces designed in part to relieve the German pressure on the French at Verdun. On the offensive's first day, the British suffered 58,000 casualties, one-third of them killed, in the most bloody single day's fighting of one operation in history. (German casualties during the first day of their final offensive of the war, 21 March 1918, were 78,000 but more widely dispersed.) Heavy preliminary bombardments failed to destroy the waiting Germans in the frontline trenches but alerted German forces to the coming assault, and British troops advanced without cover into savage machine-gun fire. The Somme offensive represented the greatest expenditure of artillery and ammunition of the entire war, surpassing even that at Verdun, as

the British fired a total of 4 million rounds of ammunition in slightly less than five months, until 18 November, when mud (2161) finally stopped the campaign. Up to one quarter of the British shells were defective, however, diluting the force of their bombardments. The British and French took approximately 100 square miles of territory from German forces, moving the front forward 12 kilometers, but did not attain their objective of breaking through German lines and ending the war.

For many, Verdun and the Somme became emblematic of the wastefulness of the war, especially of generals' disregard of the cost in human life of sending men to be mown down by machine guns in assaults that bore some resemblance to the 1854 Crimean War cavalry charge of the British Light Brigade against heavy guns. Numerous historians, notably Basil Liddell Hart, Alan Clark, John Keegan, John Laffin, and John Mosier, have condemned Haig—together with other British commanders—for his willingness to countenance the slaughter of tens of thousands of British troops in pursuit of an illusory objective, the gaining of a few strategically unimportant miles of ground. Other recent historians, notably Gary Sheffield, have been more complimentary, suggesting that although the British generals were on a “very steep learning curve” during the war, in the process they did learn how to fight a modern war. Sheffield suggests that the Somme offensive weakened the German army to the point where it was unable to mount another major attack until spring 1918. He also argues that at least certain portions of the Somme battle were far more efficiently fought than its reputation would suggest; that, due to their experience in earlier campaigns, by 1918 British commanders had become far more expert in the use of the creeping barrage and in permitting their men to advance at will, taking advantage of cover; that artillery was far more effective at cutting wire; and that tanks, air reconnaissance, and other military innovations had finally been efficiently incorporated into the military offensive strategy. Some recent studies of Haig have also suggested that far from being a hidebound cavalry officer, he took the lead in introducing new tactics and new military technology. The debate will doubtless continue indefinitely. What is clear, nonetheless, is that the memory of World War I remains controlling. Since 1918 no democratic government has ever deliberately placed its armies in a situation where they would have to face a conflict of trench warfare and attrition, and on many occasions military commanders have gone to considerable lengths to ensure that their troops would be able to fight a war of movement.

French Eyewitness Accounts of the Battle of Verdun: February–December 1916

The First [German] Attack, February 21st [1916], Described by a French Staff Officer

Thousands of projectiles are flying in all directions, some whistling, others howling, other[s] moaning low, and all uniting in one infernal roar. From time to time an aerial torpedo passes, making a noise like a gigantic motor car. With a tremendous thud a giant shell bursts quite close to our observation post, breaking the telephone wire and interrupting all communication with our batteries.

A man gets out at once for repairs, crawling along on his stomach through all this place of bursting mines and shells. It seems quite impossible that he should escape in the rain of shell, which exceeds anything imaginable; there has never been such a bombardment in war. Our man seems to be enveloped in explosions, and shelters himself from time to time in the shell craters which honeycomb the ground; finally he reaches a less stormy spot, mends his wires, and then, as it would be madness to try to return, settles down in a big crater and waits for the storm to pass.

Beyond, in the valley, dark masses are moving over the snow-covered ground. It is German infantry advancing in packed formation along the valley to the attack. They look like a big gray carpet being unrolled over the country. We telephone through to the batteries and the ball begins. The sight is hellish. In the distance, in the valley and upon the slopes, regiments spread out, and as they deploy fresh troops come pouring in.

There is a whistle over our heads. It is our first shell. It falls right in the middle of the enemy infantry. We telephone through, telling our batteries of their hit, and a deluge of heavy shells is poured on the enemy. Their position becomes critical. Through glasses we (2162) can see men maddened, men covered with earth and blood, falling one upon the other. When the first wave of the assault is decimated, the ground is dotted with heaps of corpses, but the second wave is already pressing on. Once more shells carve awful gaps in their ranks. Nevertheless, like an army of rats the Boches continue to advance in spite of our “marmites.” Then our heavy artillery bursts forth in fury. The whole valley is turned into a volcano, and its exit is stopped by the barrier of the slain.

Source

Eyewitness account of the Battle of Verdun in Charles F. Horne and Warren F. Austin, eds., *Great Events of the Great War*, 7 vols. (Washington, DC: National Alumni, 1920), 4:53–54.

The Destruction of Fort Douaumont on February 26th [1916], Described by a French Soldier

Despite the horror of it, despite the ceaseless flow of blood, one wants to see. One's soul wants to feed on the sight of the brute Boches falling. I stopped on the ground for hours, and when I closed my eyes I saw the whole picture again. The guns are firing at 200 and 300 yards, the shrapnel is exploding with a crash, scything them down. Our men hold their ground; our machine guns keep to their work, and yet they advance.

Near me, as I lie in the mud, there is a giant wrapped in one of our uniforms with a steel helmet on his head. He seems to be dead, he is so absolutely still. At a given moment the Boches are quite close to us. Despite the noise of the guns one can hear their oaths and their shouts as they strike. Then the giant next to me jumps up, and with a voice like a stentor shouts in German, "*Hier da! Hier da!*" [Over here! Over here!] Mechanically some of us get up. My wound, which had been dressed, left me free and I had forgotten it. I was unarmed, and so I struck him with my steel helmet and he dropped, with his head broken. An officer who was passing sees the incident and takes off the man's coat. Below is a German uniform. Where had the spy come from and how had he got there?

But the Boches are returning again massed to the assault, and they are being killed in bulk. It makes one think that in declaring war the Kaiser has sworn the destruction of his race, and he would have shown good taste in doing so. Their gunfire is slackening now, and ours redoubles. The fort has gone, and if under its ruins there are left a few guns and gunners the bulk of the guns are firing from outside. The machine guns are coming up and getting in position, and our men are moving on in numerous waves.

I find a rifle belonging to a comrade who has fallen and join the Chasseurs with the fifty cartridges that I have left. What a fight it is, and what troops! From time to time a man falls, rises, shoots, runs, shoots again, keeps on firing, fights with his bayonet, and then, worn out, falls, to be trampled on without raising a cry. The storm of fire continues. Everything is on fire—the wood near by, the village of Douaumont, Verdun, the front of Bezonvaux, and the back of Thiaumont. There is fire everywhere. The acrid smell of carbonic acid and blood catches at our throats, but the battle goes on.

They are brave, but one of our men is worth two of theirs, especially in hand-to-hand fighting. They bend and fall back, and the sound of the song they sing to order, "*Heil dir im Siegerkranz*," only reaches us in hiccoughs. Our officers, with wonderful coolness, control the ardor of the troops. The infantry action is over. By its *tirs de barrage* the artillery is holding that of the enemy, and we keep awaiting the fresh order for action in silence.

**German Advance of April 2nd [1916] from Caillette toward Fort Vaux,
Described by a French Staff Officer**

A wonderful work was accomplished that Sunday forenoon in the livid, Londonlike fog and twilight produced by the lowering clouds and battle smoke. While the German assault columns in the van fought the French hand to hand, picked corps of workers behind them formed an amazing human chain from the woods to the east over the shoulder of the center of the Douaumont slope to the crossroads of a network of communication trenches, 600 yards to the rear.

Four deep was this chain, and along its line of nearly 3,000 men passed an unending stream of wooden billets, sandbags, chevaux-de-frise, steel shelters, and light mitrailleuses [machine guns], in a word, all the material for defensive fortifications, like buckets at a country fire.

Despite the hurricane of French artillery fire, the German commander had adopted the only possible means of rapid transport over the shell-torn ground, covered with debris, over which neither horse nor cart could go. Every moment counted. Unless barriers rose swiftly the French counter-attacks, already massing, would sweep the assailants back into the wood.

Cover was disdained. The workers stood at full height, and the chain stretched openly across the hollows (2163) and hillocks, a fair target for the French gunners. The latter missed no chance. Again and again great rents were torn in the line by the bursting melinite, but as coolly as at maneuvers the iron-disciplined soldiers of Germany sprang forward from shelters to take the places of the fallen, and the work went apace.

Gradually, another line doubled the chain of the workers, as the upheaved corpses formed a continuous embankment, each additional dead man giving greater protection to his comrades, until the barrier began to form shape along the diameter of the wood. There others were digging and burying logs deep into the earth, installing shelters and mitrailleuses, or feverishly building fortifications.

At last the work was ended at fearful cost, but as the vanguard sullenly withdrew behind it, from the whole length burst a havoc of flame upon the advancing Frenchmen. Vainly the latter dashed forward. They could not pass, and as the evening fell the barrier still held, covering the German working parties, burrowing like moles in the maze of trenches and boyaux.

So solid was the barricade, padded with sandbags and earthworks, that the artillery fire fell practically unavailing, and the French General realized that the barrier must be breached by explosives as in Napoleon's battles.

It was 8 o'clock and already pitch dark in that blighted atmosphere as a special blasting corps, as devoted as the German chain workers, crept forward toward the German position. The rest of the French waited, sheltered in the ravine east of Douaumont, until an explosion should signal the assault.

In Indian file, to give the least possible signs of their presence to the hostile sentinels, the blasting corps advanced in a long line, at first with comparative rapidity, only stiffening into the grotesque rigidity of simulated death when the searchlights played upon them, and resuming progress when the beam shifted; then as they approached the barrier they moved slowly and more slowly.

When they arrived within fifty yards the movement of the crawling men became imperceptible; the German star-shells and sentinels surpassed the searchlights in vigilance.

The blasting corps lay at full length, just like hundreds of other motionless forms about them, but all were working busily. With a short trowel each file leader scuffled the earth from under the body, taking care not to raise his arms, and gradually making a shallow trench deep enough to hide him. The others followed his example until the whole line had sunk below the surface. Then the leader began scooping gently forward while his followers deepened the furrow already made.

Thus literally, inch by inch, the files stole forward, sheltered in a narrow ditch from the gusts of German mitrailleuse fire that constantly swept the terrain. Here and there the sentinels' eye caught a suspicious movement and an incautiously raised head sank down, pierced by a bullet. But the stealthily mole-like advance continued.

Hours passed. It was nearly dawn when the remnant of the blasting corps reached the barricade at last, and hurriedly put their explosives in position.

Back they wriggled breathlessly. An over-hasty movement meant death, yet they must needs hurry lest the imminent explosions overwhelm them.

Suddenly there comes a roar that dwarfs the cannonade, and along the barrier fountains of fire rise skyward, hurling a rain of fragments upon what was left of the blasting party.

The barricade was breached, but 75 per cent. of the devoted corps had given their lives to do it.

As the survivors lay exhausted, the attackers charged over them, cheering. In the mêlée that followed there was no room to shoot or wield the rifle.

Some of the French fought with unfixed bayonets like the stabbing swords of the Roman legions. Others had knives or clubs. All were battle-frenzied, as only Frenchmen can be.

The Germans broke, and as the first rays of dawn streaked the sky, only a small northern section of the wood was still in their hands. There a similar barrier stopped progress, and it was evident that the night's work must be repeated. But the hearts of the French soldiers were leaping with victory as they dug furiously to consolidate the ground they had gained, strewn with German bodies as thick as leaves.

Over 6,000 Germans were counted in a section a quarter of a mile square, and the conquerors saw why their cannonade had been so ineffective. The enemy had piled a second barrier of corpses close behind the first, so that the soft human flesh would act as a barrier to neutralize the force of the shells.

(2164) **Source**

Charles F. Horne and Warren F. Austin, eds., *Great Events of the Great War*, 7 vols. (Washington, DC: National Alumni, 1920), 4:54–60.

Sir Douglas Haig, 2nd Despatch on the Somme, 23 December 1916

I have the honour to submit the following report on the operations of the Forces under my Command since the 19th May, the date of my last Despatch.

The General Situation Towards the End of May

1. The principle of an offensive campaign during the summer of 1916 had already been decided on by all the Allies. The various possible alternatives on the Western front had been studied and discussed by [French Commander] General Joffre and myself, and we were in complete agreement as to the front to be attacked by the combined French and British Armies.

Preparations for our offensive had made considerable progress; but as the date on which the attack should begin was dependent on many doubtful factors, a final decision on that point was deferred until the general situation should become clearer.

Subject to the necessity of commencing operations before the summer was too far advanced, and with due regard to the general situation, I desired to postpone my attack as long as possible. The British Armies were growing in numbers and the supply of munitions was steadily increasing.

Moreover a very large proportion of the officers and men under my command were still far from being fully trained, and the longer the attack could be deferred the more efficient they would become. On the other hand the Germans were continuing to press their attacks at Verdun, and both there and on the Italian front, where the Austrian offensive was gaining ground, it was evident that the strain might become too great to be borne unless timely action were taken to relieve it.

Accordingly, while maintaining constant touch with General Joffre in regard to all these considerations, my preparations were pushed on, and I agreed, with the consent of H.M. Government, that my attack should be launched whenever the general situation required it with as great a force as I might then be able to make available.

2. By the end of May the pressure of the enemy on the Italian front had assumed such serious proportions that the Russian campaign was opened early in June, and the brilliant successes gained by our Allies against the Austrians at once caused a movement of German troops from the Western to the Eastern front.

This, however, did not lessen the pressure on Verdun. The heroic defence of our French Allies had already gained many weeks of inestimable value and had caused the enemy very heavy losses; but the strain continued to increase. In view, therefore, of the situation in the various theatres of war, it was eventually

agreed between General Joffre and myself that the combined French and British offensive should not be postponed beyond the end of June.

The object of that offensive was threefold:

1. To relieve the pressure on Verdun.
2. To assist our Allies in the other theatres of war by stopping any further transfer of German troops from the Western front.
3. To wear down the strength of the forces opposed to us.

3. While my final preparations were in progress the enemy made two unsuccessful attempts to interfere with my arrangements. . . . Neither of these enemy attacks succeeded in delaying the preparations for the major operations which I had in view.

Preparations for the Somme Battle

4. These preparations were necessarily very elaborate and took considerable time.

Vast stocks of ammunition and stores of all kinds had to be accumulated beforehand within a convenient distance of our front. To deal with these many miles of new railways—both standard and narrow gauge—and trench tramways were laid. All available roads were improved, many others were made, and long causeways were built over marshy valleys.

Many additional dug-outs had to be provided as shelter for the troops, for use as dressing stations for the wounded, and as magazines for storing ammunition, food, water, and engineering material. Scores of (2165) miles of deep communication trenches had to be dug, as well as trenches for telephone wires, assembly and assault trenches, and numerous gun emplacements and observation posts.

Important mining operations were undertaken, and charges were laid at various points beneath the enemy's lines.

Except in the river valleys, the existing supplies of water were hopelessly insufficient to meet the requirements of the numbers of men and horses to be concentrated in this area as the preparations for our offensive proceeded.

To meet this difficulty many wells and borings were sunk, and over one hundred pumping plants were installed. More than one hundred and twenty

miles of water mains were laid, and everything was got ready to ensure an adequate water supply as our troops advanced.

Much of this preparatory work had to be done under very trying conditions, and was liable to constant interruption from the enemy's fire. The weather, on the whole, was bad, and the local accommodation totally insufficient for housing the troops employed, who consequently had to content themselves with such rough shelter as could be provided in the circumstances.

All this labour, too, had to be carried out in addition to fighting and to the everyday work of maintaining existing defences. It threw a very heavy strain on the troops, which was borne by them with a cheerfulness beyond all praise.

The Enemy's Position

5. The enemy's position to be attacked was of a very formidable character, situated on a high, undulating tract of ground, which rises to more than 500 feet above sea-level, and forms the watershed between the Somme on the one side and the rivers of south-western Belgium on the other.

On the southern face of this watershed, the general trend of which is from east-south-east to west-north-west, the ground falls in a series of long irregular spurs and deep depressions to the valley of the Somme. Well down the forward slopes of this face the enemy's first system of defence, starting from the Somme near Curlu, ran at first northwards for 3,000 yards, then westwards for 7,000 yards to near Fricourt, where it turned nearly due north, forming a great salient angle in the enemy's line.

Some 10,000 yards north of Fricourt the trenches crossed the River Ancre, a tributary of the Somme, and still running northwards passed over the summit of the watershed, about Hébuterne and Gommecourt, and then down its northern spurs to Arras.

On the 20,000 yards front between the Somme and the Ancre the enemy had a strong second system of defence, sited generally on or near the southern crest of the highest part of the watershed, at an average distance of from 3,000 to 5,000 yards behind his first system of trenches.

During nearly two years' preparation he had spared no pains to render these defences impregnable. The first and second systems each consisted of several lines of deep trenches, well provided with bomb-proof shelters and with numerous communication trenches connecting them. The front of the trenches

in each system was protected by wire entanglements, many of them in two belts forty yards broad, built of iron stakes interlaced with barbed wire, often almost as thick as a man's finger.

The numerous woods and villages in and between these systems of defence had been turned into veritable fortresses. The deep cellars usually to be found in the villages, and the numerous pits and quarries common to a chalk country, were used to provide cover for machine guns and trench mortars.

The existing cellars were supplemented by elaborate dug-outs, sometimes in two storeys, and these were connected up by passages as much as thirty feet below the surface of the ground. The salients in the enemy's line, from which he could bring enfilade fire across his front, were made into self-contained forts, and often protected by mine fields; while strong redoubts and concrete machine gun emplacements had been constructed in positions from which he could sweep his own trenches should these be taken. The ground lent itself to good artillery observation on the enemy's part, and he had skillfully arranged for cross fire by his guns.

These various systems of defence, with the fortified localities and other supporting points between them, were cunningly sited to afford each other mutual assistance and to admit of the utmost possible development of enfilade and flanking fire by machine (2166) guns and artillery. They formed, in short, not merely a series of successive lines, but one composite system of enormous depth and strength.

Behind his second system of trenches, in addition to woods, villages and other strong points prepared for defence, the enemy had several other lines already completed; and we had learnt from aeroplane reconnaissance that he was hard at work improving and strengthening these and digging fresh ones between them, and still further back.

In the area above described, between the Somme and the Ancre, our front line trenches ran parallel and close to those of the enemy, but below them. We had good direct observation on his front system of trenches and on the various defences sited on the slopes above us between his first and second systems; but the second system itself, in many places, could not be observed from the ground in our possession, while, except from the air, nothing could be seen of his more distant defences.

North of the Ancre, where the opposing trenches ran transversely across the main ridge, the enemy's defences were equally elaborate and formidable. So far

as command of ground was concerned, we were here practically on level terms; but, partly as a result of this, our direct observation over the ground held by the enemy was not so good as it was further south.

On portions of this front the opposing first line trenches were more widely separated from each other; while in the valleys to the north were many hidden gun positions from which the enemy could develop flanking fire on our troops as they advanced across the open.

Arrangement

6. The period of active operations dealt with in this Despatch divides itself roughly into three phases. The first phase opened with the attack of the 1st July, the success of which evidently came as a surprise to the enemy and caused considerable confusion and disorganization in his ranks.

The advantages gained on that date and developed during the first half of July may be regarded as having been rounded off by the operations of the 14th July and three following days, which gave us possession of the southern crest of the main plateau between Delville Wood and Bazentin-le-Petit.

We then entered upon a contest lasting for many weeks, during which the enemy, having found his strongest defences unavailing, and now fully alive to his danger, put forth his utmost efforts to keep his hold on the main ridge.

This stage of the battle constituted a prolonged and severe struggle for mastery between the contending armies, in which, although progress was slow and difficult, the confidence of our troops in their ability to win was never shaken. Their tenacity and determination proved more than equal to their task, and by the first week in September they had established a fighting superiority that has left its mark on the enemy, of which possession of the ridge was merely the visible proof.

The way was then opened for the third phase, in which our advance was pushed down the forward slopes of the ridge and further extended on both flanks, until, from Morval to Thiepval, the whole plateau and a good deal of ground beyond were in our possession. Meanwhile our gallant Allies, in addition to great successes south of the Somme, had pushed their advance, against equally determined opposition and under most difficult tactical conditions, up the long slopes on our immediate right, and were now preparing to drive the enemy from the summit of the narrow and difficult portion of the main ridge which

lies between the Combles Valley and the River Tortille, a stream flowing from the north into the Somme just below Peronne.

The Somme Battle—First Phase

The Overrunning of the German Entrenched Positions

7. Defences of the nature described could only be attacked with any prospect of success after careful artillery preparation. It was accordingly decided that our bombardment should begin on the 24th June, and a large force of artillery was brought into action for the purpose.

Artillery bombardments were also carried out daily at different points on the rest of our front, and during the period from the 24th June to 1st July gas was discharged with good effect at more than forty places along our line, upon a frontage which in total amounted to over fifteen miles. Some 70 raids, too, were undertaken by our infantry between Gommecourt and our (2167) extreme left north of Ypres during the week preceding the attack, and these kept me well informed as to the enemy's dispositions, besides serving other useful purposes.

On the 25th June the Royal Flying Corps carried out a general attack on the enemy's observation balloons, destroying nine of them, and depriving the enemy for the time being of this form of observation.

The Opening Assault—1 July

8. On July 1st, at 7.30 am, after a final hour of exceptionally violent bombardment, our infantry assault was launched. Simultaneously the French attacked on both sides of the Somme, co-operating closely with us.

The British main front of attack extended from Maricourt on our right, round the salient at Fricourt, to the Ancre in front of St. Pierre Divion. To assist this main attack by holding the enemy's reserves and occupying his artillery, the enemy's trenches north of the Ancre, as far as Serre inclusive, were to be assaulted simultaneously; while further north a subsidiary attack was to be made on both sides of the salient at Gommecourt.

I had entrusted the attack on the front from Maricourt to Serre to the Fourth Army, under the command of General Sir Henry S. Rawlinson, with five Army

Corps at his disposal. The subsidiary attack at Gommecourt was carried out by troops from the Third Army commanded by General Sir E. H. H. Allenby.

Just prior to the attack the mines which had been prepared under the enemy's lines were exploded, and smoke was discharged at many places along our front. Through this smoke our infantry advanced to the attack with the utmost steadiness, in spite of the very heavy barrage of the enemy's guns. On our right our troops met with immediate success, and rapid progress was made.

Before midday Montauban had been carried by the 30th Division, and shortly afterwards the Briqueterie to the east, and the whole of the ridge to the west of the village were in our hands (18th Division). Opposite Mametz part of our assembly trenches had been practically levelled by the enemy artillery, making it necessary for our infantry (7th Division) to advance to the attack across 400 yards of open ground.

None the less they forced their way into Mametz, and reached their objective in the valley beyond, first throwing out a defensive flank towards Fricourt on their left. At the same time the enemy's trenches were entered by the 21st Division north of Fricourt, so that the enemy's garrison in that village was pressed on three sides.

Further north, though the villages of La Boisselle and Ovillers for the time being resisted our attack, our troops (34th and 8th Divisions) drove deeply into the German lines on the flanks of these strongholds, and so paved the way for their capture later. On the spur running south from Thiepval the work known as the Leipzig Salient was stormed by the 32nd Division, and severe fighting took place for the possession of the village and its defences.

Here and north of the valley of the Ancre as far as Serre on the left flank of our attack, our initial successes were not sustained. Striking progress was made at many points and parties of troops penetrated the enemy's positions to the outer defences of Grandcourt (36th Division), and also to Pendant Copse (4th Division) and Serre (31st Division); but the enemy's continued resistance at Thiepval and Beaumont Hamel (29th Division) made it impossible to forward reinforcements and ammunition, and, in spite of their gallant efforts, our troops were forced to withdraw during the night to their own lines.

The subsidiary attack at Gommecourt also forced its way into the enemy's positions; but there met with such vigorous opposition that as soon as it was considered that the attack had fulfilled its object our troops were withdrawn.

The Attack Continued

9. In view of the general situation at the end of the first day's operations, I decided that the best course was to press forward on a front extending from our junction with the French to a point halfway between La Boiselle and Contalmaison, and to limit the offensive on our left for the present to a slow and methodical advance. North of the Ancre such preparations were to be made as would hold the enemy to his positions, and enable the attack to be resumed there later if desirable.

In order that General Sir Henry Rawlinson might be left free to concentrate his attention on the portion of the front where the attack was to be pushed home, I also decided to place the operations against the front, La Boiselle to Serre, under the command of General Sir Hubert de la P. Gough, to whom I accordingly allotted the two northern corps of Sir Henry Rawlinson's Army.

(2168) My instructions to Sir Hubert Gough were that his Army was to maintain a steady pressure on the front from La Boiselle to the Serre Road, and to act as a pivot on which our line could swing as our attacks on his right made progress towards the north.

10. During the succeeding days the attack was continued on these lines. . . .

To sum up the results of the fighting of these five days, on a front of over six miles, from the Briqueterie to La Boiselle, our troops had swept over the whole of the enemy's first and strongest system of defence, which he had done his utmost to render impregnable. They had driven him back over a distance of more than a mile, and had carried four elaborately fortified villages.

The number of prisoners passed back to the Corps cages at the close of the 5th July had already reached the total of ninety-four officers and 5,724 other ranks.

11. After the five days' heavy and continuous fighting just described it was essential to carry out certain readjustments and reliefs of the forces engaged. In normal conditions of enemy resistance the amount of progress that can be made at any time without a pause in the general advance is necessarily limited.

Apart from the physical exhaustion of the attacking troops and the considerable distances separating the enemy's successive main systems of defence, special artillery preparation was required before a successful assault could be delivered. Meanwhile, however, local operations were continued in spite of much unfavourable weather. The attack on Contalmaison and Mametz Wood

was undertaken on the 7th July by the 38th Division (Major-General I. Philipps), and the 17th, 23rd and 19th Divisions.

After three days' obstinate fighting, in the course of which the enemy delivered several powerful counter-attacks, the village and the whole of the wood, except its northern border, were finally secured. On the 7th July also a footing was gained in the outer defences of Ovillers (25th and 12th Divisions, Major-General A. B. Scott commanding the 12th Division), while on the 9th July on our extreme right Maltz Horn Farm—an important point on the spur north of Hardecourt—was secured.

A thousand yards north of this farm our troops (30th Division) had succeeded at the second attempt in establishing themselves on the 8th July in the southern end of Trones Wood. The enemy's positions in the northern and eastern parts of this wood were very strong, and no less than eight powerful German counter-attacks were made here during the next five days. In the course of this struggle portions of the wood changed hands several times; but we were left eventually, on the 13th July, in possession of the southern part of it.

12. Meanwhile Mametz Wood had been entirely cleared of the enemy (by the 21st Division), and with Trones Wood also practically in our possession we were in a position to undertake an assault upon the enemy's second system of defences. Arrangements were accordingly made for an attack to be delivered at daybreak on the morning of the 14th July against a front extending from Longueval to Bazentin-le-Petit Wood, both inclusive.

Contalmaison Villa, on a spur 1,000 yards west of Bazentin-le-Petit Wood, had already been captured to secure the left flank of the attack, and advantage had been taken of the progress made by our infantry to move our artillery forward into new positions. The preliminary bombardment had opened on the 11th July. The opportunities offered by the ground for enfilading the enemy's lines were fully utilised and did much to secure the success of our attack.

The Attack of 14 July

13. In the early hours of the 14th July the attacking troops moved out over the open for a distance of from about 1,000 to 1,400 yards, and lined up in the darkness just below the crest and some 300 to 500 yards from the enemy's trenches. Their advance was covered by strong patrols, and their correct deployment had been ensured by careful previous preparations.

The whole movement was carried out unobserved and without touch being lost in any case. The decision to attempt a night operation of this magnitude with an Army, the bulk of which has been raised since the beginning of the war, was perhaps the highest tribute that could be paid to the quality of our troops.

It would not have been possible but for the most careful preparation and forethought, as well as thorough reconnaissance of the ground which was in many cases made personally by Divisional, Brigade and Battalion Commanders and their staffs before framing their detailed orders for the advance.

The actual assault was delivered at 3.25 a.m. on the 14th July, when there was just sufficient light to be able (2169) to distinguish friend from foe at short ranges, and along the whole front attacked our troops, preceded by a very effective artillery barrage, swept over the enemy's first trenches and on into the defences beyond.

On our right the enemy was driven by the 18th Division from his last foothold in Trones Wood, and by 8.0 a.m. we had cleared the whole of it, relieving a body of 170 men (Royal West Kents and Queens) who had maintained themselves all night in the northern corner of the wood, although completely surrounded by the enemy.

Our position in the wood was finally consolidated, and strong patrols were sent out from it in the direction of Guillemont and Longueval. The southern half of this latter village was already in the hands of the troops who had advanced west of Trones Wood (9th Division, Major-General W. T. Furze). The northern half, with the exception of two strong points, was captured by 4.0 p.m. after a severe struggle.

In the centre of our attack Bazentin-le-Grand village and wood were also gained by the 3rd and 7th Divisions (Major-General J. A. L. Haldane commanding the 3rd Division), and our troops pushing northwards captured Bazentin-le-Petit village, and the cemetery to the east. Here the enemy counter-attacked twice about midday without success, and again in the afternoon, on the latter occasion momentarily reoccupying the northern half of the village as far as the church.

Our troops immediately returned to the attack and drove him out again with heavy losses. To the left of the village Bazentin-le-Petit Wood was cleared by the 21st Division, in spite of the considerable resistance of the enemy along its western edge where we successfully repulsed a counter-attack. In the afternoon further ground was gained to the west of the wood (1st Division, Major-

General E. P. Strickland), and posts were established immediately south of Pozieres by the 34th Division.

The enemy's troops, who had been severely handled in these attacks and counter-attacks, began to show signs of disorganization, and it was reported early in the afternoon that it was possible to advance to High Wood. General Rawlinson, who had held a force of cavalry in readiness for such an eventuality, decided to employ a part of it.

As the fight progressed small bodies of this force had pushed forward gradually, keeping in close touch with the development of the action and prepared to seize quickly any opportunity that might occur. A squadron (7th Dragoon Guards, Secunderabad Brigade with the Deccan Horse operating with them) now came up on the flanks of our infantry (7th Division), who entered High Wood at about 8.0 p.m., and, after some hand-to-hand fighting, cleared the whole of the wood with the exception of the northern apex. Acting mounted in cooperation with the infantry, the cavalry came into action with good effect, killing several of the enemy and capturing some prisoners.

14. On the 15th July the battle still continued, though on a reduced scale. Arrow Head Copse, between the southern edge of Trones Wood and Guillemont, and Waterlot Farm on the Longueval-Guillemont Road, were seized, and Delville Wood was captured and held against several hostile counter-attacks (18th and 9th Divisions).

In Longueval fierce fighting continued until dusk for the possession of the two strong points and the orchards to the north of the village. The situation in this area made the position of our troops in High Wood somewhat precarious, and they now began to suffer numerous casualties from the enemy's heavy shelling. Accordingly orders were given for their withdrawal, and this was effected during the night of the 15/16th July without interference by the enemy. All the wounded were brought in.

In spite of repeated enemy counter-attacks, further progress was made by the 1st Division on the night of the 16th July along the enemy's main second line trenches north-west of Bazentin-le-Petit Wood to within 500 yards of the north-east corner of the village of Pozieres, which our troops were already approaching from the south.

Meanwhile the operations further north had also made progress. Since the attack of the 7th July the enemy in and about Ovillers had been pressed relentlessly, and gradually driven back by incessant bombing attacks and local

assaults (25th and 32nd Divisions), in accordance with the general instructions I had given to General Sir Hubert Gough.

On the 16th July a large body of the garrison of Ovillers surrendered, and that night and during the following day, by a direct advance from the west across No Man's Land, our troops (48th Division, Major-General R. Fanshawe) carried the remainder of the (2170) village and pushed out along the spur to the north and eastwards towards Pozieres.

Results, 17 July

15. The results of the operations of the 14th July and subsequent days were of considerable importance. The enemy's second main system of defence had been captured on a front of over three miles.

We had again forced him back more than a mile, and had gained possession of the southern crest of the main ridge on a front of 6,000 yards. Four more of his fortified villages and three woods had been wrested from him by determined fighting, and our advanced troops had penetrated as far as his third line of defence. In spite of a resolute resistance and many counter-attacks, in which the enemy had suffered severely, our line was definitely established from Maltz Horn Farm, where we met the French left, northwards along the eastern edge of Trones Wood to Longueval, then westwards past Bazentin-le-Grand to the northern corner of Bazentin-le-Petit and Bazentin-le-Petit Wood, and then westwards again past the southern face of Pozieres, to the north of Ovillers. Posts were established at Arrow Head Copse and Waterlot Farm, while we had troops thrown forward in Delville Wood and towards High Wood, though their position was not yet secure. . . .

During these operations and their development on the 15th a number of enemy guns were taken, making our total captures since the 1st July 8 heavy howitzers, 4 heavy guns, 42 field and light guns and field howitzers, 30 trench mortars and 52 machine guns. Very considerable losses had been inflicted on the enemy, and the prisoners captured amounted to over 2,000 bringing the total since the 1st July to over 10,000. . . .

General Review

Our Main Objects Achieved

38. The three main objects with which we had commenced our offensive in July had already been achieved at the date when this account closes [November

1916]; in spite of the fact that the heavy autumn rains had prevented full advantage being taken of the favourable situation created by our advance, at a time when we had good grounds for hoping to achieve yet more important successes.

Verdun had been relieved; the main German forces had been held on the Western front; and the enemy's strength had been very considerably worn down.

Any one of these three results is in itself sufficient to justify the Somme battle. The attainment of all three of them affords ample compensation for the splendid efforts of our troops and for the sacrifices made by ourselves and our Allies. They have brought us a long step forward towards the final victory of the Allied cause.

The desperate struggle for the possession of Verdun had invested that place with a moral and political importance out of all proportion to its military value. Its fall would undoubtedly have been proclaimed as a great victory for our enemies, and would have shaken the faith of many in our ultimate success.

The failure of the enemy to capture it, despite great efforts and very heavy losses, was a severe blow to his prestige, especially in view of the confidence he had openly expressed as to the results of the struggle.

Information obtained both during the progress of the Somme battle and since the suspension of active operations has fully established the effect of our offensive in keeping the enemy's main forces tied to the Western front. A movement of German troops eastward, which had commenced in June as a result of the Russian successes, continued for a short time only after the opening of the Allied attack.

Thereafter the enemy forces that moved East consisted, with one exception, of divisions that had been exhausted in the Somme battle, and these troops were always replaced on the Western front by fresh divisions. In November the strength of the enemy in the Western theatre of war was greater than in July, notwithstanding the abandonment of his offensive at Verdun.

It is possible that if Verdun had fallen large forces might still have been employed in an endeavour further to exploit that success. It is, however, far more probable, in view of developments in the Eastern theatre, that a considerable transfer of troops in that direction would have followed. It is therefore justifiable to conclude that the Somme offensive not only relieved

Verdun, but held large forces which would otherwise have been employed against our Allies in the East.

The third great object of the Allied operations on the Somme was the wearing down of the enemy's powers of resistance. Any statement of the extent to which (2171) this has been attained must depend in some degree on estimates. There is, nevertheless, sufficient evidence to place it beyond doubt that the enemy's losses in men and material have been very considerably higher than those of the Allies, while morally the balance of advantage on our side is still greater.

During the period under review a steady deterioration took place in the morale of large numbers of the enemy's troops. Many of them, it is true, fought with the greatest determination, even in the latest encounters, but the resistance of still larger numbers became latterly decidedly feebler than it had been in the earlier stages of the battle.

Aided by the great depth of his defences, and by the frequent reliefs which his resources in men enabled him to effect, discipline and training held the machine together sufficiently to enable the enemy to rally and reorganise his troops after each fresh defeat.

As our advance progressed, four-fifths of the total number of divisions engaged on the Western front were thrown one after another into the Somme battle, some of them twice, and some three times; and towards the end of the operations, when the weather unfortunately broke, there can be no doubt that his power of resistance had been very seriously diminished.

The total number of prisoners taken by us in the Somme battle between the 1st July and the 18th November is just over 38,000, including over 800 officers. During the same period we captured 29 heavy guns, 96 field guns and field howitzers, 136 trench mortars, and 54 machine guns.

Our Troops

So far as these results are due to the action of the British forces, they have been attained by troops the vast majority of whom had been raised and trained during the war. Many of them, especially amongst the drafts sent to replace wastage, counted their service by months, and gained in the Somme battle their first experience of war. The conditions under which we entered the war had made this unavoidable.

We were compelled either to use hastily trained and inexperienced officers and men, or else to defer the offensive until we had trained them. In this latter case we should have failed our Allies. That these troops should have accomplished so much under such conditions, and against an Army and a nation whose chief concern for so many years has been preparation for war, constitutes a feat of which the history of our nation records no equal.

The difficulties and hardships cheerfully overcome, and the endurance, determination and invincible courage shown in meeting them, can hardly be imagined by those who have not had personal experience of the battle, even though they have themselves seen something of war. . . .

The style of warfare in which we have been engaged offered no scope for cavalry action, with the exception of the one instance already mentioned in which a small body of cavalry gave useful assistance in the advance on High Wood.

Intimately associated with the artillery and infantry in attack and defence, the work of various special services contributed much towards the successes gained.

Trench mortars, both heavy and light, have become an important adjunct to artillery in trench warfare, and valuable work has been done by the personnel in charge of these weapons. Considerable experience has been gained in their use, and they are likely to be employed even more frequently in the struggle in future.

Machine guns play a great part—almost a decisive part under some conditions—in modern war, and our Machine Gun Corps has attained to considerable proficiency in their use, handling them with great boldness and skill. The highest value of these weapons is displayed on the defensive rather than in the offensive, and we were attaching.

Nevertheless, in attack also machine guns can exercise very great influence in the hands of men with a quick eye for opportunity and capable of a bold initiative. The Machine Gun Corps, though comparatively recently formed, has done very valuable work and will increase in importance.

The part played by the new armoured cars known as “tanks” in some of the later fights has been brought to notice by me already in my daily reports. These cars proved of great value on various occasions, and the personnel in charge of them performed many deeds of remarkable valour.

The employment by the enemy of gas and of liquid flame as weapons of offence compelled us, not only to discover ways to protect our troops from their effects, but also to devise means to make use of the same (2172) instruments of destruction. Great fertility of invention has been shown, and very great credit is due to the special personnel employed for the rapidity and success with which these new arms have been developed and perfected, and for the very great devotion to duty they have displayed in a difficult and dangerous service.

The Army owes its thanks to the chemists, physiologists and physicists of the highest rank who devoted their energies to enabling us to surpass the enemy in the use of a means of warfare which took the civilised world by surprise. Our own experience of the numerous experiments and trials necessary before gas and flame could be used, of the great preparations which had to be made for their manufacture, and of the special training required for the personnel employed, shows that the employment of such methods by the Germans was not the result of a desperate decision, but had been prepared for deliberately.

Since we have been compelled, in self-defence, to use similar methods, it is satisfactory to be able to record, on the evidence of prisoners, of documents captured, and of our own observation, that the enemy has suffered heavy casualties from our gas attacks, while the means of protection adopted by us have proved thoroughly effective.

Throughout the operations Engineer troops, both from home and overseas, have played an important role, and in every engagement the Field Companies, assisted by Pioneers, have cooperated with the other arms with the greatest gallantry and devotion to duty.

In addition to the demands made on the services of the Royal Engineers in the firing line, the duties of the Corps during the preparation and development of the offensive embraced the execution of a vast variety of important works, to which attention has already been drawn in this Despatch. Whether in or behind the firing line, or on the lines of communication, these skilled troops have continued to show the power of resource and the devotion to duty by which they have ever been characterised.

The Tunnelling Companies still maintain their superiority over the enemy underground, thus safeguarding their comrades in the trenches. Their skill, enterprise and courage have been remarkable, and, thanks to their efforts, the enemy has nowhere been able to achieve a success of any importance by mining.

During the Battle of the Somme the work of the Tunnelling Companies contributed in no small degree to the successful issue of several operations.

The Field Survey Companies have worked throughout with ability and devotion, and have not only maintained a constant supply of the various maps required as the battle progressed, but have in various other ways been of great assistance to the artillery.

The Signal Service, created a short time before the war began on a very small scale, has expanded in proportion with the rest of the Army, and is now a very large organization.

It provides the means of inter-communication between all the Armies and all parts of them, and in modern war requirements in this respect are on an immense and elaborate scale.

The calls on this Service have been very heavy, entailing a most severe strain, often under most trying and dangerous conditions. Those calls have invariably been met with conspicuous success, and no service has shown a more whole-hearted and untiring energy in the fulfilment of its duty.

The great strain of the five months' battle was met with equal success by the Army Service Corps and the Ordnance Corps, as well as by all the other Administrative Services and Departments, both on the Lines of Communication and in front of them. The maintenance of large armies in a great battle under modern conditions is a colossal task.

Though bad weather often added very considerably to the difficulties of transport, the troops never wanted for food, ammunition, or any of the other many and varied requirements for the supply of which these Services and Departments are responsible. This fact in itself is the highest testimony that can be given to the energy and efficiency with which the work was conducted.

In connection with the maintenance and supply of our troops, I desire to express the obligation of the Army to the Navy for the unfailing success with which, in the face of every difficulty, the large numbers of men and the vast quantities of material required by us have been transported across the seas.

I also desire to record the obligation of the Army in the Field to the various authorities at home, and to the workers under them women as well as men by whose efforts and self-sacrifice all our requirements were (2173) met. Without the vast quantities of munitions and stores of all sorts provided, and without the

drafts of men sent to replace wastage, the efforts of our troops could not have been maintained.

The losses entailed by the constant fighting threw a specially heavy strain on the Medical Services. This has been met with the greatest zeal and efficiency. The gallantry and devotion with which officers and men of the Regimental Medical Service and Field Ambulances have discharged their duties is shown by the large number of the R.A.M.C. [Royal Army Medical Corps] and Medical Corps of the Dominions who have fallen in the field.

The work of the Medical Services behind the front has been no less arduous. The untiring professional zeal and marked ability of the surgical specialists and consulting surgeons, combined with the skill and devotion of the medical and nursing staffs, both at the Casualty Clearing Stations in the field and the Stationary and General Hospitals at the Base, have been beyond praise. In this respect also the Director-General has on many occasions expressed to me the immense help the British Red Cross Society have been to him in assisting the R.A.M.C. in their work. . . .

Future Prospects

In conclusion, I desire to add a few words as to future prospects.

The enemy's power has not yet been broken, nor is it yet possible to form an estimate of the time the war may last before the objects for which the Allies are fighting have been attained. But the Somme battle has placed beyond doubt the ability of the Allies to gain those objects.

The German Army is the mainstay of the Central Powers, and a full half of that Army, despite all the advantages of the defensive, supported by the strongest fortifications, suffered defeat on the Somme this year. Neither the victors nor the vanquished will forget this; and, though bad weather has given the enemy a respite, there will undoubtedly be many thousands in his ranks who will begin the new campaign with little confidence in their ability to resist our assaults or to overcome our defence.

Our new Armies entered the battle with the determination to win and with confidence in their power to do so. They have proved to themselves, to the enemy, and to the world that this confidence was justified, and in the fierce struggle they have been through they have learned many valuable lessons which will help them in the future.

Source

FirstWorldWar.com: The War to End All Wars,
<http://www.firstworldwar.com/source/haigsommedespatch.htm>.

Sir Douglas Haig (1861–1928)

Haig, a Scot who graduated from Brasenose College, Oxford, and the Royal Military College, Sandhurst, was commissioned in a cavalry regiment, the 7th Hussars. He fought in the Boer War under Sir John French, served in India, and in 1906 went to the War Office to work under the Liberal R. B. Haldane, who described him as “the most highly equipped thinker in the British Army.” In this position he worked on plans to dispatch a British Expeditionary Force to Europe in the event of general war there, winning a knighthood in 1909. After commanding I Corps and then the British First Army in World War I, in December 1915 Haig was promoted to commander-in-chief, succeeding Sir John French.

Haig’s name became inextricably linked with two major offensives in which the British endured enormous casualties: the Battle of the Somme that began on 1 July 1916 and lasted until mid-November 1916, in which British casualties totaled close to 500,000 men; and Third Ypres, or the Battle of Passchendaele, that began on 31 July 1917 in torrential rain and lasted for several months, during which the British suffered approximately 350,000 casualties, many of them men who drowned in mud, for an overall advance of perhaps 4 miles. Haig’s admirers suggested that French difficulties, those of 1917 self-inflicted to some degree, left him no choice but to fight these battles. In 1918 he commanded the British forces that, after only just managing to withstand the last German offensive of March–July 1918, took part in the campaign that finally defeated the German armies, driving them remorselessly back until an armistice was signed in November 1918. Haig, a strong spiritualist and fundamentalist Christian, believed, in historian John Keegan’s words, “that he was in direct communication (2174) with God and had a major part to play in a divine plan for the world.” Dour, determined, and tenacious, Haig held on until the end and, despite differences with British Prime Minister David Lloyd George, who subsequently sought to shift all the blame for Passchendaele onto Haig’s shoulders, was never replaced as British commander-in-chief. Until his death in 1928, Haig continued to defend his wartime strategy of attrition as the only one that promised any chance of success.

About The Documents

French officers who took part in the fighting at Verdun left vivid firsthand accounts of their particular part in the battle. Both sides in the conflict were capable of great heroism and showed enormous discipline, and each often paid tribute to the other's courage. One central episode of the early fighting at Verdun was the German capture of the strategic strong-point of Fort Douaumont, taken on 2 March after heavy fighting. The French made one unsuccessful attempt to recapture the fort in late May but only succeeded in doing so in late October, after months of bitter combat on both sides. These accounts of the war, collected in a set of volumes published shortly after it ended, convey a sense of immediacy and of the impact the war, especially a ferocious offensive such as that of Verdun, upon those who experienced and observed it.

In the course of the war Haig published eight dispatches as commander-in-chief, the last of them after Germany's defeat. In all of them he sought to justify the already controversial strategy of attrition and the great offensive he had adopted as the only one likely to bring victory in the end. Many, such as Lloyd George, suggested that war might have been more easily won, with a smaller loss of life, if peripheral offensives had been pursued more aggressively. Haig, by contrast, remained an unapologetic Westerner, convinced that the war could only have been won in the trenches of Flanders and France and using the tactics that he chose to employ. The reports he produced at regular intervals, eight in all, were written with the knowledge that they would immediately be disseminated as pamphlets and published in *The Times* and other newspapers. In a matter-of-fact style, minimizing the suffering of the war but emphasizing the bravery of all those who fought on the British side, Haig sought to justify his strategy at a time when, almost six months after it began, the heavy casualties of the Somme had begun to provoke public criticism. A formal document, it made no attempt to convey the bloodiness and horror of the experience of a major offensive but fell back on conventional language to describe the lengthy battle. Haig explained the rationale behind and the course of the Somme campaign, almost certainly exaggerating the overall benefits to the Allied position gained from the offensive, in part, no doubt, to defend his own decisions and to maintain British morale. Carefully diplomatic, Haig also paid warm tribute to Britain's allies, the French, and those Dominion troops involved. Close to the end of his report, he also expressed gratitude to all the associated support units, a revelation of the complicated nature of the war

that was being waged and the wide range of ancillary services it demanded. Interestingly, Haig made particular mention of the new technological branches of war; the scientists who had developed the use of gas; the tanks, of which only a few took part at the Somme; and the airplane. This at least suggests some validity to the perspective of those historians who have argued that he was friendly to military innovations, willing to utilize them on the battlefield, and an apostle of combined operations.

Further Reading

Clayton, Anthony. *Paths of Glory: The French Army, 1914–1918*. London: Cassell, 2003.

Corrigan, Gordon. *Mud, Blood and Poppycok: Britain and the First World War*. London: Cassell, 2003.

De Groot, Gerard J. *Douglas Haig, 1861–1928*. London: Unwin Hyman, 1988.

Horne, Alistair. *The Price of Glory: Verdun 1916*. New York: Macmillan, 1962.

Norman, Terry. *The Hell They Called High Wood: The Somme, 1916*. London: William Kimber, 1984.

Sheffield, Gary. *The Somme*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2003.

Tooley, Hunt. *The Western Front: Battle Ground and Home Front in the First World War*. New York: Palgrave, 2003.

Travers, Tim. *The Killing Ground: The British Army, the Western Front, and the Emergence of Modern Warfare, 1900–1918*. London: Routledge, 1990.

Warner, Philip. *Field Marshal Earl Haig*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1991.

Winter, Denis. *Haig's Command: A Reassessment*. London: Viking, 1991.

(2175)

MLA

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "14. The Western Front." *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*, ABC-CLIO, 2005, pp. . *ABC-CLIO eBook Collection*, legacy.abc-clio.com/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2085.

Chicago Manual of Style

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "14. The Western Front." In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005.
http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2085.

APA

Roberts, P. M., S. C. Tucker (2005). 14. The Western Front. In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia* (pp.). Retrieved from <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2085>

Essay 15. New Weapons: Chemical Warfare and the Use of Poison Gas

Chemical Warfare in World War I

World War I was the first conflict in which chemical weapons were employed against humans, a development that to many symbolized the breakdown of postwar European civilization into barbarism. The willingness to use such weapons was also emblematic of the fact that all belligerents were prepared to resort to every means available to them to attain victory. Although French forces probably used small quantities of stupefying tear gas early in 1915, German troops were the first to use large-scale weapons of chemical warfare, employing massive amounts of poisonous chlorine gas at the Second Battle of Ypres in April 1915. On 22 April a cloud of chlorine gas, 168 tons from 6,000 cylinders, was released simultaneously over 4 miles of the front, where it quickly affected 10,000 Allied troops, 5,000 of whom died within ten minutes of their first exposure to gas. The Germans themselves had not anticipated how successful their new weapons would be, so they failed to fully exploit the breakthrough this created. Two days later gas was used again, this time against Canadian troops, and it was repeatedly employed from then until the battle ended in late May. The Allies ceded substantial ground to German forces, appreciably reducing the size of their salient around Ypres, though inadequate supplies and manpower eventually forced German commanders to end the assault.

Although the Allies immediately condemned Germany for employing inhumane methods of warfare, from then onward all belligerent nations used gas extensively during the war. The British first used chlorine gas on 25 September 1915 at the Battle of Loos, releasing it along 25 miles of front, an operation that proved counterproductive when the winds changed, sending gas toward their own lines and causing death or serious injury to numerous British troops. Emulating the Germans, both Britain and France quickly developed their own chemical warfare services, which soon became substantial bureaucratic empires with a vested interest in their own survival. Each country had units specifically dedicated to chemical warfare, including the British Special Brigade, the French Service Chimique de Guerre, and the U.S. 1st Gas Brigade. By summer 1918, 9,000 Allied chemical warfare troops faced 5,000 German counterparts. In all countries, academics and scientists were recruited to enhance the effectiveness of chemical warfare.

Besides the original chlorine gas, several other forms of gas weapons were soon invented. The excellence of the prewar German chemical industry gave it a distinct advantage in introducing new methods of chemical warfare, including phosgene gas, first used in December 1915, that relied on a choking agent. Even more feared was mustard gas or dichloroethyl sulfide, introduced in July 1917, a blistering agent whose effects only became apparent over several days and that attacked not only the skin but also internal mucous membranes, causing severe lung damage or death. The Allies developed their own formula for phosgene within two months but did not catch up with German prowess on mustard gas for over a year. Both sides competed to invent the most effective means of delivery, including projectors, heavy mortars, and flamethrowers, all of which could launch gas barrages from a considerable distance. All nations also hastened to provide their forces with some form of protection against chemical warfare, using bleach to decontaminate areas affected by gas and quickly developing gas masks and respirators, some of which were more effective than others but all clumsy and uncomfortable to wear. Military medical centers also devised treatments to alleviate the effects of gas poisoning, and overall only 1–3 percent of victims died, though many others suffered some permanent injury to lungs or skin.

Chemical warfare was only one of a number of technological innovations applying industrial methods to the conduct of war, including tanks, aerial warfare, and massive deployments of machine guns, that attracted much popular attention but failed to break the stalemate in the trenches of the Western Front. Although casualties from gas were always relatively light, about 500,000 in all of whom the majority recovered, among combatants and noncombatants alike the image of chemical warfare, the unheralded release of insidious poisonous vapors that incapacitated defenseless and unsuspecting men, was particularly horrific. Subsequent disarmament agreements and conventions regulating the humane conduct of warfare devoted particular attention to restricting the use of chemical warfare. During World War II many anticipated that gas (2176) would be used extensively against both soldiers and civilians, but in practice the possibility of retaliation was so great that belligerents chose not to use gas either in combat situations or to terrorize or incapacitate civilian populations. Under Adolf Hitler, a World War I soldier who himself became temporarily blinded due to Allied gas warfare in 1918, the German National Socialist government used poisonous Zyklon-B gas to murder several million defenseless European Jews in massive concentration camp death chamber facilities.

German Use of Gas, April 1915: Report of British Field Marshal Sir John French on the Second Battle of Ypres, 15 June 1915

I much regret that during the period under report the fighting has been characterized on the enemy's side by a cynical and barbarous disregard of the well-known usages of civilized war and a flagrant defiance of the Hague Convention.

All the scientific resources of Germany have apparently been brought into play to produce a gas of so virulent and poisonous a nature that any human being brought into contact with it is first paralyzed and then meets with a lingering and agonizing death.

The enemy has invariably preceded, prepared and supported his attacks by a discharge in stupendous volume of these poisonous gas fumes whenever the wind was favorable.

Such weather conditions have only prevailed to any extent in the neighborhood of Ypres, and there can be no doubt that the effect of these poisonous fumes materially influenced the operations in that theater, until experience suggested effective counter-measures, which have since been so perfected as to render them innocuous.

The brain power and thought which has evidently been at work before this unworthy method of making war reached the pitch of efficiency which has been demonstrated in its practice shows that the Germans must have harbored these designs for a long time.

As a soldier I cannot help expressing the deepest regret and some surprise that an Army which hitherto has claimed to be the chief exponent of the chivalry of war should have stooped to employ such devices against brave and gallant foes.

It was at the commencement of the second battle of Ypres on the evening of April 22nd that the enemy first made use of asphyxiating gas.

Some days previously I had complied with General Joffre's request to take over the trenches occupied by the French, and on the evening of the 22nd the troops holding the lines east of Ypres were posted as follows:

From Steenstraate to the east of Langemarck, as far as the Poelcappelle Road, a French Division. Thence, in a southeasterly direction toward the Passchendaele-Beclaere Road, the Canadian Division. Thence a Division took up the line in a southerly direction east of Zonnebeke to a point west of Becelaere, whence another Division continued the line southeast to the northern limit of the Corps on its right.

Of the 5th Corps there were four battalions in Divisional Reserve about Ypres; the Canadian Division had one battalion of Divisional Reserve and the 1st Canadian Brigade in Army Reserve. An Infantry Brigade, which had just been withdrawn after suffering heavy losses on Hill 60, was resting about Vlemernighe.

Following a heavy bombardment, the enemy attacked the French Division at about 5 p.m., using asphyxiating gases for the first time. Aircraft reported that at about 5 p.m. thick yellow smoke had been seen issuing from the German trenches between Langemarck and Bixschoote. The French reported that two simultaneous attacks had been made east of the Ypres-Staden Railway, in which these asphyxiating gases had been used.

What follows almost defies description. The effect of these poisonous gases was so virulent as to render the whole of the line held by the French Division mentioned above practically incapable of any action at all. It was at first impossible for anyone to realize what had actually happened. The smoke and fumes hid everything from sight, and hundreds of men were thrown into a comatose or dying condition, and within an hour the whole position had to be abandoned, together with about fifty guns.

I wish particularly to repudiate any idea of attaching the least blame to the French Division for this unfortunate incident.

After all the examples our gallant Allies have shown of dogged and tenacious courage in the many (2177) trying situations in which they have been placed throughout the course of this campaign it is quite superfluous for me to dwell on this aspect of the incident, and I would only express my firm conviction that, if any troops in the world had been able to hold their trenches in the face of such a treacherous and altogether unexpected onslaught, the French Division would have stood firm.

The left flank of the Canadian Division was thus left dangerously exposed to serious attack in flank, and there appeared to be a prospect of their being

overwhelmed and of a successful attempt by the Germans to cut off the British troops occupying the salient to the East.

In spite of the danger to which they were exposed the Canadians held their ground with a magnificent display of tenacity and courage; and it is not too much to say that the bearing and conduct of these splendid troops averted a disaster which might have been attended with the most serious consequences.

They were supported with great promptitude by the reserves of the divisions holding the salient and by a brigade which had been resting in billets.

Throughout the night the enemy's attacks were repulsed, effective counter-attacks were delivered, and at length touch was gained with the French right, and a new line was formed.

Source

Charles F. Horne and Warren F. Austin, eds., *Great Events of the Great War*, 7 vols. (Washington, DC: National Alumni, 1920), 3:139–144.

Varieties of Gas: Recollections of Corporal Earl B. Searcy, 311th United States Infantry, 7th Division, 1921

Five kinds of gas were at that time in common use by the enemy. I shall enumerate them briefly:

“Tear Gas”—Named for its reaction on the tear-glands of the eyes. Non-poisonous, but painful and highly annoying.

“Sneezing Gas”—So termed because of its irritating reaction on the membranes of the nose and head. A few whiffs would throw the victim into violent fits of sneezing. The Germans had the habit of throwing over the “tear” and “sneezing” gas for a time, hoping to render the Allied troops unable to keep their masks on, then would follow up with the poisonous varieties. Later we learned a great deal of the practice from experience.

“Chlorine Gas”—A suffocating gas, highly poisonous.

“Phosgene Gas”—Having the odor of musty hay. Very poisonous.

“Mustard Gas”—So named from its smell, which strongly resembled that of ordinary mustard. The fumes from the “mustard” were not dangerously

poisonous, unless inhaled at close range; but the liquid was one of the most cruel weapons of the war. The gas was fired in special shells, which burst with little noise, in the hope that the liquid, which was yellowish in color, might splash over the victim, burning him with such violence that no cure at that time was known for it. Some of the most pitiful cases we saw later were men whose faces and bodies had been burned with this merciless liquid called “mustard gas.”

We were told, further, that gas was sent over enemy lines in two ways: by the “cloud” method, which meant that it was simply liberated from huge tanks when the wind was right, and by “shell,” meaning that the gas was mixed with other ingredients and fired by artillery.

Source

Earl B. Searcy, *Looking Back* (Springfield, IL: Journal, 1921), 36–37, reprinted as “Recollections of Corporal Earl B. Searcy, 311th United States Infantry, 7th Division,” in James H. Hallas, *Doughboy War: The American Expeditionary Force in World War I* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2000), 55–56.

The Effect of Phosgene Gas Poisoning: Recollections of Sergeant Fred A. McKenna, 103rd United States Field Artillery, 26th Division, 1921

Phosgene was quickly recognized by its pungent odor, somewhat similar to the odor of old, moldy hay. The effect of this gas differed in many respects from that of chlorine, and on the whole, it was far more efficient and deadly. If breathed in high concentrations, it killed immediately. In small concentrations, its effect was almost limited to the little terminal air cells in the (2178) lungs. Its action so hindered the lining of these little air cells and of the small blood vessels in the cell walls that the fluid part of the blood leaked out of the blood vessels into the air cells. In addition to the blood vessels there was another system of vessels known as the lymphatics, which, from our point of view, may be looked upon as sewers to remove secretion. The symptoms of phosgene poisoning might be delayed for a considerable time, because the sewers at first were able to carry off the greater part of the secretion; a time came, however, when it was impossible for those sewers to remove the secretion as fast as it was excreted from the blood vessels. Consequently, the air cells began to fill up with fluid, which was at first thin and which later became thicker, almost like pus. The result was that death from phosgene poisoning was a slow and prolonged drowning in the subject’s own body fluid, a drowning infinitely worse than in water, because instead of eight to ten minutes, it required eight to ten days. The symptoms were those of drowning; the subject was blue, and

struggled for breath. The fluid ran out of his mouth and nose. A pool of fluid was often on the floor beside his bed, where he had hung over his head to let it be drained or coughed out. As the case progressed, the patient became bluer, colder, unconscious, and finally, after eight or nine days of suffering, died from inability to get sufficient air to maintain life.

Source

Fred A. McKenna, ed., *Battery A 103rd Field Artillery in France* (Providence, RI: Privately printed, 1921), 145, in James H. Hallas, *Doughboy War: The American Expeditionary Force in World War I* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2000), 163.

Wilfred Owen, *Dulce Et Decorum Est*

Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,
 Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge,
 Till on the haunting flares we turned our backs
 And towards our distant rest began to trudge.
 Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots
 But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame; all blind;
 Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots
 Of tired, outstripped Five-Nines that dropped behind.
 Gas! GAS! Quick, boys!—An ecstasy of fumbling,
 Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time;
 But someone still was yelling out and stumbling,
 And flound'ring like a man in fire or lime . . .
 Dim, through the misty panes and thick green light,
 As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.

In all my dreams, before my helpless sight,
 He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.
 If in some smothering dreams you too could pace
 Behind the wagon that we flung him in,
 And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,
 His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin;
 If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood
 Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,
 Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud
 Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,—
 My friend, you would not tell with such high zest
 To children ardent for some desperate glory,
 The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est
 Pro patria mori.

Source

C. Day Lewis, ed., *The Collected Poems of Wilfred Owen* (Norfolk, CT: New Directions, 1964), 55.

Sir John French (1852–1925)

Field Marshal Sir John French was the first commander-in-chief of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) in France. A cavalryman, he served as chief of the Imperial General Staff from 1912 to 1914, where he prepared plans for British forces to serve in France in the event of war. As a commander he proved mercurial and impulsive, bringing the BEF close to defeat during the Battle of Mons in autumn 1914 and initially seeking to withdraw the British armies from the line to refit as the crucial September 1914 First Battle of the Marne was impending. During 1915 French's overconfidence caused him to launch attacks

on the German lines at Neuve-Chapelle in March, Auber Ridge in May, and Loos in September, all of which proved costly defeats, or at best stalemates. After the Battle of Loos Prime Minister Herbert H. Asquith forced French to resign, and he became commander-in-chief of British home forces, a position he retained until the war ended in 1918.

(2179)

Wilfred Owen (1893–1918)

Owen, today perhaps the best known of all the British war poets, came from modest circumstances, the son of a minor railway official and a dominating mother who centered her ambitions on Wilfred, her eldest child, encouraging him to develop his poetic talents. Owen consciously modeled himself after the youthful poet John Keats and hoped to pursue literary studies at London University but failed to win a scholarship there. He worked for some time as a teacher of English in Bordeaux, France, where he remained for more than a year after the war began. Eventually, in September 1915, Owen returned to England to join the Artists' Rifles as an officer cadet, and the following June he was commissioned a second-lieutenant in the 5th Manchester Regiment. Owen, whose earlier poetry revealed strong homoerotic leanings, was an excellent officer who paid great attention to the welfare of his men. In January 1917 his first exposure to the horrors of trench warfare transformed him from a rather optimistic and carefree young man into one who wished to bear witness to the waste and futility of what he himself would term "the pity of war," the damage it wreaked on the innocent and defenseless.

After four months of frontline service, in late April 1917 Owen spent several days under fire in a forward position, confined with the scattered remnants of a fellow officer's body. He was invalided home with neurasthenia, or shell shock, and sent to Craiglockhart Hospital near Edinburgh, which specialized in war-related nervous illnesses. Here Owen, who had not yet published any of his verse, encountered the rather older, much wealthier, and already well-known poet Siegfried Sassoon, who encouraged him to write factual poetry detailing the impact of warfare on those who had to wage it and introduced him to prominent figures in the literary world who could serve as Owen's patrons. Sassoon also lent him the French writer Henri Barbusse's antiwar novel of 1916, *Le Feu*, that likewise viewed the war as a horrific, destructive, and futile enterprise. After a year of home duty managing his regiment's officers' mess in Scarborough, Owen returned to the front in September 1918, convinced that he would be killed but that it was his duty to return to his men and speak of their sufferings on their behalf. On 4 October Owen won the Military Cross for

conspicuous bravery in an attack across the Sambre Canal. German machine-gun fire killed him on 4 November, and the news of his death reached his parents on 11 November 1918, one hour after the announcement of the armistice ending hostilities.

In 1920 Sassoon edited a volume containing twenty of Owen's poems, and in 1931 their fellow war poet Edmund Blunden brought out an expanded volume of fifty-nine, including most of Owen's best-known writings, together with a brief description by Owen of his own poetical intentions and a biographical memoir by Blunden. Owen's reputation grew gradually, and by the 1960s, when the composer Benjamin Britten wrote a musical requiem setting for several of Owen's poems deploring the devastation and futility of war, he had become a canonical figure of World War I history, his poems recognized as classics and often used as set texts to introduce schoolchildren to the memory of that conflict.

About The Documents

The four documents here, all dealing with the subject of chemical warfare, are in some ways of very different types. They include Sir John French's report on the use of gas at the Second Battle of Ypres in 1915; accounts by two American noncommissioned officers of the types of gas and their effects; and one of Wilfred Owen's most famous wartime poems. French's report was an official document written for public consumption. He described the impact of the phosgene gas attacks at the Ypres in factual terms but took the opportunity to preface this with harsh condemnations of Germany's "cynical and barbarous disregard of the well-known usages of civilized war and a flagrant defiance of the Hague Convention." He suggested that the Germans must have contemplated using such weapons since well before the war and expressed both "regret" and "surprise that an Army which hitherto has claimed to be the chief exponent of the chivalry of war should have stooped to employ such devices against brave and gallant foes." French's shock might have seemed less like hypocritical propaganda had Britain and France not moved promptly to develop lethal chemical weapons of their own and to deploy these as soon as possible.

The two accounts of gas given by a corporal and private from the American Expeditionary Force, which reached France in 1918 and initially suffered rather severely from gas warfare, were both entirely factual.

(2180) Each formed part of a longer memoir of wartime service that each man published in 1921, long enough after the war to allow time for reflection but sufficiently soon for the immediacy of the experience to linger. Neither made

any moral judgment as to the use of chemical weapons; instead, they sought to describe the varieties of gas and their effects. By implication, nonetheless, McKenna's graphic account of the effects of serious phosgene gas inhalation and the lingering death it caused, which revealed why it was one of the most feared weapons of the war, suggested that chemical warfare was profoundly inhumane. The final lines of Owen's poem, recounting a sudden gas attack on a platoon of bone-weary soldiers trudging back to their billets and the choking, drowning death of one exhausted private who failed to don his gas mask swiftly enough, went further. After describing the man's sufferings in gruesome detail, he explicitly challenged the official ideology that it was glorious to die for one's country, suggesting that this death proved the folly of those who perceived war as something noble, heroic, and splendid.

Further Reading

Cook, Tim. *No Place to Run: The Canadian Corps and Gas Warfare in the First World War*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000.

Dixon, John. *Magnificent but Not War: The Second Battle of Ypres, 1915*. London: Pen and Sword, 2003.

Haber, L. E. *The Poisonous Cloud: Chemical Warfare in the First World War*. Oxford, UK: Clarendon, 1986.

Hibberd, Dominic. *Wilfred Owen: A New Biography*. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2003.

McPhail, Helen, and Philip Guest. *Wilfred Owen*. Barnsley, South Yorkshire: Leo Cooper, 1998.

Owen, Harold, ed. *Journey from Obscurity, Wilfred Owen, 1893–1918: Memoirs of the Owen Family*. 3 vols. New York: Oxford University Press, 1963–1965.

Owen, Wilfred. *The Complete Poems and Fragments*. Ed. Jon Stallworthy. 2 vols. London: Chatto and Windus, 1983.

———. *Selected Letters*. 2nd ed. Ed. John Bell. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.

Palazzo, Albert. *Seeking Victory on the Western Front: The British Army and Chemical Warfare in World War I*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000.

Richter, Donald. *Chemical Soldiers: British Gas Warfare in World War I*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1992.

MLA

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "15. New Weapons." *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*, ABC-CLIO, 2005, pp. . *ABC-CLIO eBook Collection*, legacy.abc-clio.com/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2092.

Chicago Manual of Style

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "15. New Weapons." In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005.
http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2092.

APA

Roberts, P. M., S. C. Tucker (2005). 15. New Weapons. In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia* (pp.). Retrieved from <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2092>

Essay 16. The Gallipoli Campaign

The Gallipoli Campaign, February 1915–January 1916

The Gallipoli campaign was one of the major Allied disasters of the early years of World War I. In late October 1914 Ottoman Turkey joined the Central Powers—Germany and Austria-Hungary—a decision motivated by the long-standing military ties between Germany and Turkey, by the belief that the Central Powers were likely to win, and also by well-founded Turkish fears that the Allies were likely to promise tsarist Russia their capital city, Constantinople, and the Dardanelles Straits controlling the entrance to the Black Sea from the Mediterranean as an inducement to keep Russia in the war. Meanwhile, by the end of 1914 the war on the Western Front had degenerated into one of attrition, with both sides soon settled into a system of trenches extending several hundred miles from the Belgian coast to the Alps. Allied leaders optimistically hoped that a flank attack on the Central Powers might break the deadlock on the Western Front. If they could seize the Dardanelles, this would also greatly facilitate the transport of military supplies to Russia, locked in a war with Germany and Austria-Hungary in the central plains of Europe, and might even persuade Greece and Bulgaria to join the Allies. Russian leaders urged their Allies to adopt such an “Eastern strategy” in the hope that this would relieve the pressure on their own forces.

Within the British cabinet, First Lord of the Admiralty Winston Churchill became the most dedicated advocate of an expedition to seize the Dardanelles and Constantinople, and in January 1915 he won the British cabinet’s approval for a naval offensive to this end. French Naval Minister Jean Augagneur likewise agreed to commit a squadron of ships to the venture. Anglo-French naval forces made three attempts to force the straits, twice in late February and again on 18 March 1915, but heavy bombardments from Turkish fortresses and losses from unsuspected minefields meant that all were unsuccessful. A mixture of British, French, Australian, and New Zealand ground forces, 480,000 over the course of the campaign, were dispatched to assist the expedition, which was commanded by British General Sir Ian Hamilton, a close friend of British War Minister Lord Kitchener. Before (2181) the initial Allied landing at Gallipoli on 25 April 1915, the Turks deployed additional ground troops to reinforce the area. At great cost, Allied forces established two beachheads, at Helles and Gaba Tepe (later renamed Anzac Cove), but subsequent efforts during April, May, and June 1915 to extend the position southward to Krithia were all repelled with heavy casualties.

In early August 1915 the Allies launched another three-pronged offensive, its centerpiece the landing of additional troops at a new beachhead on Suvla Bay, in the hope that they would link up with those based at Anzac Cove and sweep through the entire Gallipoli Peninsula. Although the Suvla Bay landings were successful, the new offensive soon bogged down. One major reason was that Turkish forces held the high ground above all three beachheads, making further progress almost impossible. In late August efforts by troops at Suvla Bay to take two Turkish strongholds, Hill 60 and Scimitar Hill, and join up with Allied forces at Anzac Cove ended once more in failure. By this time the Allies had suffered 40,000 casualties, and the campaign was settling into one of trench warfare, afflicted at various times by heat, cold, rain, insects, and a variety of illnesses, including malaria and dysentery. In September 1915 Hamilton requested an additional 95,000 men, but the British War Office only offered 25,000. Some Allied troops were diverted from Gallipoli to the newly launched Salonika offensive, and in October 1915 Hamilton himself was replaced by General Sir Charles Monro, who almost immediately recommended Allied evacuation of the entire Gallipoli position. Between 10 December 1915 and 9 January 1916 the 140,000 remaining Allied troops were successfully evacuated from the three Allied redoubts of Anzac Cove, Suvla Bay, and Helles, an operation conducted in such great secrecy that it deceived the watching Turkish forces.

British losses at Gallipoli, including those killed and wounded from the empire forces, amounted to 205,000, about one-quarter of them from the Anzac troops, while the French suffered 47,000 casualties. Overall Turkish losses of approximately 250,000 were roughly comparable. For the Allies, especially the British, the Gallipoli expedition later became synonymous with poor military planning, inadequate coordination of military and naval forces, and wasteful deployment of scarce manpower at the cost of heavy casualties. His involvement in the Dardanelles expedition forced Churchill to resign from office in May 1915 and, despite his energetic subsequent efforts to justify the campaign and to argue that if only the British cabinet had authorized renewed naval support in summer or autumn 1915 it might have succeeded, Churchill's responsibility for the scheme became an ineradicable political black mark on his career. Although Australians took great and sometimes inflated pride in the performance of their forces at Gallipoli, overall they perceived the campaign as one in which incompetent British generals and politicians had casually squandered the lives of many thousands of Australian troops, a view that generated deep and lasting resentment and contributed to further alienating the country from the British Empire.

**Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett to British Prime Minister Herbert Henry Asquith,
8 September 1915**

Dear Mr Asquith

I hope you will excuse the liberty I am taking in writing to you but I have the chance of sending this letter through by hand and I consider it absolutely necessary that you should know the true state of affairs out here. Our last great effort to achieve some definite success against the Turks was the most ghastly and costly fiasco in our history since the Battle of Bannockburn.

Personally I never thought the scheme decided on by Headquarters ever had the slightest chance of succeeding and all efforts now to make out that it only just failed owing to the failure of the 9th Corps to seize the Anafarta Hills bare no relation to the real truth. The operations did for a time make headway in an absolutely impossible country more than any general had a right to expect owing to the superlative gallantry of the Colonial Troops and the self-sacrificing manner in which they threw away their lives against positions which should never have been attacked.

The main idea was to cut off the southern portion of the Turkish Army by getting astride of the Peninsula from Suvla Bay. Therefore the whole weight of the attack should have been concentrated on this objective, instead of which the main attack with the (2182) best troops was delivered against the side of the Turkish position which is a series of impossible mountains and valleys covered with dense scrub.

The Staff seem to have carefully searched for the most difficult points and then threw away thousands of lives in trying to take them by frontal attacks. A few Ghurkhas obtained a lodgement on Chunuk Bair but were immediately driven off by the Turkish counter attacks and the main objective Koja Chemen Tepe was never approached. The 9th Corps miserably mishandled having failed to take the Anafarta Hills is now accused of being alone responsible for the ultimate failure of the operations.

The failure of the 9th Corps was due not so much to the employment of new and untried troops as to bad staff work. The generals had but a vague idea of the nature of the ground in their front and no adequate steps were taken to keep the troops supplied with water. In consequence many of these unfortunate volunteers went three days in very hot weather on one bottle of water and were yet expected to advance carrying heavy loads and to storm strong positions.

The Turks having been given ample time to bring up strong reinforcements to Anafarta, where they entrenched themselves in up to their necks, were again assaulted in a direct frontal attack on August 21st. The movement never had the slightest chance of succeeding and led to another bloody fiasco in which the unfortunate 29th Division who were brought up especially from Helles, and the 2nd Mounted Division (Yeomanry) were the chief sufferers. As the result of all this fighting our casualties since August 6th now total nearly fifty thousand killed wounded and missing.

The army is in fact in a deplorable condition. Its morale as a fighting force has suffered greatly and the officers and men are thoroughly dispirited. The muddles and mismanagement beat anything that has ever occurred in our Military History.

The fundamental evil at the present moment is the absolute lack of confidence in all ranks in the Headquarters staff. The confidence of the army will never be restored until a really strong man is placed at its head. It would amaze you to hear the talk that goes on amongst the Junior commanders of Divisions and Brigades. Except for the fact that the traditions of discipline still hold the force together you would imagine that the units were in an open state of mutiny against Headquarters.

The Commander in Chief and his Staff are openly spoken of, and in fact only mentioned at all with derision. One hates to write of such things but in the interests of the country at the present crisis I feel they ought to be made known to you. The lack of a real Chief at the head of the army destroys its discipline and efficiency all through and gives full rein to the jealousies and recriminations which ever prevail amongst the Divisional Leader.

At the present time the army is incapable of a further offensive. The splendid Colonial Corps has been almost wiped out. Once again the 29th Division has suffered enormous losses and the new formations have lost their bravest and best officers and men. Neither do I think even with enormous reinforcements, that any fresh offensive from our present positions has the smallest chance of success.

Our only real justification for throwing away fresh lives and fresh treasure in this unfortunate enterprise is the prospect of the certain cooperation of Bulgaria. With her assistance we should undoubtedly pull through. But as I know nothing of the attitude of Bulgaria or Greece or Italy I am only writing to give you a true picture of the state of the army and the problems with which we are faced in the future if we are left to fight the Turks alone.

Already the weather shows signs of breaking and by the end of this month we cannot rely on any continuous spell of calm for the landing of large bodies of troops at some other point on the coast. In fact the season will soon be too late for a fresh offensive if another is contemplated. We have therefore to prepare against the coming of the winter or to withdraw the army altogether. I am assuming it is considered desirable to avoid the latter contingency at all costs for political reasons owing to the confession of final failure it would entail and the moral effect it might have in India and Egypt.

I am convinced the troops could be withdrawn under cover of the warships without much loss far less in fact than [*sic*] we suffer in any ordinary attack. I assume also that the future of the campaign out here must be largely dependent on the measure of success that attends our fresh offensive, in conjunction with the French, in the West.

It is no use pretending that our prospects for the winter are bright. The Navy seems to think it will be able to keep the army supplied in spells of calm weather provided a sufficient reserve of food munitions (2183) and ammunition is concentrated while the weather holds at the various beaches. The outlook for the unfortunate troops is deplorable.

We do not hold a single commanding position on the Peninsula and at all three points Helles, Anzac and Suvla Bay we are everywhere commanded by the enemy's guns. This means that throughout the winter all the beaches and lines of communication to the front trenches will be under constant shell fire. Suvla Bay is especially exposed. The Turks are firing a fair amount of ammunition but it is obvious they are feeling the shortage or else are carefully husbanding their supply otherwise they could shell us off the Peninsula at some points altogether.

But it must be remembered that as soon as they are absolutely certain our offensive has shot its bolt, and that we are settling down in our positions for the winter, they will be free to concentrate their artillery at certain points and also to bring up big guns from the forts and therefore we must expect a far more severe artillery fire on the beaches during the winter months than we are exposed to at present.

A great many of the trenches which we hold at present will have to be abandoned altogether during the winter as they will be underwater, and preparing a series of defensive works will ensure us against sudden surprise attacks. We could thus hold [*sic*] our positions with fewer men and rest some of the divisions from time to time in the neighbouring islands.

We ought to be able to hold Helles without much trouble but even if we commence our preparations in time we shall be faced with enormous difficulties at Anzac and Suvla Bay. Our troops will have to face the greatest hardships from cold wet trenches and constant artillery fire. I believe that at the present time the sick rate for the army is roughly 1000 per day.

During the winter it is bound to rise to an even higher figure. I know one general, whose judgement is usually sound who considers we shall lose during the winter in sickness alone the equivalent of the present strength of the army. This may be an exaggeration but in any case our loss is bound to be very heavy. The whole army dreads beyond all else the prospect of wintering on this dreary and inhospitable coast. Amongst other troubles the autumn rains will once more bring to view hundreds of our dead who now lie under a light covering of soil.

But I suppose we must stay here as long as there is the smallest prospect of the Balkan alliance being revived and throwing in its lot with us even if they do not make a move until next Spring. I have laid before you some of the difficulties with which we are faced in order that they may be boldly met before it is too late.

No one seems to know out here what we are going to do in the future and I am so afraid we shall drag on in a state of uncertainty until the season is too far advanced for us to make proper preparations to face the coming winter in a certain measure of comfort and security. At the present time some of our positions gained by the Colonial Corps high up on the spurs of the hills on which the Turks are perched cannot be considered secure.

A sudden counter attack vigorously delivered would jeopardise the safety of our line and might lead to a serious disaster. There will have to be a general reshuffling of the whole line and some of our advanced posts will have to be abandoned during the winter months.

I have only dealt with our own troubles and difficulties. The enemy of course has his. But to maintain as I saw stated in an official report that his losses in the recent fighting were far heavier than ours is a childish falsehood which deceives no one out here. He was acting almost the whole time on the defensive and probably lost about one third of our grand total.

You may think I am too pessimistic but my views are shared by the large majority of the army. The confidence of the troops can only be restored by an immediate change in the supreme command. Even if sufficient drafts are sent out to make good our losses we shall never succeed operating from our present

positions. A fresh landing on a grand scale north of Buliar would probably insure success but the season is late and I suppose the troops are not available.

If we are to stay here for the winter let orders be given for the army to start its preparations without delay. If possible have the Colonial troops taken off the Peninsula altogether because they are miserably depressed since the last failure and with their active minds, and positions they occupy in civil life, a dreary winter in the trenches will have a deplorable effect on what is left of this once magnificent body of men, the finest any Empire has ever produced. If we are obliged to keep this army locked up in Gallipoli this winter (2184) large reserves will be necessary to make good its losses in sickness.

The cost of this campaign in the east must be out of all proportion to the results we are likely to obtain now, in time to have a decisive effect on the general theatre of war. Our great asset against the Germans was always considered to be our superior financial strength. In Gallipoli we are dissipating a large portion of our fortune and have not yet gained a single acre of ground of any strategical value. Unless we can pull through with the aid of the Balkan League in the near future this futile expenditure may ruin our prospects of bringing the war to a successful conclusion by gradually wearing down Germany's colossal military power.

I have taken the liberty of writing very fully because I have no means of knowing how far the real truth of the situation is known in England and how much the Military Authorities disclose. I thought therefore that perhaps the opinions of an independent observer might be of value to you at the present juncture. I am of course breaking the censorship regulations by sending this letter through but I have not the slightest hesitation in doing so as I feel it is absolutely essential for you to know the truth. I have been requested over and over again by officers of all ranks to go home and personally disclose the truth but it is difficult for me to leave until the beginning of October.

Hoping you will therefore excuse the liberty I have taken.

Believe me

Yours very truly

E. Ashmead-Bartlett

Source

FirstWorldWar.com: The War to End All Wars,
http://www.firstworldwar.com/source/ashmeadbartlett_letter.htm.

And the Band Played “Waltzing Matilda”

When I was a young man I carried my pack,
And I lived the free life of a rover,
From the Murray’s green basin to the dusty outback,
I waltzed my Matilda all over,
Then in 1915 my country said “Son,
It’s time to stop rambling for there’s work to be done.”
So they gave me a tin hat and they gave me a gun,
And they sent me away to the war.
And the band played “Waltzing Matilda,”
As we sailed away from the quay,
And amidst all the tears and the shouts and the cheers,
We sailed off for Gallipoli.
How well I remember that terrible day,
When the blood stained the sand and the water,
And how in that hell that they call Suvla Bay,
We were butchered like lambs at the slaughter,

Johnnie Turk, he was ready, he'd primed himself well,
He showered us with bullets and he rained us with shells,
And in five minutes flat he'd blown us all to hell,
Nearly blew us right back to Australia.
And the band played "Waltzing Matilda,"
As we stopped to bury our slain,
And we buried ours and the Turks buried theirs,
And it started all over again.

Now those who were living did our best to survive,
In that mad world of death, blood and fire,
And for seven long weeks I kept myself alive,
Though the corpses around me piled higher,
Then a big Turkish shell knocked me arse over tit,
And when I awoke in my hospital bed,
And saw what it had done, Christ, I wished I was dead,
Never knew there were worse things than dying.
And no more I'll go "Waltzing Matilda,"
To the green bushes so far and near,
For to hang tents and pegs,
A man needs two legs,
No more waltzing matilda for me.

Source

And the Band Played “Waltzing Matilda.” Words and music by Eric Bogle. Copyright © 1976 by PLD Music Ltd. All rights in the USA and Canada administered by Music Sales Corporation (ASCAP). International copyright secured. All rights reserved. Reprinted with permission.

(2185)

Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett (1881–1931)

Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett was the son of a Liberal British politician with a strong interest in the Balkans and the Ottoman Empire who was civil lord of the Admiralty from 1885 to 1892. The younger Ashmead-Bartlett served as a subaltern in the Boer War and, as a special war correspondent, accompanied Japanese forces in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905, the French army in the 1907 Morocco campaign, the Italians in their 1911 Tripoli expedition, and Turkish forces in the First Balkan War of 1912, writing several books on the Russo-Japanese War and Ottoman Turkey. Employed by the British *Daily Telegraph* in 1915, he accompanied the Gallipoli expedition as a representative of the entire Newspaper Proprietors’ Association, which meant that his reports were carried by most of the British press as well as U.S., European, and Australian newspapers. Ashmead-Bartlett’s vivid and well-received reports on the Dardanelles campaign helped to win him a hero’s welcome when he visited Australia in 1916. From 1924 to 1926 he was a Conservative member of Parliament in Britain. He also published several subsequent books on the Gallipoli campaign, Central European affairs, and Soviet Russia.

Keith Murdoch (1885–1952)

In 1915 the Australian journalist Keith Murdoch, who eventually founded one of the world’s most powerful newspaper and communications dynasties, currently headed by his son Rupert, was based in London and acting as managing editor for both the Sydney *Evening Sun*’s United Cable Service and the *Melbourne Herald*. In August 1915 he obtained permission to visit Gallipoli, on the pretext of investigating misdirection of the mail delivered to Australian soldiers serving there. Murdoch quickly came to agree with Ashmead-Bartlett’s views that the Gallipoli campaign had been seriously mismanaged. It was perhaps not entirely coincidental that his son Rupert would become a strong supporter of complete Australian independence from Great Britain or that in the late twentieth century the younger Murdoch’s British

newspapers challenged the British establishment from the monarchy downward.

About The Documents

The two documents here are very different in nature. One was a highly controversial private letter that never reached its addressee but nonetheless had significant political consequences for wartime strategy. The other document is a doggerel poem that expressed common Australian views of the Gallipoli campaign.

Throughout World War I, heavy censorship by all belligerent governments made frank reporting difficult. After several months at Gallipoli, Ashmead-Bartlett believed that despite the unquestionable bravery of the troops involved, the campaign there had been seriously flawed in both concept and execution, and he held British commander-in-chief Sir Ian Hamilton primarily responsible for the latter. As early as May 1915 the *Daily Telegraph* published a dispatch from him warning that the Turkish forces were stronger than British officials had admitted. All that Ashmead-Bartlett wrote was subject to British censorship, and on occasion the British Admiralty confiscated slides he had taken of military operations. Returning briefly to London in June 1915, he unavailingly attempted to warn British officials of his misgivings regarding the operation. Back at Gallipoli, he complained strongly of the butchery to which no less than four sets of military censors subjected his reports, oversight that also prevented Ashmead-Bartlett from communicating his growing criticisms of the leadership of Gallipoli operations to the British authorities.

When Murdoch arrived at Gallipoli, his views of the campaign soon came to coincide with those of Ashmead-Bartlett. Although both had signed a pledge to respect military censorship, the latter took the courageous decision of composing a letter to Prime Minister Herbert H. Asquith, which he asked Murdoch to hand-carry to its recipient at 10 Downing Street. Respectful in tone, it nonetheless painted a deeply pessimistic picture of the situation in Gallipoli, bluntly highlighting in scathing terms military incompetence, the wastefulness of the expedition, and the troops' loss of faith in their leaders. Shocked by this breach of the gentleman's code, another British journalist reported their scheme to the authorities, and British military police in Marseilles confiscated the letter from Murdoch. The latter, however, was fully familiar with the contents of Ashmead-Bartlett's letter, with which he agreed, and he promptly composed an 8,000-word letter to Andrew Fisher, the Australian prime minister, reproducing all he remembered of his colleague's criticisms of the administration of the Gallipoli (2186) campaign. In sometimes

exaggerated and inaccurate but nonetheless effective terms, he lavished praise upon the Australian troops but fiercely attacked every level of the British army. Murdoch sent this letter on 23 September 1915, and Fisher, in turn, passed on the information it contained to Asquith. Almost certainly, the maneuverings of the two journalists were by no means the only cause of the British cabinet's decision the following month to replace Sir Ian Hamilton, but the action of the Australian prime minister undoubtedly gave additional force to the position of those who sought the British commander's recall.

Both Ashmead-Bartlett and Murdoch risked their careers and showed considerable personal courage in defying the British military authorities. It was a measure of how alarming the well-connected Ashmead-Bartlett found the situation in Gallipoli that he was prepared to break the gentlemanly code of honor and jeopardize his comfortable insider status with the British military and political authorities. As soon as its officials learned of his letter, the British War Office promptly rescinded his authorization as a correspondent, and Ashmead-Bartlett assumed his career as a war correspondent was at an end, at least for the rest of World War I. When he embarked on a series of lectures in Britain, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand, War Office representatives dogged his footsteps, threatening to arrest him should he make any controversial or untoward statements, though the popularity of his Australian talks and their effectiveness in winning recruits for the Australian army soon persuaded the authorities to leave Ashmead-Bartlett in peace for most of his two months there. During this visit he also sold most of his Gallipoli documents to the Sydney publishers Angus and Robertson. On his return to Britain in summer 1916, the War Office confiscated additional papers from Ashmead-Bartlett, who continued, despite further harassment, to campaign against the authorities in the British press and in May 1917 gave evidence to the parliamentary inquiry into the Dardanelles fiasco. Both Ashmead-Bartlett and Murdoch also benefited greatly from the staunch support of the powerful British press baron Lord Northcliffe, who swung his influential newspapers firmly behind them and defended their conduct, averting some of the more serious retribution their actions might otherwise have brought down upon their heads. The entire episode was an illustration of the significant role that, despite official censorship, well-placed journalists could on occasion play in the conduct of political and military affairs, and also of the considerable clout at the disposal of the major newspaper proprietors of the period.

Gallipoli was a significant milestone in Anglo-Australian relations, exacerbating existing tensions and resentments between the two countries. Even the persistent and well-publicized attempts of the British authorities to

punish Ashmead-Bartlett and Murdoch tended to be detrimental to the relationship. Their maneuverings took place at the level of high politics. The doggerel adaptation of the traditional Australian folk song “Waltzing Matilda” produced by the Anzac troops, by contrast, illustrates the attitude of the ordinary Australian privates who took part in the fighting, many of them to be killed or seriously wounded. Although by no means great literature, it encapsulated the experience of the soldiers, facing well-prepared Turkish troops and “butchered like lambs at the slaughter” in “that hell that they call Suvla Bay.” After enduring seven weeks of “that mad world of death, blood, and fire,” the protagonist was injured by a Turkish shell, waking up to discover he had lost either one or both legs, and that “there were worse things than dying.” Not so much bitter as matter of fact, it nonetheless suggested that the once happy but now permanently crippled young “rover” had made a great mistake in joining up. In the long run, the human consequences of Gallipoli for the 50,000 Anzac troops left dead or wounded may well have had as great an impact upon Anglo-Australian relations as the machinations in the upper echelons of generals, politicians, and journalists.

Further Reading

Andrews, E. M. *The Anzac Illusion: Anglo-Australian Relations during World War I*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Ashmead-Bartlett, Ellis. *Ashmead-Bartlett's Despatches from the Dardanelles*. London: George Newnes, 1915.

———. *Australians in Action: The Story of Gallipoli*. Sydney: W. A. Gulick, 1915.

———. *Some of My Experiences in the Great War*. London: George Newnes, 1918.

———. *The Uncensored Dardanelles*. London: Hutchinson, 1928.

Fewster, Kevin, Vesihi Basarin, and Hatice Basarin. *Gallipoli: The Turkish Story*. London: Allen and Unwin, 2004.

(2187)

Hickey, Michael. *Gallipoli*. London: John Murray, 1995.

Liddle, Peter H. *Gallipoli 1915: Pens, Pencils, and Cameras at War*. Washington, DC: Brassey's, 1985.

Pugsley, Christopher. *The ANZAC Experience: New Zealand, Australia, and Empire in the First World War*. Auckland, New Zealand: Reed, 2004.

Williams, John F. *ANZACS, The Media, and the Great War*. Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 1999.

Zwar, Desmond. *In Search of Keith Murdoch*. South Melbourne, Australia: Macmillan, 1980.

MLA

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "16. The Gallipoli Campaign." *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*, ABC-CLIO, 2005, pp. . *ABC-CLIO eBook Collection*, legacy.abc-clio.com/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2102.

Chicago Manual of Style

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "16. The Gallipoli Campaign." In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005. <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2102>.

APA

Roberts, P. M., S. C. Tucker (2005). 16. The Gallipoli Campaign. In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia* (pp.). Retrieved from <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2102>

Essay 17. The Siege of Kut, 7 December 1915–29 April, 1916

The Siege of Kut-al-Amara, December 1915–April 1916

From November 1914 until 1918, a total of half a million British Empire troops took part in the Mesopotamian campaign, their objective to win control of the oil fields of modern Iraq, then still part of the Ottoman Empire. In addition, they sought to safeguard the British imperial position in Egypt, which controlled the Suez Canal route to India, from a potential Ottoman or German threat. Some British politicians further hoped, unavailingly, that if this effort could bring about Turkey's collapse, the entire war effort of the Central Powers would disintegrate, making victory on the stalemated Western Front unnecessary. While the British actively encouraged various local Arab Muslim leaders to renounce their allegiance to the Ottomans and seek independence, their agreements left it studiously vague whether these rulers had been promised full independence or limited autonomy under British suzerainty. They were almost equally imprecise as to exactly what territory each would-be sheikh, prince, emir, or king had been promised, and under what conditions.

British forces based in India landed in the Persian Gulf in October 1914 and took the city of Basra the next month. The following April British forces moved into Lower Mesopotamia. The 6th Indian Division, commanded by Major General Sir Charles Townshend, drove the Turks out of the area, defeating them on the Amara River in early June and taking Nasiriyah on the Euphrates River in late July. Townshend was then ordered to take the city of Kut, 150 miles up the Tigris River, an operation some of his superiors in India viewed as a preliminary to capturing Baghdad, the capital of Mesopotamia, though the War Office in London urged great restraint. On 26 September 1915, Townshend captured Kut and then pursued fleeing Turkish forces to Aziziyah, halfway between Kut and Baghdad. Ignoring orders and eager to avenge what was clearly becoming an Anglo-French Allied fiasco on the Turkish peninsula of Gallipoli, Townshend attempted to press on to Baghdad, but the Turkish Sixth Army under General Nur al-Din received reinforcements, whereupon it stood and fought. The battle was a stalemate, but Townshend's 14,000 soldiers suffered 4,600 casualties, making it impossible for them to continue even though the Turkish casualties of 9,500 were twice as heavy.

Townshend was forced to fall back on Kut, which he reached on 3 December 1915. British and Indian troops, noncombatants, and wounded totaling 15,500 crowded into the city, whose usual population was a mere 6,000 Arabs, and by

7 December Turkish forces had surrounded it. The British forces dug themselves into trenches surrounding the city, earthworks where conditions were by all accounts as nasty and unpleasant as those on the Western Front. The Turks made an unsuccessful attempt to storm the city on 24 December 1915 and then settled into a siege, waiting to starve out the occupants. Three successive British attempts to raise the siege failed, and on 29 April 1916 hunger finally caused the fall of Kut to the Turks. Townshend was later criticized for making no assessment of food and other supplies and arranging for their equitable distribution until close to two months after he arrived at Kut, by which time much was already consumed. The fall of Kut, coming three months after the evacuation of Gallipoli, was a humiliating blow to British prestige. So too was the treatment of British and Indian captives. During the siege itself and in captivity, officers enjoyed relatively advantageous conditions, but other ranks suffered severely. Two thousand of the troops who took refuge in Kut were already sick and wounded, yet there were only 100 hospital beds available for the British soldiers and a further 325 for the Indians. Some 1,746 troops died in the course of the siege itself, and a further 1,700 of the 2,592 British other ranks and 1,300 of the 9,300 Indian Sepoys captured at Kut died in captivity, many of them on forced marches to prison across the desert and suffering from dehydration, thirst, hunger, and heat exhaustion, (2188) herded by whips and left to die of exposure if they fell out. Prison camps for ordinary soldiers were overcrowded, with poor sanitation and food, and many died of cholera or dysentery, while Turkish guards forced some of their younger captives to submit to homosexual demands. Officers lived in relative comfort. Townshend, whom the Turks housed as an “honored guest” in luxurious conditions, made no effort to improve the treatment of his men, an omission for which he was ostracized upon his return to Britain. Public outrage led to the establishment of a British commission to investigate the fall of Kut and its aftermath, but by the time its findings came out, the episode was almost forgotten.

The Letters of Captain Surgeon J. S. S. (“Ian”) Martin to His Mother

Early January 1916, Describing the Previous Month

Our quiet village of Kut has now entirely changed. Horses, tents, sick, guns all over the place: gardens trampled flat: roads driven through walls, houses and orchards. Everywhere litter and untidiness: the arriving force had no thought but to put up a shelter, cook a mouthful of food, and go to sleep. Mule carts were unhitched anywhere and the drivers went to sleep under the carts,

generally leaving the unfortunate mules to fend for themselves. They had marched forty miles the last day with the enemy at their heels.

Next day everyone was scratching holes in the ground. We who had stayed in Kut found it difficult to believe in the imminence of the enemy's attack. No. 4 Field Ambulance hadn't heard a shot fired in anger since the few shells in April at Alwaz. However, as we saw everyone else digging in we followed their example in a somewhat feeble fashion. Anyway, we dug some deep trenches for our British sick—about 20 in number. I had about 200 Indian sick in my section but couldn't hope to tackle shelter trenches for such a number. My sick also were about $\frac{1}{4}$ mile away in a very thick orchard and I hoped would be well out of shell fire.

The main ambulance camp and our mess were on the fringe of an orchard and most of the tents were in the open. But the danger to us here arose from the presence of one of our own batteries about 100 yards in front, and some heavy guns on our right. The General Hospitals formed an enormous camp to our right and being right in the open must have been plainly visible to the enemy, as the sick were either in big marquee tents or in reed huts.

On the 6th December the Cavalry Brigade marched out with most of the transport and the Horse Artillery. The enemy began to shell us that afternoon and made things most unpleasant in our camp. Our artillery replying, the enemy's fire is directed to the battery just in front of us and in consequence we got a large number of the shells intended for our guns. We had now a big shelter made of hay bales about 2 layers thick erected, in which we established a dressing station. But we have no place to keep the wounded, who after being dressed have to lie in the open in the tents. Luckily no one is hit.

This day we make the acquaintance of "Windy Lizzie" a long-range howitzer mounted on a barge. Her little gift is a 5 inch leaden shell full of high explosive. She gives a little distant cough and after some time you hear a high-up whistling noise which seems to get nearer, nearer, louder and more menacing, followed by a tremendous bang, or about equally a soft plop, for her shells don't always go off. Mostly you don't hear the preliminary cough: the first warning is the whistling, then you listen for the bang and wonder where it will be. She is rather erratic in distance and you can never be certain what she's aiming at: but one of her efforts is sure to land somewhere near you in the end. She is the worst of the lot as you can't get any cover worth while from her shells, which seem to drop vertically from the blue.

The other characteristic Turkish gun is the little quick-firing mountain variety. A battery of four pops off, about 6 each gun—pop pop pop bang bang bang—without a pause for five minutes or so and the air is simply full of noise and smoke of bursting shrapnel. But these are easy to avoid if you sit tight in your funk hole or dodge behind a palm tree. Of course the Turks have got lots of ordinary field guns—one hears an estimate of eighty guns, and they help to keep things lively.

Anyway the General Hospitals found things getting a bit too hot for them and so they decided to move into billets in the town. This they did on the night of the 7th. To make room for them the whole bazaar was turned out and each little shop became a tiny ward in the new hospital, holding about four patients. The bazaar consists of rows and rows of such shops on each (2189) side of a central roofed-in roadway. We started moving in about 5 pm and finished stowing away the sick by 5 am next morning. I suppose there were about 600 to move. So now if you wander through the bazaar, not eastern wares, but wounded men are on show; it is really one of the queerest sights in the world.

We ourselves stuck out the 8th in the open, without casualties: trying to dig ourselves and our sick in as best we could. The morning of the 9th I had detailed a party to work on a new dugout, and gone off to get roofing stuff from the engineers. When I returned I found two of the party had been killed and three wounded and that the men were a bit fed up: especially the patients who couldn't move from their tents. When our OC [Officer Commanding] heard of the casualties he went straight off to the General, and got orders to move into billets in town at once. After a bit of searching we found the billets in which we are now quartered, gave summary notice to quit to the Arab owners, and moved in the same evening, sick and all.

Our mess house is a typical good class Arab quarter. Downstairs three dark rooms open from the square courtyard. Two are used by our British personnel, one by us as mess. Very dark and cold they are as the only light comes through the door. Upstairs it is very pleasant. On one side is a long well-lighted room with plastered walls and carpeted roof and floor. In this we three junior officers live and very comfortable we are too. Opposite us is the OC's bedroom—about half the size of this. Round the inside overhanging the courtyard runs a verandah: and over the verandah and courtyard spread the fronds of two great palms.

Two similar houses serve for British Hospital and Assistant Surgeons and are facing us on the other side of the street. The Indian hospital is adjacent the Mess in two blocks. Indeed when we first arrived the sick and wounded very

soon filled up both blocks and we founded a “convalescent home” in a disused Turkish bath about $\frac{1}{4}$ mile away where all the slightly wounded go, coming every day for medicine and dressing here. This Turkish Bath of “Hamam” is the quaintest place I think ever utilised as a hospital. It is almost underground and very dark. The big room is lined by couches which do excellently for the sick and the central circular room, which has a furnace underneath, is hot and moist and does very well for chest cases. It is a bit damp as water is of course laid on all over the place: but it’s very warm and comfy and so deep down that it were miraculous if a shell pierced it.

On the 10th the enemy made their first infantry attack, coming in at night and entrenching about 600 yards from our front line. . . . We took and held the “Woolpress” village on the right bank on the 10th, as enemy snipers were giving us a lot of trouble, and we have kept it since. The bridgehead on the far bank of the bridge of boats, put up for the marching out of the Cavalry Brigade on the 6th, was held by a small detachment but the enemy, fearing our use of the bridge either to attack them or as a means of retreat, attacked the holding party in force and captured the bridgehead. We had then to recapture the bridge with a strong force and to avoid further trouble blew up the far end resting on the right bank, so that the whole thing drifted on to our, left, bank and has there remained since. This affair cost us a good many casualties as some of the more severely wounded had to be abandoned on the right bank: but the Turkish general was very courteous afterwards and sent in twice to let us know how our wounded men were progressing!

On the 12th and 13th they made attacks en masse on our front which failed dismally. So they stopped attacking for a bit and spent their time sapping up to us. So that by the 17th they were up against our barbed wire entanglements and beginning to sap under these. Both sides now used bombs freely, and all houses were raided for mirror glass for periscopes. The night of the 17th we made a sortie from the fort and captured 30 or 40, killing a lot more. After that they were more careful and a later sortie was scarcely a success, as our men found the invaded trenches empty and they were heavily enfiladed on their way back. The enemy again attacked in force on the 20th, lost very heavily and retired.

But their big attack was on the 24th. It began in the afternoon with a really heavy bombardment of the town, also of the fort. They knocked out one of the two guns in the fort and did a lot of damage to the wall. In the town a lot of houses were hit. Our British Hospital was hit—the body of the 4 inch shrapnel embedding itself in the outer wall: the nose passed through the shuttered window, killed our store sergeant and also a sick sergeant just below the

window. Three more inmates were wounded, and altogether we were rather annoyed, as this was the first shell that had done any damage.

(2190)

That night the enemy brought up two field guns to within 200 yards of the fort and simply blew in the whole front, burying the defenders. They then rushed it with bombs and carried and held the NE [Northeast] Bastion. We bombed them out: they got in again: finally they found it too hot and retired leaving some 50–60 prisoners and about 1,000 dead. These attacks sound very curious from our billets. Usually one hears only the crack crack of our own and enemy snipers: then perhaps you hear it develop into a slow rattle with the birr of our maxims and the tut-tut-tut of their machine-guns plainly audible. Every now and then a bullet sings past or phuts against the wall. But listen to the rattle deepen to a steady roar which seems to come in great waves of sound—every now and again a big boom! of a bomb or a field gun: and the air even here, 1 mile away, is fairly alive with singing bullets and you duck behind the wall as you rush along the verandah to the bedroom.

The next morning the wounded begin to come in—or more often next evening, as it is too exposed to move sick by day. Then we in the ambulance have fairly got to set to—digging out bullets: setting fractures: opening and cleaning up wounds: tying bleeding vessels—work for all and lots of it. So we lie awake of nights listening to the roar of musketry and wondering how much work we'll get next day!

Then it's not very easy to be as calm and collected as one would like when going about one's work during the day. For up to the 24th they kept buzzing shells at us all day and most of the night too. And though by God's mercy only one of the lot hit our hospital still all round us shells were bursting and people from the houses all round came in wounded and many men were killed. Many of the local Arabs suffered. There have been days when every single house round us had its quota of killed and wounded, and we unscathed. Our walls would not help to stop the shells: they have not done so in other houses: it was simply God's mercy for the poor wounded and sick.

These bullets I have mentioned as singing by are the cause of a good many casualties. We have had five or six such among our patients—none serious however. They must needs be very spent before they can drop into our courtyard. One of my best bearers was shot through the chest while having a look round from a rooftop. Another was hit in the forehead—he has been

operated on and will live—while bringing in a wounded officer. Otherwise personnel unscathed.

The enemy have snipers on the other bank who practice shooting down all the streets running at right angles to the river. It is pitiful to see the poor Arab women rushing down at nightfall to fill their waterjugs. One or two of them are always brought to hospital wounded. We have become the favourite hospital for the Arabs. I had some success in digging out bullets from various inaccessible places: and our fame has spread abroad. We put “Medicine” on their wounds: other ambulances not so—they put the dressing on straight away. They come all ages and sexes—pretty little girls with bullets in the groin to hoary old sinners with shrapnel in the belly. They do make marvellous recoveries—and as a result we try rather marvellous operations on them—so far invariably successfully. So that our street is full of Arab seekers-after-health every day.

Though we have had but few patients injured by bombardment it is very different with the General Hospitals. They are nearer the river front, and so to our heavy guns, which attract the enemy’s fire. They cover an enormous area of the town. Every day fifteen to twenty shells hit them somewhere: the marvel is not that they have casualties, but that any survive. I myself one day saw a shell land on the roadway and kill two and wound one sepoy about 20 yards away. I was able to give first aid—luckily as the man was bleeding very freely. But it’s not what you expect in a hospital. And just about five yards away Barber, the OC of the hospital, was calmly sewing away inside a bullet-smitten abdomen, with two doctors assisting him.

Another day, looking in at the Stationary Hospital operating theatre, King, of our service, was cutting off the remnants of a leg. “Hullo,” I said, “who’s that you’re amusing yourself with?” “Oh, only one of my sub-assistant surgeons” was his answer. “He got his leg blown off and two orderlies were killed just in the office about twenty minutes ago!”

As the enemy trenches have closed in, so the wounds from our front-line trenches have become more severe. They are often inflicted at point-blank range and the wound is consequently “explosive”—ie a comparatively small wound is seen where the bullet has entered but the exit is a great bulging mass of torn muscles, tendons and crushed up splinters of bone. All you can do is to give an anaesthetic and cut away the (2191) protruding mass and clean up things as best you can, hoping that it won’t go too awfully septic. Of course in trench warfare a very large number of the total wounds are through the head:

these only come into the ambulance to die: one can do absolutely nothing for them: they are already unconscious and need no anodyne.

For myself I got laid up with influenza on the 24th and it certainly doesn't tend to bring your temperature down to have these beastly shells banging and screaming about: especially when people are killed not five yards from where you are lying in bed and practically in front of your eyes. However, Xmas day by some unspoken contract was kept in absolute peace and rest. Not a single shot was fired the whole twenty-four hours: even the snipers ceased. They say it was partly due to the German advisers of the Turkish C.-in-C. The Turks also wished to collect and bury their dead at the Fort—which I understand they were permitted to do. . . .

Late January 1916, After a British Attempt to Raise the Siege Had Failed

On the morning of the 19th and the whole night previously the ground of Kut reverberated with the incessant rumble of the relieving force's guns, twenty-five miles distant: as light grew the horizon was white with the bursting shrapnel and the smoke of the enemy's return fire. In our trenches they say you could hear quite plainly the sharper rattle of rifle fire.

The noise of the guns gradually became an occasional thud instead of a continuous boom, the shrapnel clouds became individual, and then finally ceased to be seen: and we hoped that the ridge had been taken, and that we should shortly see the enemy columns filing past.

We did see one such column, and a joyful communiqué to the garrison announced that the first of the Turkish retreat had begun: but we now believe to our sorrow that it was a convoy of wounded, and with not a few of our sepoys as prisoners. For the attack had dismally failed: the first-line trenches were carried and the order was to hold them at all costs: but a fierce counter attack with bombs drove back all but the Black Watch, who held on alone till their remnants were practically wiped out. So we in Kut, disappointed and disheartened, settled down to enjoy the prospect of a prolonged siege as best we might. . . .

Early February 1916, When Torrential Rains Hit Kut

The streets became long lakes of muddy water—I got wet above the knees one evening returning from an afternoon's bridge with the Flying Corps. Our hospital compound became too dreadful at this time: there is of course no system of drainage and such means as we could use—big pits etc—were of

little avail as they soon flooded over. The cesspits which each house has in plenty also overflowed with an indescribable odour. Many of our wards leaked heavily and in one the mud roof partially collapsed over our patients.

Meantime imagine the state of affairs in the trenches. The floor of these had been by this time trodden hard and the clay had become quite impervious to water. So that every drop stayed where it fell: in time the communication trenches became so full that, in spite of hostile fire, everyone had to move over the open. Then pity the poor wounded, soaked to the skin, numb with wet and cold! Coming in to a hospital which could not give them a dry shelter and only in direst need an extra blanket or change of clothing. We always managed to dress their wounds and clean them up a bit, and give them a hot drink and morphia if necessary.

The rains kept on for nearly a week: the nights became steadily colder and soon several degrees of frost were nightly registered. The rains in the hills had swollen the river, which was rising a foot a day. Finally on the wettest night of all the sepoys' misery culminated. The river one night overflowed its banks and burst in a great wave, first into the Turk trenches—which were about fifty to 100 yards in front of ours—and thence into our front line through the Turkish saps. We managed to dam it back long enough to turn our maxims on to the retreating enemy so, the Turks had to run too—and then it was a case of every one making a rush for our second-line trenches about 300 yards back. We lost a few men by rifle fire but our machine-guns literally mowed down the enemy, who had no communication trenches at all, and who refused to retire quicker than at a walk.

These rains proved a perfect godsend to the garrison. The enemy were forced to retire right back to the sandhills about two miles away. Their second- and third-line trenches were equally flooded. They had not now even a picquet in touch with us. You can picture the relief of our fellows now able to walk about in (2192) perfect freedom in the open: no enemy within sight: not even a sniper in range. Only a couple of days before the enemy all round them, their sapheads right under our barbed wire and in places less than thirty yards away: the crack of rifles incessant: bombs and trench mortars banging everywhere: and the final attack imminent any moment. The rains compelled us to evacuate our front-line trenches for about half a mile, but this only strengthened our field of fire, and when the water went down strong picquets were posted in the old front line.

About this time the fuel question was very serious. The men were getting only a handful of brushwood with which to cook their food. Luckily the abandoned Turkish trenches were simply full of wood and the delighted sepoys lit huge

bonfires everywhere and dried their clothes and blankets with great cheerfulness. We sent out some raiding parties to the sand hills and captured a few prisoners—but annoyed the Turks who retaliated by sending picquets and snipers close in: so that the reign of absolute peace came to an end abruptly and our fellows had to keep carefully behind their own wire and under cover once more. But the Turkish sapheads and mine galleries were gone for good and with them all fear of successful attack by assault.

Late February 1916

[T]he question of relief faded into the background and, as in all sieges, *food* became the dominant question. We carefully went over our Mess stores and calculated how long they would last. The Commissariat announced a revised scale of rations. Bread was lowered to 12 ounces daily: jam and butter were issued in small amounts to make up: bacon stopped: tea was very much reduced. Paraffin oil ran out altogether as all oil had to be reserved for the grain crushing mills. Petrol was cornered for the same purpose.

Now if we go over the advantages of Kut in a siege the chief is that it is normally a great trading centre for the surrounding agricultural country, and a favourite trade route from the Persian highlands. The whole of the export trade of corn was stopped by order of the Governor of Kut early in November. So great stores of wheat and barley—mostly the latter—had accumulated here when our retreating division arrived. Now you will see the reason for the grain-crushing engines, and the saving of the paraffin. Very soon the entire stock of ordinary flour ran out and we became dependent on the three oil engines we were lucky enough to find installed here. A mixture of about one part wheat to four parts barley flour now is used in making our bread, and is issued to the Indians to make chupatties. This makes the most delicious bread you ever tasted: one knows it is made direct from the pure grain: nothing is wasted—it is dark brown and delightfully flavoured. . . .

Sugar gave out almost at once, also molasses for the Indians. Milk—well, we stuck to our cows as long as we could: but one cow and her calf soon succumbed to the necessity for a meat ration. We were on bully beef for quite a while: then they began to slaughter the draught oxen of the heavy 5" guns. Luckily we had about 120 of these, the finest bullocks in India and such beef! As the Indians weren't getting any [for religious reasons] they did us quite a long time.

About three weeks ago (early February) the first horse fell under the butcher's knife. Since then they have been slain daily, about 20 at a time. About 2,000

mules and 3,000 horses and ponies have been cooped up along with us: we kept them as long as we might but as they each eat daily about ten men's grain ration you can see that they are a considerable burden on the community. So we began on them as soon as we could, before the bully beef or the bullocks were quite finished. For a long time officers' messes generally got a bit of beef if they wished but now are reconciled to daily horse. We have him in steak and kidney pie, horse olives, horse mince, horse rissoles, potted horse, horse soup, stuffed horse heart, horse liver etc ad nauseum.

The other staple in our ration is the date. I expect you have by this time received the dates I sent you before Xmas. Well do you know, I have many a times in this siege been selfish enough to wish I had kept that case for myself! It must be the weather, or the brown bread, or the muchness of work that does it, but I have never been so consistently and chronically hungry in all my life before. I had quite a good lunch at 1 pm and already am longing for four o'clock tea though I have an hour to wait. To return to our dates—he turns up every day in our ration—2 oz each—and we have him for pudding at dinner in various disguises. He is excellent by himself with a little dash of ginger and lime juice, and a little boiled rice to tone him down served with him. He makes an excellent and savoury (2193) mush stewed with a few dried apricots: date charlotte is delicious: date dumpling is a dream: and he is an excellent ingredient of suet puddings.

On 22 February a second British attempt to raise the siege failed.

Immense excitement prevailed in Kut as our GOC [General Officer Commanding Charles] Townshend had been promising us early relief and we had known for some time that something was brewing. Here we had to organise our bearer sections and get transport etc ready to move out against the enemy should they be seen to retire. We actually knew nothing about it till five am on the morning of the attack when the Major came in with a lamp and told us to be ready to move out to our positions in the front line trenches by seven am. What a scurry and rush to get boxes and haversacks ready, waterbottles filled, emergency and ordinary rations issued. Of course we were wild with excitement and expectancy. From our roof we could see the whole sky west of us lit up by glaring flashes and the air was filled with the incessant distant booming of the guns. Alas our hopes! We returned sorrowfully to our billets that evening—to learn next day that the whole attack had been abortive—that nothing more than the artillery duel we had heard had taken place.

So we settled down again to routine, and locked up our boxes and became a little more despondent as to our ultimate chances. Also we began to hunt round

with even greater energy for any foodstuffs that might still be available on purchase—with only moderate success. The usual routine began—breakfast at 8.30—surgical cases till twelve—lunch at 1—operations at 2—tea at 4—exercise in the shape of walking round to various Messes and exchange views as to date of next attempt at relief, rumours as to numbers of relief force, river floods etc, an occasional game of bridge.

About this time enemy aircraft made their debut at Kut. We were very interested one morning in a curious monoplane—dark in colour, with what looked like squares—really Maltese Crosses—on the wings, but didn't really take much notice of the thing, as our own planes were coming over us every day and no one thought of the Turks having such a thing. However, that same evening the beastly thing came again, and we were startled by a series of tremendous explosions, some of them very near our ambulance—quite unlike our old friend Windy Lizzie's shells—much louder—earth-shaking—clouds of black smoke and debris hurled hundreds of yards. The annoying part of it was that these were our own bombs abandoned during the retreat.

Next day there was a great buzz taking precautions against more bombs. We mounted six anti-aircraft guns and one of the 13-pounder horseguns was tilted up and fixed on a swivel. So that when the old Fritz came along, flying low, as usual, he got the surprise of his life when the whole lot blazed off at him—nearly got him too. We got fairly used to Fritz in time. He used to roll up nearly every evening and drop about six bombs at a time—sometimes making several trips back for more.

On 8 March British forces under General Aylmer made a third effort to raise the siege by attacking Turkish forces.

The long-expected day arrived, and we got out our boxes again, summoned and equipped our sections, and proceeded to our new positions in the trenches. The garrison was ready to sortie at a moment's notice. We were going to cross the river by a bridge below the town and attack the Turkish right flank in rear, while Aylmer stormed it in front. The whole of the operation centred on the attack on the Dujaila redoubt. If this were carried, the enemy's flank was turned and his communications with his main camp above Kut cut off below the River Hai: also by our guns we could command the enemy's bridge of boats over the Tigris connecting their forces on both banks.

Well we had a most exciting morning: the roar of guns was continuous the whole of the morning of the 8th, and we could hear them coming ever nearer and could see innumerable shrapnel and lyddite bursts on the horizon. We

know now our people were scarcely five miles from us: we were all discussing what we should have for our relief dinner, and what time of day we thought Aylmer would arrive. But the roar of guns continued steadily, and we heard great crackling bursts of rifle fire. Still no movement among the Turks, no signs of the expected retirement.

All day and through the night the bombardment continued, next day too—till about noon when all became quiet again. Then we heard—Aylmer sent a communique and our General published his wires to us, with a long screed of his own too. Our relief force had stormed the redoubt and been thrust back: they could get no water, for they were five miles south of the river, and in the end had retired, losing some (2194) 2–3,000 casualties. Townshend's letter to his troops pointed out clearly our new and dangerous position and asked us to hope on and fight on to the bitter end.

The immediate consequences of the defeat in Kut were a decrease in the rations and a wholesale destruction of horses and transport animals which were left. A few are still kept for butcher meat but the entire grain supply had now to be reserved for the garrison. As our paraffin supply became low, the mills became unable to cope with the amount of grain requiring milling. A large amount of the grain ration had therefore to be issued untreated—simply unhusked, and we had to do our best with this to turn it into food. So if you look in to our hospital yard you may see any fine morning about twenty bearers hammering, grinding, sifting the grain. The product is made into a kind of gruel which is served to—and heartily detested by—the patients.

All local produce was long ago commandeered for the hospitals—eggs, milk, chickens, etc. We still, however (29/3/16) are carrying on with tinned milk, and butter and jam nearly ad lib. We shared out all the mess stores in equal portions. Each member of the mess is at liberty to fix his own date for relief and proportion his mess supplies accordingly. For instance I have four tins of jam, two of milk, and 5/6 lb of butter to last me to the end. I am counting on this arriving in about sixteen days—certainly no more. So one tin of jam lasts me 4 days, but a tin of milk must do 8 days! It's jolly difficult in this warm weather. Our OC however is reckoning on 21 days and has to eke his stuff out in proportion. I may be left in the lurch but what matter? I shall have lived luxuriously for a time, anyhow.

We aren't doing so badly now—7.30 am tea—breakfast 8.30 bowl of porridge, fried fresh fish, rice (ad lib) bread butter and jam, tea coffee or chocolate with milk and saccharine—lunch 1 pm tinned salmon, tinned pineapple, bread and jam, coffee—tea 4.30 pm oatcakes, bread and jam—dinner, clear soup, fresh

fish, steak and kidney pudding, stewed dates and rice, liver or sardine on toast. I am not any thinner, I assure you. I suppose you must have gathered from this how very largely the food question has bulked in our view of life! Indeed it is with some pride that No 4 Field Ambulance mess can compare their catering with the majority of other peoples'. . . .

. . . . Today [1 April 1916] completes the 120th day of the siege. This brings us level with Ladysmith [during the South African Boer War], and fulfills one ambition of our siege enthusiasts. The men are beginning to weaken—nay, have weakened—so greatly that they with difficulty can carry their rifles and equipment the distance between the front-line trenches and their town billets. The only ration now is—British $\frac{1}{2}$ lb bread, 1 lb horsemeat: Indian 10 oz barley flour (of the crudest description, largely chaff) only. They [the men] wish the siege ended and care not which way so long as they get their bellies filled. It is difficult for us officers to realise their hunger and weakness—we have all the time had at any rate a sufficiency of palatable food and enough Mess stores to give a change of diet when needed. . . .

I don't think I have yet told you how the discovery of the siege was some toffee you got some lady to send me from England. Peppermint. I had one tin left which I had forgotten. The discovery was historic. It was at the end of February, when none of us had tasted sugar for two months. By jove how good it was!

Then one eventful day I opened, at long last, my box of shirts. I had been saving them up for just such an emergency as we are now in. The wounded were without any available change of clothing—they came in soaking wet and chilled to the bone from the trenches. Now the shirts weren't very warm, but they were clean and white and with blankets and hot bottles were really delicious to the wounded. They are really beautifully made—I feel as if I should love to wear them myself!

Source

Michael Moynihan, ed., *A Place Called Armageddon: Letters from the Great War* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1975), 166–187. Courtesy of the Martin Family, with the assistance of the Imperial War Museum.

Captain Surgeon Ian Martin (1889–1974)

During the siege of Kut, Ian Martin, born on the Isle of Lenis, Scotland, was a military captain surgeon responsible for the medical care of those incarcerated

within the city. Martin's father was a minister in the Scottish Free Church, and his mother was Irish. An energetic man and dedicated army officer with a gift for organization (2195) and great zest for life, recognized as brilliant and lacking overweening personal ambition, he joined the Indian Army's medical service and spent most of his career in that country. After his capture at Kut Martin spent the remainder of the war in a Turkish prison camp. Although the journey involved a lengthy 600-mile march from Baghdad to Turkey, officers were treated far better than ordinary soldiers, and Martin's main complaint was of boredom, even though he took the opportunity to learn Turkish. Martin ended his career as a major-general overseeing the medical facilities that dealt with the 60,000 wounded troops who came out of Burma in World War II and retired in 1944.

About The Documents

During the siege of Kut, Martin wrote eight letters, totaling fifty-eight pages, to his mother in Scotland. At the time he had no means of delivering them, but one presumes that once he was in captivity, prison camp authorities organized mail services. After his mother's death, the letters were passed on to Martin and his wife, and his family ultimately donated them to the Imperial War Museum in London.

As a surgeon, Martin had not accompanied the British force toward Baghdad but stayed in Kut tending the wounded and was there to receive Townshend's battered men when they returned in early December. His letters describing the siege give a vivid picture of its privations, especially the growing lack of food, and also of some of its high or low points, including the early days of digging in to sustain a prolonged enemy attack and the failed efforts to raise the siege. One can trace his progression from cheery optimism, even a certain exhilaration in the early days, to dogged endurance. As time went on and the siege began to seem more hopeless, in some ways the letters functioned almost as a diary, since he could not know when, or even if, they would ever be delivered.

One can discern a humane man who conceived his duty as a physician as extending to Turkish prisoners and Kut's Arab population and was prepared to give up his last shirts to comfort the wounded. Although he did not dwell in gruesome detail on the horrors of siege warfare, a subject on which few men care to be overly enlightening to loving mothers, he was frank about the wounds he was treating and the danger he was in. Much else, however, is missing, not because Martin was oblivious but in all probability due to his consciousness that, should it ever prove possible to mail these letters, military

censors were likely to object to overmuch frankness. Whereas the officers at Kut were—as Martin’s narrative admits—relatively well fed, at least until the very end, this was not true of the other ranks, who were reduced to near-starvation and who ate not only the slaughtered horses of the garrison but also cats, dogs, hedgehogs, rats, birds, snakes, and any other living animal they could find. According to his son-in-law, Dr. M. B. S. Cooper, Martin felt ashamed of the behavior of British staff officers at Kut, whom he believed had “‘chickened out,’ isolating themselves in their mess, and that the other ranks had been badly let down. He said that all the books written about Kut had covered up the awful behaviour of the officers but that he could never bring himself to write about it with survivors still alive.” There is some trace of this in Martin’s letters, where he mentions the sufferings of the men, but no overt effort to highlight the class distinctions, something British censors would almost certainly have excised. Truthful so far as they went, his letters home were far from telling the whole, highly unpalatable truth of the siege of Kut.

Further Reading

Barber, Charles Harrison. *Besieged in Kut, and After*. London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1917.

Braddon, Russell. *The Siege*. New York: Viking, 1970.

Erickson, Edward J. *Ordered to Die: A History of the Ottoman Army in the First World War*. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2001.

Long, P. W. *Other Ranks of Kut*. London: Williams and Norgate, 1938.

Millar, Ronald W. *Death of an Army: The Siege of Kut, 1915–1916*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1970.

Mousley, Capt. E. O., RFA. *The Secrets of a Kuttite: An Authentic Story of Kut, Adventures in Captivity and Stamboul Intrigue*. New York: John Lane, 1921.

Neave, Dorina L. *Remembering Kut: “Lest We Forget.”* London: A. Barker, 1937.

Roshwald, Aviel. *Ethnic Nationalism and the Fall of Empires: Central Europe, the Middle East and Russia, 1914–1923*. New York: Routledge, 2000.

Sandes, E. W. C., Maj. *In Kut and Captivity with the Sixth Indian Division*. London: John Murray, 1919.

Townshend, Maj. Gen. Charles Vere Ferrers. *My Campaign*. 2 vols. New York: J. A. McCann, 1920.

(2196)

MLA

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "17. The Siege of Kut, 7 December 1915–29 April, 1916." *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*, ABC-CLIO, 2005, pp. . *ABC-CLIO eBook Collection*, legacy.abc-clio.com/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2109.

Chicago Manual of Style

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "17. The Siege of Kut, 7 December 1915–29 April, 1916." In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005. <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2109>.

APA

Roberts, P. M., S. C. Tucker (2005). 17. The Siege of Kut, 7 December 1915–29 April, 1916. In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia* (pp.). Retrieved from <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2109>

Essay 18. The Soldier's Experience: Herbert G. Boorer and Victor Richardson

The Experience of War

The British literature of disillusionment that came out of World War I is rightly famous, if only by virtue of its quality. Historians such as Niall Ferguson, David Sheffield, and Robert Wohl have nonetheless argued that the writings of such individual young officers as Edmund Blunden, Robert Graves, and Siegfried Sassoon were far from typical of the average soldier's or even average officer's reaction to war. For the most part, after all, men in the trenches continued to fight; throughout the war morale remained relatively high in both the British and German armies, though the French admittedly suffered a rash of mutinies in spring 1917. In every country, it seems, individual reactions to warfare varied enormously. Temperament, length of service, and type of service all played their part. For some soldiers, the experience of war was clearly extremely fulfilling. Notoriously, Corporal Adolf Hitler found his four years of wartime service in the German army the best time of his life up to date, as his unit provided him with a surrogate family and a sense of structure and purpose that had previously been lacking from his dilettante life as a poor art student. The upper-class Julian Grenfell, heir to a British peerage and the splendid country house that accompanied it, gloried in war, conducting individual raids on German trenches, efforts he apparently regarded as rather a variation on the stalking of animals at which he was already adept.

The distinguished literary critic Samuel Hynes, who served as an aviator in World War II, has suggested that despite all the hardships and dangers involved, the majority of soldiers found their wartime service the most exciting and fulfilling time of their lives. This is not to argue that all did: after the war, 65,000 British former soldiers, 6 percent of all who had served, received disability pensions due to war-related psychological illnesses or neurasthenia. Even so, Niall Ferguson likewise contends that some, perhaps many, soldiers actually enjoyed wartime military service, killing, carnage, and brutality and found physical danger exhilarating, traits that some at least brought back to civilian life with them, contributing to the postwar political disorder that afflicted Germany, Italy, Russia, and other parts of Europe. The wartime letters of the British landscape artist R. B. Talbot Kelly, for example, included in his memoirs published posthumously in 1980, reveal his enthusiasm for the war and the intensity he found in the experience, something for which he remained grateful all his life.

It was not so much the experience of war, Ferguson and others argue, that caused pervasive disillusionment but rather the subsequent perceived failure of the war to accomplish any of the objectives for which it had supposedly been fought. Hynes and Ferguson both point out that both during and after the war, the most popular British writings on it were the poems of Rupert Brooke, which glorified the war as a noble cause. Despite the appearance of such harshly realistic antiwar books as Henri Barbusse's novel *Le Feu* (1916), overall, both during and after the conflict, publishers probably brought out more novels and memoirs presenting the experience of war in uplifting terms than they did works strongly critical of it. Those that have lasted and are best remembered now, however, are the poems, novels, and memoirs of such individuals as Richard Aldington, Edmund Blunden, Vera Brittain, Robert Graves, Wilfred Owen, Erich Maria Remarque, Isaac Rosenberg, and Siegfried Sassoon. The poems of Blunden, Brittain, Graves, Owen, Rosenberg, and Sassoon were written and, in most though not all cases, published during the war, but their lengthier memoirs or novels generally appeared in a spate ten to fifteen years after the war had ended, in the late 1920s and early 1930s. In the interim, it had become clear that the war had failed to accomplish most of the goals that had been its stated objectives, such as producing a safer and more democratic world. Those soldiers who had fought in it had returned not to the "land[s] fit for heroes" that their respective governments had promised them but to countries wracked by economic difficulties, unemployment, and social discord. Against this background, at least among the intelligentsia, the belief that the war had been a terrible mistake soon gained currency.

The Battle of Loos: Private Herbert G. Boorer, Letters to His Wife, 1915

Boorer to Ann Catherine Boorer, 2 October 1915

Have had a cut at them this time. Was in action from Monday last until early Thursday morning. Have got (2197) through all right, and am having a few days' rest before having another go. We advanced through the open under terrific shell fire. I was in the first-line trench for thirty hours in the pouring rain, smothered from head to foot with mud. One of our limbers got smashed up, and my kit has gone west. I think I prefer the trench to a bit further back where the Jack Johnsons [heavy artillery shells] fall. I was nearly lifted off the ground several times by them, and am not exactly in love with them. I do not mind the bullets and shrapnel so much.

The Battalion has had a pretty rough time, but a lot of ground has been gained near here during the last week or so. I cannot tell you all about it, but it is something you cannot realise until you get in it. The German snipers are pretty

hot. Our MG [machine gun] section only lost two, and we came off very well compared with the companies. Your parcel was waiting when I got back. I suggest that you send quite small ones in future, as we shall be on the move a lot probably and it will be quite impossible to carry a big one. Have lost my cap also. Could do with some paper and envelopes. Am back in a village now just behind our artillery in a stable. The cigarettes came just in time as I smoked my last in the trenches. A miss is as good as a mile so they say, so am carrying on about the same as ever. . . . Do not worry. Am going strong.

Boorer to His Wife, 8 October 1915

I suppose you have got my first letter about the fight now. I expect you have read about it in the paper. The second time I was in a different place, my particular gun was supporting the 1st Battalion guns as they have had a lot of casualties. I am in a ruined house now. Our guns are going off just outside, and German Jack Johnsons are falling round about it now and again just to keep things lively. One has just dropped across the road as I write this. I have been missed scores of times by bullets and stray bits of shrapnel during the last week, and have got quite used to it. We have periods of desperate work carting guns and kit about, on very little to eat and nothing much to drink when in the trenches or else having a pot at them or waiting patiently for things to happen. I get very cold at night here. Sleep seems to be a thing of the past, but we do not care a _____. . . . The sixth JJ has just dropped amongst this bunch of ruined houses since I mentioned the last one. I do not think anyone was hurt though.

Boorer to His Wife, 20 October 1915

I think I had better deal with your questions first. You can send the gloves as I have been nearly frozen stiff the last five days. I have a stocking cap, or rather I have borrowed one. Will let you know if I have to give it back. The tin of matches I had on me in my haversack when I lost my pack and kit on the limber and have still a few left.

No ground has been lost by the Guards. On the contrary we have been doing nothing else but attacking and taking ground since we started. It was us that started the ball the first time in action and took Hill 70 and Loos. . . . Machine-guns cannot charge with the infantry, as of course they cannot get along quick enough. They give covering fire from the original position, and follow up immediately the infantry are in, to hold the new position against counter attack when the troops are exhausted and the position is not at all secure. . . . I have not seen any churches, only ruined ones, or priests, and Sundays seem to be the particular day all parties prefer to kick up merry hell. . . .

Well we have been in the front line again from last Thursday until yesterday evening. I think I had about five hours sleep in five days and was pretty well done up when I arrived here just behind the trenches, but feel fine this morning after a feed and good sleep. We looked very pretty, I quite admired myself, I imagine I looked like a Californian gold miner you read about. Five days' beard, no wash. But instead covered with dirt all over face, inside shirt, where it goes down the neck clothes on cake of it. Stocking cap on, and one of those khaki handkerchiefs round neck.

The strain is finding out the boys' weak spots. Half the section have gone sick with various complaints. Also we had three gassed going in, and one wounded. I suppose the gassed ones did not get the smoked helmet on quick enough. I got a breath or two, but it did not affect me. And when I got my helmet on it was worse than the gas. You have to breathe through thick shirting saturated with chemicals, which you put over the head and tuck into your shirt and button round, with a little transparent stuff to look through, which puzzles you to do, as it gets misty from your breath. There must be something to protect the eyes as it affects them first.

We are having it thick here, as there is no peace for a minute, being nearly all attacking. There was a (2198) bombing attack by the brigade bombers who took part of the German trench. My particular gun had to go and hold it a few minutes afterwards, although it was in the Scots Guards part of the trenches. It was a dead end, with nothing but a barricade between us and the Germans. Dead men hanging over the trenches, blown almost inside out. Had to work, and lay on a few covered with a few inches of dirt in the bottom of the trench. More were put into niches in the sides, with bayonets stuck in to keep them falling out. . . . We should have been in for it if they had crawled up and bombed us in the night but we kept putting bursts over the barricade, and they did not do so. We were sniped at from all angles however. There was just six of us in this bit, on our own, so you can guess sleep was hardly safe. We brought six out so all's well that ends well.

Source

Imperial War Museum, in Michael Moynihan, ed., *A Place Called Armageddon: Letters from the Great War* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1975), 25–28. Courtesy of the Boorer family with the assistance of the Imperial War Museum.

A Contented Soldier: Victor Richardson

Victor Richardson to Edward Brittain, 18 May 1916

Of course I am not going to believe that you have deteriorated morally [due to the war]: you only think you have. The truth is, you and I—as I have only just got to realise—are idealists. You will say that it is a pretty strange sort of thing for a cynical, cold-blooded person like myself to say. But it is really true, I am convinced. And idealists are fore-doomed to fail—that is why, I suppose, I have always been inclined to despise them for unpractical fools. I suppose our ideal is Roland [Leighton]. He did not fail, but He probably thought He did. Yet I doubt if one man in a thousand achieves His spotless purity, His wonderful old-world chivalry, or His love of Country in the abstract. In the words of the Bible “Such things are too great and excellent for me: I cannot attain unto them”—at least that is how I feel, and I rather think you do too. But I doubt if you or I have ever done very much that would be considered very wrong by the standards of the World. I hope you will not think me inconsistent for calling myself an idealist: I have not said that I approve of idealism; but one cannot help what one is by nature and temperament, whether one admires it or not. . . .

I don't think many people—apart from the very Low Church party of our own English Church, and I never have paid much heed to such people & I don't suppose you have—really think that this War is a punishment for the sins of those who have suffered in it and through it. To me, at any rate, such an idea is absolutely unthinkable. Surely the Allies are God's instrument by which He will remove that spirit and doctrine which is the cause of such Wars as this one. Did not Christ, “the all-powerful but yet meek, gentle, peace-loving, beneficent God,” Himself say that He came to bring “not peace, but a sword.” If Germany should win, not only would the rest of the World be faced with material ruin, but the whole Christian principle by which things are more or less governed in civilized Europe would be overthrown. Such a state of things is unthinkable . . . God will—using the Allies as His instrument—prevent it from coming to pass.

Victor Richardson to Vera Brittain, Billets, France, 31 October 1916

You may or may not be interested to hear that I have done the unlucky thing, and transferred—been transferred that is—to the 9th K.R.R.C. [King's Royal Rifle Corps]—I left England six days after you did. If there is anything in your superstition that it is unlucky to transfer, I am in the words of the Prophets most decidedly “for it.” In other words by all the laws of compensation I shall certainly have to pay for the excellent time I have had since joining the 9th

R.R.R. When I joined them with three others from the 4th R. [Royal] Sussex they were recovering from two highly successful “shows” on the Somme. I did two tours in the trenches with them, and we were then withdrawn for a proper rest. We are now resting & only doing three hours’ work a day. It is perfectly delightful to be in a battalion where officers are treated as such, and not as N.C.O.’s or private schoolboys, and where everything is properly run. We have quite a number of Regular Officers & N.C.O.’s and I expect that accounts for it. The 9th K.R.R. were a unit of the First Hundred Thousand [troops to go to France] and a truly splendid lot. I shall never have another word to say against the New Army.

(2199)

When we were in the line we were not so very far North of where Roland was, and it must have been just the same sort of things that He experienced. I suppose it becomes boring after a time, but being so new I thoroughly enjoyed it. It is not half so bad as one is always led to believe—and of course one never appreciates the good side of it till one has seen it. . . . It was very quiet & without much excitement. We did not get any heavy shells at all till the last day when a couple of 5.9s amused themselves at our expense for about half-an-hour, but without doing any damage. Whizz-Bangs—about which one has heard so much—are perfectly harmless in a trench, as the trajectory is so flat that it is nearly impossible for them to land in a trench. There is practically no rifle or machine gun fire & what there is appears to be unaimed—fixed rifles & swinging traverses for the most. There is a lot of trench mortar work & also varied bombs, but one can generally see these things coming which renders them fairly harmless. The trenches are wonderfully clean even in bad weather & the dugouts very comfortable, though some people might dislike their earthy smell. Altogether life out here is very enjoyable & a welcome change from England. Of course a “show” is a different business altogether. . . .

I thought the above notes on trench life might possibly interest you. I have so far come across nothing more gruesome than a few very dead Frenchmen in No Man’s Land, so cannot give you very thrilling descriptions. The thing one appreciates in the life here more than anything else is the truly charming spirit of good fellowship & freedom from pettiness that prevails everywhere.

Uppingham has just had another rude awakening. Did Edward ever tell you of Bunce? He had a rotten time & was everyone’s butt owing to his athletic incapacity. Some time ago his C.O. described him as the life and soul of the Battalion—Puckle scowled when I failed to admit surprise. Now he has been killed out here by falling on a bomb during practice to save the lives of his

men. His C.O. wrote "He was a born leader of men." Really I am beginning to agree with the Riflemen who when some dear old lady said "What a terrible War it is," replied "Yes Mum, but better than no War."

Victor Richardson to Vera Brittain, France, 18 November 1916

As you might expect I only just managed to get out at all. 36 names were sent in from our Battn. in response to an urgent call from Eastern Command & I was last but one on the list—they don't encourage people who want to go, in the T.F. [Territorial Force], as they regard France as a penal settlement. I was told I was to be attached with 14 others to the 10th R.B.'s. When I got to the Base I was told I was to be attached with 3 others to the 9th K.R.R. When we arrived we were told we were to be transferred. . . . I really could not stand a Territorial crowd again. I daresay they fight as well as any one else, but they are so hopelessly ignorant when it comes to doing things in the right way. . . .

I am thinking of trying for a permanent commission in the Regulars. What do you think about it? The only objection I can see to it is the pay, and after the War one will, I should think, be able to live on one's pay in most regiments, though probably not in the Rifles. I think I should try to get into the Indian Army after the War if by any chance I am still alive then, as the pay would be higher and the life more interesting as there generally seems to be a certain amount happening on the frontier. . . .

Victor Richardson to Vera Brittain, France, 6 December 1916

You seem to think that I have become a quite horrible individual. Perhaps that is so, but I don't think you quite understand the way I look at things. To start with you are quite right when you speak of coming out here as a release from imprisonment. It is. I wouldn't be back in England for worlds. . . . I was perfectly wretched until I did get out here.

It is quite awful to feel the silent contempt of those whom one regards as one's dearest friends. Perhaps I am over sensitive: I cannot help that. . . .

After all if I stopped to consider the deeper meaning and significance of these things my life would be one long misery. And it is the same, I am sure, with every man who thinks. Take a man in the prime of life killed by a stray bullet as may often happen. Consider all the anxieties of his upbringing—all that the trained product has cost materially and spiritually. Reflect that in one minute's time one may be just the same—blotted out for eternity. Why! one simply can't afford to let one's mind dwell on these things. One could not carry on.

You will be surprised to hear what has depressed me more than anything else—the Crucifixes one occasionally sees standing in desolate shell-swept areas.

(2200)

The horror of the one intensifies a hundredfold that of the other, and the image of the tortured Christ strikes one as an appalling monument to the Personification of Utter Failure.

As regards suitability for this kind of War—very few men are suitable & I most certainly am not. But one has to strive to become suitable—and very few indeed fail entirely in this respect. One has to try therefore to convince oneself—and if possible other people—that one is at any rate a decent imitation of a soldier.

Victor Richardson to Vera Brittain, France, 26 December 1916

I expect to be going on the Coy [Company] Commander's Course at 3rd Army School shortly. I am very glad as it is a very thorough Course, and ought to make me tolerably efficient from the technical point of view. But I am afraid nothing will ever make me a good soldier, owing to my being one of those unfortunate beings who are cursed with a temperament. Of course I get on alright as things are with us at present, but I have not yet seen War. I am perpetually haunted by the fear of not coming up to scratch in an emergency. I tell you it is a positive curse to have a temperament out here. The ideal thing is to be a typical Englishman. And the curse is trebled if you are also impetuous and excitable as I now realise I am and always have been. . . .

Victor Richardson to Vera Brittain, France, 4 March 1917

Your letter came just before I set out on a working party. We were working about 300 yards from Fritz on top with bullets from fixed rifles & machine guns whistling about—a beautiful moonlight night, but I found it too dark for reading letters all the same. You will hardly believe it, but I almost enjoy bullets whistling round me nowadays—I regard it as excellent nerve training for the Push, and as a recent article in the Times said with reference to the French victories at Verdun the infantry must be “trained in body, mind, and spirit.” Another example of what I mean—in ordinary times I would always go out of my way to avoid seeing a street accident. The other day I saw one of our planes “brought down in flames” and actually went to investigate for myself. You can imagine what I saw when I got there & I won't describe it. Thank God the pilot was dead before I arrived, but it was the worst thing I have seen out

here or anywhere else. Still this is the “training of the spirit” or perhaps of the “mind”—it is always difficult to tell where one begins and the other ends.

I think on the whole I agree with what you say about belief in dogmas, yet one is told that [without] faith there is no salvation. In that case my chances of a future life are not worth very much. However I haven't time now to worry too much over these things. Worry only lessens morale. I suppose I must in the words of Blake—or was it Cromwell?—brought up to date “Trust in God and keep close to the barrage.” By the way you will be pleased to hear that I have given up the idea of going into the Church, unless anything very unexpected happens.

The day after your letter came my C.O. recommended me for a permanent commission in the 60th.

Victor Richardson to Vera Brittain, France, 24 March 1917

Mrs Leighton [Roland Leighton's mother] has just sent me Rhymes of a Red Cross Man. They are indeed excellent, but their vivid realism is oppressive—at least I find it so just now. With regard to “Pilgrims” it is true in part. It is true that none of us would wish those we love to do other than “smile and be happy again.” But none of us wish to die. The 9th/60th is probably one of the finest battalions in France, and the Division, when the Divisions were placed in 4 categories after the Somme Battle, shared 1st place in the 1st category with the Guards. Nevertheless I venture to say that there is not one officer, warrant officer, N.C.O., or rifleman who looks on death as “The Splendid Release.” That is the phrase of “a Red Cross Man” and not of a member of a fighting unit.

I often wonder why we are all here. Mainly I think, as far as I am concerned, to prevent the repetition in England of what happened in Belgium in August 1914. Still more perhaps because one's friends are here. Perhaps too “heroism in the abstract” has a share in it all. But the attitude of 90% of the British Expeditionary Force is summed up in the words of two songs, the first a marching song to the tune of Auld Lang Syne that the little old men have been heard to sing:

(2201)

We're here because

We're here because

We're here because

We're here.

The second is a song from one of the revues—what country but “our dear, far, forgetting land” could produce such music at such a time?—

I'm here and you're here

So what do we care.

No “we ain't no bloomin' eroes.” And I think it's just as well. . . .

“Punch” some time ago had an essay in the “Watch Dogs” Series on “a little word of six letters” which epitomises the Army's view of the War. If taken literally it is, alas, no exaggeration—it is a shorter word than sanguinary—and figuratively it really expresses the whole situation, but my one fear in case of my safe return is that I may be perpetually uttering it in the drawing room. . . .

Source

Alan Bishop and Mark Bostridge, eds., *Letters from a Lost Generation: First World War Letters of Vera Brittain and Four Friends* (London: Little, Brown, 1998), 257–258, 283–285, 292, 296–297, 307, 324, 326–327. Courtesy of Shiona Robothan.

Herbert G. Boorer (1887–1915)

Herbert Boorer, whose father had been a master carpenter at the Drury Lane theater in London, was a tall, athletic traveling salesman in chocolate. On 2 September 1914, approaching his twenty-seventh birthday and married with three small children, he enrolled as a private in the Grenadier Guards. Boorer trained as a machine gunner, arrived in France in mid-August 1915, and in late September 1915 took part in the extremely bloody Battle of Loos, displaying considerable bravery under fire. In early December 1915 a rifle shot from a German sniper killed Guardsman Boorer as he was attending to his machine-gun post. Expressing condolences to his widow, Boorer's section officer described him as “a splendid officer [who] had a splendid character.”

Victor Richardson (1895–1917)

The youthful Victor Richardson has been remembered primarily because he is one of the four young men, all killed in World War I, who featured prominently in the writer Vera Brittain's memoirs. Like her fiancé Roland Leighton and her brother Edward Brittain, his inseparable friends at Uppingham College, Victor joined up in 1914, eventually dying in June 1917 of wounds received at the battle of Arras. Less academically gifted than his two talented classmates, who rather overshadowed him, he had originally intended to train as a physician, and at one stage during the war he even considered becoming a clergyman. The straightforward Richardson seems to have found army life congenial, even extremely satisfying, while accepting the horrors of war as its inevitable corollary. Indeed, he decided that he wished to remain in the army as a professional soldier once the war was over.

About The Documents

The documents included here are all personal letters, written without any thought that they would eventually be published. During his time in France, Boorer wrote a dozen letters to his wife, a mixture of graphic but laconic description of life in the trenches, including the Battle of Loos, and mundane requests for small comforts from home. She kept them until her own death in 1941, when they passed to the daughter who had lived with her. In the early 1970s the family responded to an appeal in *The Sunday Times*, which had published an earlier collection of diaries by First World War veterans, and presented Boorer's letters to the Imperial War Museum in London, which was actively seeking to collect papers and reminiscences of every kind relating to the conflict. Boorer's letters were somewhat unusual in that they give the perspective of a private soldier rather than an officer, albeit that of a relatively well-educated man who had attended Haberdashers' Aske's School in London. Boorer told his wife that "the fighting is something you cannot realise until you get in it" but was fairly frank, perhaps unusually so for a soldier writing to his wife, in describing the dangers to which he was exposed, including machine guns, heavy artillery shells, and gas as well as cold and lack of food, drink, and sleep. He described very matter of factly the difficult conditions in which he and his battalion were working, not (2202) seeking to complain but simply conveying as much of the experience as circumstances and censorship permitted. Boorer made no attempt to discuss, let alone question, the wider issues of the war and its implications; his letters focus entirely on the experience of trench warfare itself. According to the editor, those of his wife's letters that have survived were concerned entirely with the packages of supplies she was sending to him. To judge from his letters, British private soldiers (and

their wives) were clearly quite capable of displaying the same stoicism and stiff upper lips that were expected of their socially superior officers.

Richardson, younger by eight years than Boorer, had joined the army as a second lieutenant within a few months of leaving Uppingham School. Although at school he had formed one of a “Triumvirate” with his closest friends, Roland Leighton and Edward Brittain, Vera Brittain’s fiancé and brother, his correspondence with Vera Brittain did not begin until after she received the devastating news of Leighton’s death in December 1915 and was at least in part an effort by Richardson to give her what comfort he could. He also sought to assuage Edward Brittain’s doubts that he could cope with the experience of fighting. According to Richardson, whereas Leighton found “the heroic and glorious side of War appeal[ing],” Brittain “entirely lack[ed] any primitive warring side to his character,” and he was “sustained by Duty alone” to fight in a war he found abhorrent. Indeed, in 1915 Brittain apparently told Richardson that: “The thought of those lines of trenches gives me a sick feeling in the stomach.” Richardson recounted how Brittain, anticipating his return to the Somme in June 1916—where he would be wounded and win the Military Cross on 1 July 1916—was “only too naturally depressed at the thought of going back.”

Richardson told Vera Brittain in June 1916 that he himself shared Edward Brittain’s outlook: “I hate War bitterly as I have always hated it. I have tried to make myself a militarist, but my militarism is only skin deep; I am sorry to say I cannot honestly pretend that it is otherwise.” Yet his letters suggest this was not, strictly speaking, quite truthful. The Brittain siblings were at least beginning to develop some doubts about the war, while as early as April 1915 Leighton, whom they and Richardson subjected to something close to posthumous canonization, had written in the stress of the moment to his fiancée, “There is nothing glorious in trench warfare. It is all a waiting and a waiting and taking of petty advantage—and those who can wait longest win. And it is all for nothing—for an empty name, for an ideal perhaps—after all.” Richardson, who had always looked up to Leighton, was perhaps the most enthusiastic in seeking to make his death by a casual sniper’s bullet into a glorious apotheosis from which Leighton somehow emerged triumphant and was purified by death.

One reason for this may well have been that Richardson himself eventually found that military service in the wartime army provided him with a satisfying and fulfilling career and lifestyle. In 1914 Richardson, who considered himself far less clever than Leighton or the Brittain siblings, had been somewhat uncertain what career to pursue; the war gave him his answer. His letters to

Vera Brittain rather prosaically describe experiences he clearly enjoyed, despite or perhaps even because of the dangers involved. He soon expressed great pride in the soldierly performance of his battalion and division. Although Richardson apparently never doubted the justice of the Allied cause, even telling Edward Brittain that the Allied forces were “God’s instrument by which He will remove that spirit and doctrine which is the cause of such Wars as this one,” by mid-1917 he had come to deprecate high-flown language and stated quite forthrightly that he and his fellow soldiers had did not regard death as a “Splendid Release,” nor did they have any burning desire to die. Abandoning much of his earlier stirring but conventional rhetoric regarding heroic and idealistic sacrifice, Richardson had apparently metamorphosed into a rather tough and competent professional soldier whose abilities won him the respect of his superior officers, a process documented in his letters to the somewhat uneasy Vera Brittain, who had become his confidante. Interestingly, in her own memoir of the war, Brittain downplayed Richardson’s enjoyment of the army and quoted his letters to her in such a manner as to suggest that he shared her own later disillusionment. One may quite plausibly argue that especially among those who volunteered, Richardson’s comfortable embrace of the soldier’s life was at least as typical a reaction to wartime service as the revulsion the experience more famously inspired in other men who chose to enlist.

(2203)

Further Reading

Bond, Brian. *The Unquiet Western Front: Britain’s Role in Literature and History*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Cecil, Hugh. *The Flower of Battle: How Britain Wrote the Great War*. South Royalton, VT: Steerforth, 1996.

Corrigan, Gordon. *Mud, Blood and Poppycok: Britain and the First World War*. London: Cassell, 2003.

Fuller, J. G. *Troop Morale and Popular Culture in the British and Dominion Armies, 1914–1918*. Oxford, UK: Clarendon, 1990.

Girouard, Mark. *The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981.

Holmes, Richard. *Tommy: The British Soldier on the Western Front*. London: HarperCollins, 2004.

Hynes, Samuel. *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture*. London: Bodley Head, 1990.

Kelly, R. B. Talbot. *A Subaltern's Odyssey: A Memoir of the Great War, 1915–1917*. London: William Kimber, 1980.

Leed, Eric J. *No Man's Land: Combat and Ideology in World War I*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979.

Watson, Janet S. K. *Fighting Different Wars: Experience, Memory, and the First World War in Britain*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

MLA

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "18. The Soldier's Experience." *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*, ABC-CLIO, 2005, pp. . *ABC-CLIO eBook Collection*, legacy.abc-clio.com/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2114.

Chicago Manual of Style

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "18. The Soldier's Experience." In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005. <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2114>.

APA

Roberts, P. M., S. C. Tucker (2005). 18. The Soldier's Experience. In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia* (pp.). Retrieved from <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2114>

Essay 19. The Soldier's Reaction to War

The British War Poets and Writers

The popular image of World War I rests heavily on the writings of a group of mostly British poets, playwrights, and memoirists whose depictions of the war have become classics. Prominent among them are Richard Aldington, Edmund Blunden, Vera Brittain, Robert Graves, Wilfred Owen, Isaac Rosenberg, Siegfried Sassoon, J. C. Sherriff, and the German novelist Erich Maria Remarque. Most of their war poetry appeared during or immediately after the war itself, but their retrospective memoirs, novels, and plays for the most part came out ten to fifteen years after the armistice of November 1918. As a rule, they gave a brutally unvarnished picture of war, stressing the filth, squalor, waste, and macabre aspects of the conflict; the mud, vermin, and promiscuously scattered bodies and body parts in the trenches; and the casual slaughter and disregard for human life. They also highlighted the incompetence of many of the military leaders who set the strategy for the war and their disregard for its cost in terms of human life. Such writers effectively rejected the pre-1914 literary conventions for handling warfare, which had presented conflict in high-flown terms of individual heroism, idealistic causes, noble sacrifice, and gallant warriors. For the rest of the twentieth century, writers found it nearly impossible to credibly depict combat and fighting in other than realistic terms.

In recent years, historians such as Gary Sheffield, Modris Eksteins, Niall Ferguson, and Robert Wohl have questioned the validity of the view of World War I purveyed by the best-remembered war writers. Many other novels and memoirs of the conflict, they suggest, some of them best-sellers at the time, portrayed it in much more positive terms, as a struggle that, though unpleasant, had to be won and in which such military values as personal courage, comradeship, and care for one's men were both valued and frequent. Such historians pointed to the fact that at least on the Western Front, most soldiers continued to fight throughout the war, morale was generally high, and soldiers often took great pride in their units and accomplishments. Some, such as Gary Sheffield, also criticized the suggestion that top-level military leadership in both Britain and Germany was inadequate and that, in the popular phrase, the war was one of "lions led by donkeys," excellent soldiers betrayed by incompetent generals.

Interestingly, as some literary critics have noted, many of these writers were in reality at most ambivalent toward the war. In some cases, that of the pacifist

Vera Brittain, for example, their commitment to an antiwar perspective did not take shape until after the war had ended. Robert Graves purported to be surprised when his memoir, *Good-bye to All That*, was taken as an antiwar tract. Although the book brought out many of the more macabre aspects of the war and conveyed the line officers' prevailing attitude of contempt for the staff officers who made the strategic decisions and ordered the offensives, Graves's pride in his battalion's traditions and its soldierly conduct, as well as his own, were shown to be equally pronounced. Blunden's depiction of the war was comparably ambivalent, his affection for his men and the unit in which he served as noteworthy as his understated description of the war's horrors. For most such writers, however, the war became the central experience of (2204) their lives, something that shaped the remainder of their often long and productive careers in ways they found it difficult to escape. Graves, probably the most successful in putting the past behind him, left England for Majorca in the early 1930s, writing prolifically, embarking on a series of well-publicized love affairs and marriages, and advancing his own idiosyncratic interpretations of mythology centered around the figure of the "White Goddess." Brittain's wartime losses eventually made her a lifelong pacifist, while Blunden put much of his energies not just into his own recollections of the war but also into editing and publicizing the writings of other authors, notably Wilfred Owen, who had not survived the war. The literary critic Samuel Hynes has even commented on the extent to which writers and artists whose formative years were spent in frontline military service later found it impossible to enter the British literary mainstream and remained in some sense trapped in their wartime experience.

Siegfried Sassoon, Officer, Poet, and Conscientious Objector

Siegfried Sassoon, Diary Entry, 30 March 1916

7 o'clock on a frosty white morning with a lark shaking his little wings above the trenches, and an airplane droning high up in the soft early sunlight. At 5 it was quite light, with a sickle-moon low in the west and the dawn a delicate flush of faint pink and submerged radiance above a mist-swathed country, peeping out from tree or roof, all white, misty-white and frosty-white, men stamp their feet and rats are about on the crannied rime-frosted parapets. Folds of mist, drifting in a dense blur; above them the white shoals and chasms of the sky.

Here life is audacious and invincible—until it is whirled away in enigmatic helplessness and ruin; and then it is only the bodies that are smashed and riddled; for the profound and purposeful spirit of renascence moves in and rests

on all things—imperceptible between the scarred and swarming earth and noble solitudes of sky—the spirit that triumphs over visible destruction, as leaping water laughs at winds and rocks and shipwrecked hulks.

Their temper is proven, the fibre of their worth is tested, and revealed; these men from Welsh farms and Midland cities, from factory and shop and mine, who can ever give them their meed of praise for the patience and tender jollity which seldom forsake them?

The cheerless monotony of their hourly insecurity, a monotony broken only by the ever-present imminence of death and wounds—the cruelty and malice of these things that fall from the skies searching for men, that they may batter and pierce the bodies and blot the slender human existence.

As I sit in the sun in a nook among the sandbags and chalky debris, with shells flying overhead in the blue air, a lark sings high up, and a little weasel comes and runs past me within a foot of my outstretched feet, looking at me with tiny bright eyes. Bullets sing and whistle and hum; so do bits of shell; rifles crack; some small guns and trench-mortars pop and thud; big shells burst with a massive explosion, and the voluminous echoes roll along the valleys, to fade nobly and without haste or consternation.

Bullets are deft and flick your life out with a quick smack. Shells rend and bury, and vibrate and scatter, hurling fragments and lumps and jagged splinters at you; they lift you off your legs and leave you huddled and bleeding and torn and scorched with a blast straight from the pit. Heaven is furious with the smoke and flare and portent of shells, but bullets are a swarm of whizzing hornets, winged and relentless, undeviating in their malicious onset.

The big guns roar their challenge and defiance; but the machine-guns rattle with intermittent bursts of mirthless laughter.

There are still pools in the craters; they reflect the stars like any lovely water, but nothing grows near them; snags of iron just from their banks, tin cans and coils of wire, and other trench-refuse. If you search carefully, you may find a skull, eyeless, grotesquely matted with what was once hair; eyes once looked from those detestable holes, they made the fabric of a passionate life, they appealed for justice, they were lit with triumph, and beautiful with pity.

How good it is to get the savour of time past; what living skies, what crowds of faces, what unending murmur of voices, mingle with the sounds of visions of to-day; for to-day is always the event; and all the yesterdays are windows

looking out on unbounded serenity, and dreams written on the darkness; and suspended (2205) actions re-fashion themselves in silence, playing the parts they learned, at a single stroke of thought.

Siegfried Sassoon, "A Working Party," 30 March 1916

Three hours ago he blundered up the trench,
Sliding and posing, groping with his boots;
Sometimes he tripped and lurched against the walls
With hands that pawed the sodden bags of chalk.
He could not see the man who went before him;
Only he heard the drum and rattle of feet
Stepping along the greasy planks, or splashing
Wretchedly where the slush was ankle-deep.

Voices would grunt, "Keep to the right; make way!"
When squeezing past men from the front line;
White faces peered, puffing an ember of red;
Candles and braziers glinted through the chinks
And curtain-flaps of dug-outs; then the gloom
Swallowed his sense of sight; the orange gleams
Faded; he felt his way; and someone swore
Because a sagging wire had caught his neck.
A flare went up; and shining whiteness spread,
And flickered upwards; showing nimble rats,

And mounds of sandbags, weatherworn and bleached,
Then the slow silver moment died in dark.
The wind came posting by with chilly gusts,
And buffeting at corners, piping thin
And dreary through the crannies; rifle-shots
Would split and crack and sing along the night
And shells came curving through the cloven air,
Bursting with hollow and voluminous bang.

Three hours ago he stumbled up the trench,
But he will never walk that road again;
He will be carried back; not carefully now,
Because he lies beyond the need of care,
And he has no wound to hurt him, being dead.
He was a young man, with a meagre wife
And two pale children in a Midland town;
His mates considered him a useful chap,
Who did his work and hadn't much to say,
And always laughed at other people's jokes,
Patient and dull, but kindly and reserved.

That night when he was busy at his job

Of piling sandbags on the parapet,
He thought how slow time went, stamping his feet,
And blowing on his fingers, pinched with cold.
He thought of getting back by half-past twelve,
And a tot of rum to send him warm to sleep
In draughty dug-out, stuffy with the fumes
Of coke, and full of snoring weary men.
He pushed another bag along the top,
Craning his body outward; then a flare
Gave one white glimpse of earth and what he knew;
And as he dropped his head, the instant split
His startled life with lead, and all went out.

That's how a lad goes west when at the front—
Snapped in a moment's merciful escape,
While the dun year goes lagging on its course
With widows grieving down the streets in black,
And faded mothers dreaming of bright sons
That grew to men, and listed for the war,
And left a photograph to keep their place.

Siegfried Sassoon, Diary Entry, 31 March 1916

They put up three mines this evening between 4 and 5 but did no damage at all. Last night, warmer and lovely with stars, found me creeping about the front of our wire with Corporal O'Brien. Got quite near the German wire but couldn't find the sap which had been mentioned. Out about an hour and a half; great fun. To-night I'm going to try and spot one of their working-parties and chuck some bombs at them. Better to get a sling at them in the open—even if on one's belly—than to sit here and have a great thing drop on one's head. I found it most exhilarating—just like starting for a race. Great thing is to get as many sensations as possible. No good being out here unless one takes the full amount of risks, and I want to get a good name in the Battalion, for the sake of poetry and poets, whom I represent.

No-man's-land fascinates me, with its jumble of wire-tangles and snaky seams in the earth winding (2206) along the landscape. The mine-craters are rather fearsome, with snipers hidden away on the lips, and pools of dead-looking water. One mine that went up to-day was in an old crater; I think it missed fire, as the earth seethed and spumed, but did not hurl debris skyward in smoke as they usually do. But the earth shook all right.

I am not going out for nothing to-night. I know I ought to be careful of myself, but something drives me on to look for trouble. Greaves [a fellow-officer] tried to stop me going out last night; but that was child's play, only two or three sniper's shots at us, and the white rocket-lights going up while we lay flat and listened to our bumping hearts, and laughed with sheer delight when the danger was over. . . .

Siegfried Sassoon, Diary Entry, 1 April 1916

Got back to Morlancourt by 1 o'clock on a bright day—east wind, glare and dust. Got through last night all right. About 9.30 I started creeping along the old sap which leads out to the crater where they put a fresh mine up in the afternoon; about forty yards from our parapet (it didn't explode properly). Our sentry had seen two men go down into the crater at dusk—covering-party, I expect—while the others worked on the lip. After crawling about forty yards I got to the edge of the crater and could hear them working about twenty-five yards away. Couldn't make out where the covering-party were, and was in mortal funk lest someone would shoot me. Crept back, and returned with Private Gwynne and four Mills bombs; we threw the bombs, I think with effect; a flare went up and I could see someone about five yards away, below me; fired six shots out of the revolver; and fled. . . .

I used to say I couldn't kill anyone in this war; but since they shot Tommy I would gladly stick a bayonet into a German by daylight. Someone told me a year ago that love, sorrow, and hate were things I had never known (things which every poet should know!). Now I've known love for Bobbie [Hanmer] and Tommy, and grief for Hamo and Tommy, and hate has come also, and the lust to kill. Rupert Brooke was miraculously right when he said "Safe shall be my going, Secretly armed against all death's endeavour; Safe though all safety's lost." He described the true soldier-spirit—saint and hero like Norman Donaldson and thousands of others who have been killed and died happier than they lived.

Siegfried Sassoon, "Peace," 2 April 1916

Down glaring dusty roads, a sanctuary of trees,
 Green for my gaze and cool, and hushed with pigeon's croon;
 Chill pitcher'd water for my thirst; and sweet as these,
 Anger grown tired of hate, and peace returning soon.
 In my heart there's cruel war that must be waged
 In darkness vile with moans and bleeding bodies maimed;
 A gnawing hunger drives me, wild to be assuaged,
 And bitter lust chuckles within me unashamed.
 Come back to heal me when my feckless course is run,
 Peace, that I sought in life; crown me among the dead;
 Stoop to me like a lover when the fight is done;
 Fold me in sleep; and let the stars be overhead.

Source

Siegfried Sassoon, *Diaries, 1915–1918*, ed. Rupert Hart-Davis (London: Faber and Faber, 1983), 47–52. Copyright Siegfried Sassoon by kind permission of George Sassoon.

Siegfried Sassoon, Diary Entry, 3 June 1916

Lorries a mile away, creeping along the green and yellow ridges of the June landscape like large insects. A partridge runs out of the rustling blades of corn, and hurries back again. The afternoon sky is full of large clouds, and broad beams of light lead the eyes up to a half-hidden sun. A fresh breeze comes from the north-west. Miles of green country as far as I can see, and trees dark green against the sky's white edge. A lark goes up, and takes my heart with him. Seven soldiers straggle across the view; one wears a cape. A team of horses drags a harrow; three greys and a brown, with a French boy riding, and calling to them.

I was thinking this evening (as I sat out in the garden with the sun low behind the roofs and a chilly (2207) wind shaking the big aspens) that if there really are such things as ghosts, and I'm not prepared to gainsay the fact—or illusion—if there are ghosts, then they will be all over this battle-front forever. I think the ghosts at Troy are all too tired to show themselves—they are too literary—and Odysseus has sailed into the sunset never to return. The grim old campaigns of bowmen and knights and pikemen may have their spectral anniversaries—one never hears of them. But the old Flanders wars have been wiped out by these new slaughterings; and the din of our big guns that shatter and obliterate towns and villages, and dig pits in every field, and lay waste pleasant green woods—this must have scared the old phantoms far away. Or do they still watch the struggle?

I can imagine that, in a hundred or two hundred or two thousand years, when wars are waged in the air and under the ground, these French roads will be haunted by a silent traffic of sliding lorries and jolting waggons and tilting limbers—all going silently about their business. Some staring peasant or stranger will see them silhouetted against the pale edge of a night sky—six mules and a double limber, with the drivers jiggling in the saddle—a line of cumbrous lorries nosing along some bleak main-road—a battalion transport with the sergeant riding in front, and brake-men hanging on behind the limbers, taking rations to the trenches that were filled in hundreds of years ago. And there will be ghostly working-parties coming home to billets long after midnight, filing along deserted tracks among the cornlands, men with round basin-helmets, and rifles slung on their shoulders, puffing at ambrosial Woodbines—and sometimes the horizon will wink with the flash of a gun, and insubstantial shells will hurry across the upper air and melt innocuous in nothingness.

And the trenches—where the trenches used to be—there will be grim old bomb-fights in the craters and wounded men cursing; and patrols will catch their breath and crawl out from tangles of wire, and sentries will peer over the parapets, fingering the trigger—doubtful whether to shoot or send for the sergeant. And I shall be there—looking for Germans with my revolver and my knobkerrie and two Mills-bombs in each pocket, having hair-breadth escapes—crawling in the long grass—wallowing in the mud—crouching in shell-holes—hearing the Hun sentries cough and shift their feet, and click their bolts; I shall be there—slipping back into our trench, and laughing with my men at the fun I've had in no-man's-land. And I'll be watching a frosty dawn come up beyond the misty hills and naked trees—with never a touch of cold in my feet or fingers, and perhaps taking a nip of rum from a never-emptying flask. And all the horrors will be there and agonies be endured again; but over all will be the same peaceful starlight—the same eternal cloudlands—and in those dusty hearts an undying sense of valour and sacrifice. And though our ghosts be as dreams, those good things will be as they are now, a light in the thick darkness and a crown.

Source

Siegfried Sassoon, *Diaries, 1915–1918*, ed. Rupert Hart-Davis (London: Faber and Faber, 1983), 71–72. Copyright Siegfried Sassoon by kind permission of George Sassoon.

Siegfried L. Sassoon, Statement against the Continuation of the War

[Drafted 15 June 1917, dispatched to his commanding officer and various literary figures 6 July 1917, and printed in the *Times*, 7 July 1917.]

I am making this statement as an act of wilful defiance of military authority, because I believe that the war is being deliberately prolonged by those who have the power to end it.

I am a soldier, convinced that I am acting on behalf of soldiers. I believe that this war, upon which I entered as a war of defence and liberation, has now become a war of aggression and conquest. I believe that the purposes for which I and my fellow-soldiers entered upon this war should have been so clearly stated as to have made it impossible to change them, and that, had this been done, the objects which actuated us would now be attainable by negotiation.

I have seen and endured the sufferings of the troops, and I can no longer be a party to prolong these sufferings for ends which I believe to be evil and unjust.

I am not protesting against the conduct of the war, but against the political errors and insincerities for which the fighting men are being sacrificed.

On behalf of those who are suffering now I make this protest against the deception which is being practiced on them; also I believe that I may help to destroy the callous complacency with which the majority of those at home regard the continuance of agonies which (2208) they do not share, and which they have not sufficient imagination to realize.

Source

Siegfried Sassoon, *Diaries, 1915–1918*, ed. Rupert Hart-Davis (London: Faber and Faber, 1983), 173–174. Copyright Siegfried Sassoon by kind permission of George Sassoon.

Siegfried Sassoon, Diary Entry, 19 June 1917

I wish I could believe that Ancient War History justifies the indefinite prolongation of this war. The Jingos define it as “an enormous quarrel between incompatible spirits and destinies, in which one or the other must succumb.” But the men who write these manifestos do not truly know what useless suffering the war inflicts.

And the ancient wars on which they base their arguments did not involve such huge sacrifices as the next two or three years will demand of Europe, if this war is to be carried on to a knock-out result. Our peace-terms remain the same, “the destruction of Kaiserism and Prussianism.” I don’t know what aims this destruction represents.

I only know, and declare from the depths of my agony, that these empty words (so often on the lips of the Jingos) mean the destruction of Youth. They mean the whole torment of waste and despair which people refuse to acknowledge or to face; from month to month they dupe themselves with hopes that “the war will end this year.”

And the Army is dumb. The Army goes on with its bitter tasks. The ruling classes do all the talking. And their words convince no one but the crowds who are their dupes.

The soldiers who return home seem to be stunned by the things they have endured. They are willingly entrapped by the silent conspiracy against them. They have come back to life from the door of death, and the world is good to

enjoy. They vaguely know that it is “bad form” to hurt people’s feelings by telling the truth about the war. Poor heroes! If only they would speak out; and throw their medals in the faces of their masters; and ask their women why it thrills them to know that they, the dauntless warriors, have shed the blood of Germans. Do not the women gloat secretly over the wounds of their lovers? Is there anything inwardly noble in savage sex instincts?

The rulers of England have always relied on the ignorance and patient credulity of the crowd. If the crowd could see into those cynical hearts it would lynch its dictators. For it is to the inherent weakness of human nature, and not to its promiscuous nobility, that these great men make their incessant appeals.

The soldiers are fooled by the popular assumption that they are all heroes. They have a part to play, a mask to wear. They are allowed to assume a pride of superiority to the mere civilian. Are there no heroes among the civilians, men and women alike?

Of the elderly male population I can hardly trust myself to speak. Their frame of mind is, in the majority of cases, intolerable. They glory in senseless invective against the enemy. They glory in the mock-heroism of their young men. They glory in the mechanical phrases of the Northcliffe Press. They regard the progress of the war like a game of chess, cackling about “attrition,” and “wastage of man-power,” and “civilisation at stake.” In every class of society there are old men like ghouls, insatiable in their desire for slaughter, impenetrable in their ignorance.

Soldiers conceal their hatred of the war.

Civilians conceal their liking for it.

“How vastly the spiritual gain of those who are left behind outweighs the agony and loss of those who fight and die . . . the everlasting glory and exaltation of the war.” [From a review in *The Times Literary Supplement*]

This is the sort of thing I am in revolt against. But I belong to “a war-wearied and bewildered minority which regards ‘victory’ and ‘defeat’ as rhetorical terms with little precise meaning.”

Source

Siegfried Sassoon, *Diaries, 1915–1918*, ed. Rupert Hart-Davis (London: Faber and Faber, 1983), 175–176. Copyright Siegfried Sassoon by kind permission of George Sassoon.

Siegfried Sassoon (1886–1967)

Siegfried Sassoon joined the British armed forces in 1914 at the age of 28, when he was already an established poet, one of the group known as the Georgians (2209) who wrote what his friend Rupert Hart-Davis described as “agreeably derivative poems,” for the most part on pastoral subjects, Sassoon, whose father was a scion of a well-known Levantine Jewish banking family, enjoyed a comfortable independent income; on his mother’s side he came from a family of artists, engineers, and inventors. Before the war Sassoon divided his time between the strenuous pursuit of sports, especially fox hunting, cricket, and tennis, and developing his talents as a poet, a sphere in which he attained considerable technical virtuosity but had some problems finding original subjects to engage his interest.

Sassoon volunteered for military service on 1 August 1914, three days before Britain declared war on Germany. Interestingly, Sassoon’s diaries strongly suggest that he genuinely believed the experience of war would greatly improve his poetry, a hope undoubtedly richly fulfilled. He served first as a trooper with the Sussex Yeomanry, later transferring to the Royal Welch Fusiliers, and eventually went out to France in November 1915. An almost recklessly courageous officer who felt great loyalty toward the men under his command and won their regard, he gained the nickname “Mad Jack” for his daring raids and reconnaissances against the German lines. He was driven in part by a desire to avenge his brother Hamo, who died in October 1915 of wounds received in the Gallipoli operation, and by the loss in action of several close friends, for at least one of whom Sassoon felt a strong though unexpressed homosexual attraction. In late June 1916 he won the Military Cross for rescuing British wounded between the lines at the risk of his own life. In July 1916 Sassoon took part in the first month of the Somme offensive, showing his accustomed bravery by ignoring orders and single-handedly clearing a trench of Germans, an exploit for which he was recommended for a further decoration. At the end of the month Sassoon was invalided back to Britain with trench fever, where he remained until January 1917, a period during which he produced numerous poems. Although he was in most respects an excellent officer with a pronounced sensitivity to the beauty to be found even among the squalor of the trenches, what he came to perceive as war’s

senseless nature and the slaughter it inflicted upon those who actually did the fighting nonetheless repelled Sassoon. Over time he lost faith in the war he had once embraced enthusiastically, a change reflected in the evolution of his poetry, which began with traditional hymns to heroism in the style of Rupert Brooke. By the end of 1916 Sassoon had graduated through spare realism to harsh satire, its objects the senior officers, who in his opinion showed little understanding of the value of men's lives, and the bloodthirsty and complacent civilians at home, whom Sassoon viewed as lacking any understanding of the reality of war in the trenches.

In February 1917 Sassoon returned again to France and took part in the spring offensive at Arras until April 1917, when a sniper's bullet caught him in the shoulder. The winter of 1916–1917 was bitterly cold, and the British Somme offensive of 1916 and the French Nivelle offensive of spring 1917 each failed to bring the victory that had been promised. At the end of 1916 Allied and Central Powers alike turned down an appeal by President Woodrow Wilson of the United States to negotiate a peace settlement acceptable to both sides. Although the United States declared war on Germany in April 1917, greatly increasing the resources of both manpower and matériel available to the Allies, many began to suspect that the war would prove virtually interminable. Meanwhile, casualties continued to mount. Returning again on sick leave to Britain, in July 1917 Sassoon published a "Declaration" condemning the war and its continuation. Interestingly, his fellow officers at the front, however sympathetic to him personally, did not endorse his declaration, which they considered inopportune and liable merely to boost the enemy's morale. He was speaking primarily for himself, not as a representative of the general thinking of young officers or men in the trenches. Through the intervention of friends, especially Robert Graves, a fellow poet from the same battalion, Sassoon escaped the official retribution he might seem to have invited; instead, he was diagnosed as suffering from shell shock and sent to convalesce at Craiglockhart War Hospital, Edinburgh, which specialized in nervous cases. In November 1917 he was passed as fit for duty and served again in Ireland, Palestine, and lastly in France, where he arrived in May 1918. As always, he distinguished himself by his near-foolhardy exploits, until in July 1918 a British soldier shot him by mistake as he returned through no-man's-land from a furtive patrol to silence a German (2210) machine gun. Once again, Sassoon was sent back to England to recover, and he was still there when the war ended the following November.

About The Documents

For the rest of his long life, Sassoon remained in thrall to the war, which became his real subject, though he continued to write pastoral, personal, and eventually religious poetry. According to Hart-Davis, “It was terrible impact of the Western Front that turned him from a versifier into a poet.” Besides his large output of war poetry, which effectively ceased shortly after the war ended, between 1928 and 1945 Sassoon produced six volumes of memoirs on the war, one trilogy lightly fictionalized and omitting any reference to his poetry, the second supposedly a full retelling of his life up to 1920. Much of what he wrote was based upon the diaries he had kept, though these were not published until after his death, by which time Sassoon had deleted certain passages, apparently those he considered too revealing of his own homosexual inclinations. When publishing portions of his diaries in *Sherston’s Progress* (1936), his first, fictionalized trilogy of memoirs, Sassoon was not only selective, he also made subtle minor adaptations to the original text, pointing up ironies of which he had not earlier been aware and suggesting greater disillusionment with the war than he had felt at the time. These retrospective alterations were made to permit Sassoon to present his wartime self in a light that seemed retrospectively more appropriate to him, given his subsequent dissenting perspective. In practice Sassoon’s original diaries, which included numerous poems, not all of which he later considered of sufficient quality to publish, revealed a profound ambivalence in his attitude toward the war, which was far less apparent in his memoirs. Sassoon’s well-publicized disenchantment with and even revulsion regarding the war in 1916–1917 was undoubtedly genuine. What his various memoirs failed to emphasize, however, was the joy and exhilaration he also found in war, even as it deprived him of his brother and friends, forcing him to recognize its cost in human terms. If he rebelled against the idealization and glorification of war, he also loved its less romantic reality.

Sassoon, a sensitive if highly egotistical man, was never able to reconcile these contradictions within himself. His diary entries for spring 1916 reveal not just how greatly Sassoon enjoyed the experience of war, finding moments of beauty and romance in it, but the pleasure and pride he took in fighting and killing, so long as in doing so he was able to exercise his individual skills in risky adventures. Each time he was away from the front, and despite suffering what amounted to a nervous breakdown in spring and summer 1917, a period when he wrote a poem suggesting that the recollected “thud” of “the whispering guns” was driving him “stark, staring mad,” Sassoon eagerly sought to return as soon as he was fit to do so. In retrospect he justified his decision as driven by

concern for his men and a sense of guilt over being away from his unit during such bloody offensives as the Battle of Passchendaele. It seems, however, that he was powerfully attracted to the battlefield and the opportunities it offered him to undertake the foolhardily brave feats of wild personal heroism that—despite the industrialized nature of modern warfare—were still possible there. Several of the diary entries and poems included here illustrate Sassoon's passionate enjoyment of such opportunities, his reckless willingness to court death in pursuit of them, and even his hope that, many years later, his ghost would still be "looking for Germans with my revolver and my knobkerrie and two Mills-bombs in each pocket" and "slipping back into our trench, and laughing with my men at the fun I've had in no-man's-land." Not only did the war provide him with the material his poetic talents needed to develop, it also allowed him to exercise to the full his remarkable abilities for what came close to individual guerrilla operations. Never again would he be so alive or possess such vitality and élan as when he was fighting during the war, and these years always remained the central, defining experience of his entire life.

Further Reading

Bergonzi, Bernard. *Heroes' Twilight: A Study of the Literature of the Great War*. London: Constable, 1965.

Caesar, A. *Taking It Like a Man: Suffering, Sexuality and the War Poets*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993.

Campbell, Patrick. *Siegfried Sassoon: A Study of the War Poetry*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1999.

Fussell, Paul. *The Great War and Modern Memory*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1975.

Graves, Robert. *Good-bye to All That: An Autobiography*. Ed. Richard Perceval Graves. Providence, RI: Berghahn, 1995.

(2211)

Leed, Eric J. *No Man's Land: Combat and Ideology in World War I*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979.

Moeyes, Paul. *Siegfried Sassoon, Scorched Glory: A Critical Study*. New York: St. Martin's, 1993.

Thorpe, Michael. *Siegfried Sassoon: A Critical Study*. Leiden: Leiden University Press, 1966.

Wilson, Jean Moorcroft. *Siegfried Sassoon, the Making of a Poet: A Biography, 1886–1918*. New York: Routledge, 1999.

———. *Siegfried Sassoon, the Journey from the Trenches: A Biography, 1918–1967*. New York: Routledge, 2003.

MLA

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "19. The Soldier's Reaction to War." *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*, ABC-CLIO, 2005, pp. . *ABC-CLIO eBook Collection*, legacy.abc-clio.com/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2122.

Chicago Manual of Style

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "19. The Soldier's Reaction to War." In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005. <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2122>.

APA

Roberts, P. M., S. C. Tucker (2005). 19. The Soldier's Reaction to War. In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia* (pp.). Retrieved from <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2122>

Essay 20. The French Mutinies of 1917

The French Mutinies of 1917

One of the greatest Allied crises of the war came in spring 1917, when large numbers of French troops—demoralized by more than thirty months of war, their losses in the Verdun campaign and the recent failed Nivelle offensive, and growing weakness on the Russian Front—mutinied and in many cases refused to fight. This was a development whose impact on the Allied ability to continue the war was potentially devastating. The February 1917 Russian revolution, when discontented troops rebelled against Tsar Nicholas II, forcing his abdication and his replacement by a liberal though short-lived provisional government, alarmed governments on both sides of the conflict, who feared that the infection of revolution might only too easily spread to their own countries. One major reason Russian soldiers rejected their existing government was its incompetence in handling the country's massive war effort. A combination of heavy casualties, defeats by German forces in fall 1915, and shortages of food and equipment stimulated condemnation of the tsar's military leadership as commander-in-chief and his eventual overthrow. Over the winter of 1916–1917, German troops prepared to retreat from their existing positions to the more defensible Hindenburg Line (*Siegfriedstellung*), where they dug themselves in to heavily fortified positions they believed were impregnable. In the February 1917 Operation Alberich the German troops withdrew to their new line. General Robert Nivelle, appointed French commander-in-chief in December 1916, already had plans to break the existing German line in two days with a concentrated offensive. Even though Operation Alberich disrupted many of the existing assault plans, Nivelle nonetheless went ahead with it in April 1917. In the Second Battle of the Aisne, French troops sought to advance along the Chemin des Dames ridge, while British forces mounted secondary attacks on the German lines at Arras. The assaults continued throughout April and May but faltered in the face of massive German defenses, costing 350,000 Allied casualties for small gains of ground and proving Nivelle's hopes illusory.

General Henri Philippe Pétain replaced Nivelle as commander-in-chief in May 1917, by which point collective indiscipline had spread through no less than 110 units of exhausted French troops drawn from fifty-four divisions, over half the French army. French leaders feared that unless rapidly checked, discontented French soldiers might emulate the Russians, with drastic effects on their alliance's ability to continue the war. Although the mutinies remained largely nonviolent, without the widespread physical assaults against officers

common in Russia, probably between 25,000 and 30,000 soldiers flatly refused to obey orders. No soldiers actually engaged in frontline duty against the enemy abandoned their positions or held demonstrations, but numerous units refused to go up to the front, often moving instead to open areas where they could hold protest meetings to air their grievances. For the most part, these were concrete and far from revolutionary. Soldiers complained of bad food; demanded the right to take their leaves, many of which were greatly in arrears; and demanded the end of military injustices and serious moves for a liberal peace with no indemnities or annexations, except for the restoration to France of Alsace and Lorraine, seized by Germany in 1871.

In response, Pétain responded with a combination of carrot and stick. Dissent was ruthlessly suppressed, with 3,427 mutinous soldiers considered to be the movement's ringleaders put on trial, 554 sentenced to death, and 49 actually shot, though only 30 for mutiny itself, since the remainder were executed for associated crimes committed during this period. The other death sentences were later commuted to exile to French Indochina or Morocco, while discontented units were evacuated in disgrace from the front, quite often deprived of their prestigious battle honors. With the tacit consent of their fellow soldiers, those sent for trial were selected by a regiment's own officers and noncommissioned officers. To improve morale, Pétain personally inspected all units under his command, putting (2212) in place improved food, housing, and leave arrangements and making generous use of decorations to recognize excellent military performances by individuals and units. He also moved to enhance the caliber and leadership qualities of senior and noncommissioned officers, insisting that they develop a close rapport with their forces. In addition, in an effort to reduce casualties the French army modified its trench warfare tactics, placing the majority of troops in the second or third line of trenches and only manning the first line in sufficient force to repel enemy attacks and carry out necessary observation. Extensive resting and retraining meant that the French army launched no further major offensives until summer 1918. Although Pétain was more restrained than most, army officers generally preferred to place the ultimate responsibility for the mutinies not upon the inadequacies of their own personnel policies but upon disloyal radical, pacifist civilians, whom they alleged had deliberately subverted troop morale. Such an attitude enabled them to evade most of the blame while taking the credit for the restoration of discipline, which was largely accomplished by fall 1917.

French Marshal Henri-Philippe Pétain, “*A Crisis of Morale in the French Nation at War, 16th April–23rd October 1917,*” 15 May 1926

Towards the end of April 1917, the fortune of war appeared to turn against the Allied armies after having smiled on them for a brief moment. The dazzling hopes of the early spring, which the German withdrawal to the Hindenburg Line, America’s entry into the war, and the anticipated impact of the Franco-British offensive had caused the leaders of coalition to hold out, were dashed to the ground. *The grand strategic triumph on which so much had been staked turned into a series of dearly-bought minor successes in a prolonged campaign of merciless attrition.* Russia defaulted and her army began to disintegrate. The newspapers reported, often with approval, the early revolutionary measures—the setting up of workers’ and soldiers’ committees, the abolition of saluting and of military ranks. The enemy Command, its confidence restored, directed with dogged determination the battles in Artois, the Chemin-des-Dames, and Champagne, and after holding up our progress, banked on renewing their successes.

The French army was exhausted. Hopelessness and pessimism spread to it from the interior, swamping as it did so the mood of superficial enthusiasm, whipped up from above, which had never really taken root.

The fighting troops were at the end of their tether. Those in authority must have seen this quite well, yet they continued to count on them, so often in the past three years had they witnessed the capacity for performing the impossible. This time, however, *there were men in the ranks who not only could not but would not answer the call. This was the crisis.* It struck, like a bolt from the blue, among the units due to be sent up the line to the two deadliest of the danger-spots, the Chemin-des-Dames and the Monts-de-Champagne.

First incidents between 29th April and 17th May. Reorganisation of the French High Command. Gravity and rapid extension of the crisis.

On 29th April an infantry regiment stationed at Mourmelon [20th Infantry Regiment, 33rd Infantry Division] was ordered up the line to the sector of the Moronvilliers Heights, where it had carried out attacks on the 17th April and subsequent days and from which it had been withdrawn for a short period of rest only five days before. It was known to the men that they would be employed in a new offensive. They also knew that their division was being sent back into action when other major formations which had also taken part in the attack of 17th April were still resting far from the front. Two or three hundred men, almost all from the battalion chosen to lead the new offensive, failed to

appear when their unit was leaving for the front and then announced that they would not march. The unit's officers and NCOs proved incapable of quelling the outbreak, which, however, was put down by the divisional commander within twenty-four hours.

News of this incident soon got round and other mutinous outbreaks followed. On 4th May a number of sudden desertions occurred among members of an infantry regiment [321st Infantry Regiment, 133rd Infantry Division] in action in the Chemin-des-Dames area. In the quarters of a colonial regiment [43rd Colonial Infantry Regiment of the 2nd Colonial Infantry Division] due to take part in an attack in the same sector the men noisily refused to fight, an action clearly provoked by the circulation of leaflets on which were blazoned such inflammatory slogans as "Down with the War!," "Death to the Warmongers!," etc. On 16th (2213) and 17th May serious troubles of a similar nature broke out in a battalion of Chasseurs [25th Battalion of Chasseurs-a-pied, 127th Infantry Division], and in an infantry regiment [32nd Infantry Regiment, 18th Infantry Division] in a reserve position on the Aisne. These unhappy incidents multiplied to a point *where the safety and cohesion of the whole army were in jeopardy*.

It was precisely on this same date, the 17th, that the French High Command was reorganized. Its first duty was to assess objectively the seriousness of the trouble so as to weigh the gravity of its task. It saw the deadly virus of indiscipline spreading. It received alarming reports from all sides. They poured in—almost uninterruptedly, alas!

19th May: In a Chasseur battalion south of the Aisne [26th Battalion of Chasseurs-à-pied, 166th Infantry Division] three armed companies staged *noisy demonstrations* in cantonments.

20th May: Two complete infantry regiments [128th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Infantry Division; and 66th Infantry Regiment of the 18th Infantry Division] in the Chemin-des-Dames sector refused to obey orders. Individual *acts of insubordination* were reported in an infantry regiment [90th Infantry Regiment, 17th Infantry Division] in the same area.

21st and 22nd May: In an infantry regiment [267th Infantry Regiment, 69th Infantry Division] resting in the Tardenois district an attempt was made by agitators to stir up trouble among the men. *Delegates were elected to present at headquarters a protest against a continuation of the offensives*; a group of trouble-makers marched to the divisional depot and created a disturbance. Nearby, in another infantry regiment [162nd Infantry Regiment, 69th Infantry

Division] in the same division, *groups of soldiers turned on their officers, sang the Internationale and threw stones at them.*

25th May: In the Vosges, up to that time completely untroubled by the outbreaks, one section of an infantry regiment [54th Infantry Regiment, 12th Infantry Division] refused to embus for the front. They were incited to this act of defiance by their own sergeant.

26th May: Three infantry regiments [224th, 228th and 329th Infantry Regiments of the 158th Infantry Division] of a division called to the front after a rest period in the Aisne sent representatives to join *in discussions at which plans for an attempted general mutiny were being hatched.*

27th May: Demonstrations and disturbances occurred in an infantry regiment [298th Infantry Regiment of the 63rd Infantry Division] out of the line in Lorraine. In the Tardenois district the men of an infantry regiment [18th Infantry Regiment of the 36th Infantry Division] *shouted seditious slogans, sang the Internationale, and insulted and molested their officers while the regiment was embussing.*

28th May: *A serious extension of indiscipline and mutiny was reported from six infantry regiments, a battalion of Chasseurs, and a regiment of dragoons [4th, 82nd and 313th Infantry Regiments of the 9th Infantry Division; the 224th and 228th Infantry Regiments of the 158th Infantry Division; the 129th Infantry Regiment of the 5th Infantry Division; the 66th Battalion of Chasseurs-à-pied of the 9th Infantry Division; and the 25th Dragoons of the 1st Cavalry Division] stationed on the Aisne and farther south.*

29th, 30th and 31st May: The situation deteriorated and indiscipline spread to the majority of the regiments of eight divisions [units of the 5th, 6th, 13th, 35th, 43rd, 62nd, 77th and 170th Infantry Divisions] and to a colonial artillery regiment [3rd Regiment of Artillery of the 1st Colonial Army Corps], all of which had been in action in the Chemin-des-Dames sector or were about to be sent back there.

1st, 2nd and 3rd June: Zenith of the crisis. In fifteen to twenty units belonging to sixteen divisions [units of the 5th, 6th, 13th, 24th, 28th, 41st, 46th, 47th, 62nd, 64th, 70th, 71st, 77th, 81st, 170th and 177th Infantry Divisions], either in action or resting in the same area, men of all arms were involved for three days in the most violent outbreaks of disorder.

This catalogue of disorders, shocking though it is, still gives an inadequate picture of the plight of the French army as the intoxicating madness spread. A detailed examination of some of the most typical cases will help us to understand better the anguish of the High Command under the threat of this appalling danger.

*Example of a premeditated and methodically planned mutiny in a regiment:
28th–30th May*

This was an example of a type of mutiny conceived in cold blood, systematically organized and obstinately conducted in an infantry regiment [129th Infantry Regiment of the 5th Infantry Division] which up to that moment had been regarded as quite first class.

(2214)

Planned over a long period, it developed without a hitch, and in an atmosphere of total assurance.

This unit had taken part in May 1916 in the first attempt to recapture Fort Douaumont, where it showed great courage and sustained heavy losses. From June 1916 to February 1917 it was almost continuously in the line in the tough Eparges sector, exposed to constant shelling, surprise attacks and enemy mines. *At this point symptoms of serious physical and moral exhaustion became noticeable in its ranks—symptoms which affected the junior officers as well, and to which their superiors, up to the regimental and brigade commanders themselves, appeared to pay too little regard, whereas it should have made them doubly watchful and active, doubly willing to show themselves and take personal risks, to give encouragement and set an example.* Action had been taken against certain of these officers whose grip on the situation had been notoriously feeble, and in February 1917 the unit was withdrawn for a rest. By the spring, there were grounds for hoping that when it returned to the fighting line it would once more justify its future reputation. But this moment was delayed, since the grand plan for a strategic exploitation of the attack of 16th April failed to materialize, *and the regiment was left in inglorious inactivity near Paris.* There the men, too closely in touch with the rear, were affected by the bad spirit in the interior. They listened to *the complaints of a multitude of camp-followers whose attitude reflected the labour unrest and strikes spreading throughout the country.* They settled down all too well to their prolonged inactivity, to the absence of danger, and to the enjoyment of the comforts which came their way as a result. And when, on Whit Sunday, the lorries arrived to trundle them off to the dreaded destination of Laffaux, the

harrowing farewells overcame their sense of duty. It was then that *they began to be influenced by the propaganda directed at them at the departure point, and to believe—what they were always being told—that they would be fools indeed to go and get themselves killed when so many others had apparently refused to march.*

On 28th May, at the end of its journey, the regiment installed itself in three small villages in a sector to the south of Soissons.

After the midday meal, “la Soupe,” between 150 and 180 men attended a meeting in one of the hamlets, listened to a number of inflammatory speeches, fell in on the road in marching order, and coolly informed their company officers, when these arrived to disperse them, *that they refused to go up to the line. They had, they said, had enough of the war. They wanted a cease-fire immediately* and thought the Deputies had been wrong in December not to negotiate on the German proposals. They claimed that as Russia crumbled, leaving the German war-machine free to re-mass on the French front, the Government were simply pulling the wool over people’s eyes, and that in fact everyone knew that the Americans would not be able to come into the war in time to be of any use. The fighting soldiers, they complained, were not getting proper leave; their rations were inadequate, their wives and children were “starving to death.” *They were no longer willing to sacrifice their lives when shirkers at home were earning all the money, taking the women around in cars, cornering all the best jobs, and while so many profiteers were waxing rich.*

The mood of these demonstrators was calm and resolute. They were not drunk. They wanted their protest reported to the Government. They still respected their officers and dispersed when these told them to do so.

Misled by the ease with which they appeared to have won this round, the officers, from the divisional commander down to the most junior second lieutenants, spent the night of the 28th/29th advising each other that the best line to adopt *was one of patience and accommodation.* They moved around talking to each other when each officer should instead have returned immediately to exert his authority in his unit. They looked on the mutineers, naïvely, as mere strikers whom words would certainly soon restore to a better way of thinking. Then at dawn on the 29th they all returned to their units, with instructions to put the men to light fatigues around the camp, to give them a few pep talks, but to make no reference to the outbreak of the day before, and, most important, in no circumstances to resort to force, even if individual soldiers or groups of men tried to go off on their own.

This made it possible for the demonstrators of the day before to assemble again on the morning of the 29th and form themselves into a column—this time some 400 strong. Most of these had got themselves up to look like *strikers*, and appeared with walking sticks, flowers in their button-holes, and unbuttoned jackets. They marched in turn to the quarters of each of the (2215) other two battalions. There they were joined in the course of the morning by several hundred more supporters. By the end of the midday meal there were more than 800 of them, from every unit in the regiment. They answered to a bugle, and in due course moved off to rally support from the regiment next in line. Their discipline was excellent. They had been told by their leaders to do nothing which might provoke violence and to confine themselves to signifying *their fixed and unalterable determination to take no part in any further costly attacks*. They made this point firmly to the Divisional Commander, “You have nothing to fear, we are prepared to man the trenches, we will do our duty and the Boche will not get through. But we will not take part in attacks which result in nothing but useless casualties. . . .” They maintained the same position when harangued by the Corps Commander, who upbraided them, offered them fatherly advice, and threatened dire punishments in his various attempts to move them. All to no avail. With unshakeable politeness they repeated their complaints against the Government and what was happening in the interior, adding *that they would hold the line but would refuse to take part in any new offensive and demanded immediate peace*. About mid-afternoon they reached the quarters of the neighbouring regiment. Here the mutineers were fewer in number but much wilder. They urged them to be calm and to maintain respect for their officers. Then, *led on as usual by some extremely skilful organizers*, who seem from the evidence to have acted like true mob leaders throughout, they decided to continue their impressive march round the other units of the division and then to go on and capture some trains in which to set off for Paris with their own crews in the drivers’ cabs. But, if necessary, they were prepared to march on the capital by stages in order to bring their demands before the Chambers of Deputies. Meanwhile they returned to their own cantonments for the night.

At dawn on the 30th, under orders from the High Command, motor convoys arrived at the camps to act as transport for the three battalions. This time the officers were at their posts, and with tougher instructions. They shouted louder than the agitators and made their men obey them. The mutineers put up some resistance but did board the lorries. On the journey they continued their attempts at incitement, and tried to stir up the troops they met on the way. They made “hands up” and “thumbs down” signs. They whistled. They sang the Internationale. They waved bits of red cloth. They distributed leaflets

containing the text of their refusal to fight and encouraged others to follow their example.

On the evening of the 30th and on the following days the regiment was halted in isolation from other units, then moved to the Verdun sector by train. The rebellious spirit persisted, but the demonstrations became less frequent. The High Command split up the battalions, and during the month of June *Courts Martial were held*. A corporal and three privates were sentenced to death for “deserting their post and refusing to obey orders in the presence of the enemy.” The regiment itself supplied the firing squads and several detachments for the expiatory ceremony, which took place without incident on 28th June. *On 29th June, the regiment was stripped of its colours*. The battalion to which the leading spirits of the mutiny had belonged was disbanded on 16th July, and the necessary new postings among the officers took place.

That was the end of it. In July the two remaining battalions gave an honourable account of themselves at Verdun. In 1918 the regiment was reconstituted. It was twice mentioned in dispatches, received back its colours, and was decorated with the lanyard of the Croix de Guerre on the very spot where the 1917 mutinies had taken place.

Example of a violent outbreak in a regiment of the line: 1st–3rd June

Another type of *outbreak* was violent in character and the spirit animating it was revolutionary.

Here again our example is an infantry regiment [23rd Infantry Regiment of the 41st Infantry Division], with a first-class record and reputation and forming part of a crack division. After much hard fighting during the battle of the Somme, it was not sent back to rest as it had been led to hope that it would be. Instead, it was moved to the Argonne sector, where it suffered heavy casualties during the winter of 1916–17. It took part in the April offensive, achieving an appreciable but exceedingly costly success. It was then kept for five weeks in the line, although nearly all the neighbouring units were sent back to be reconstituted. Finally, it was sent to rest in the Tardenois area and was looking forward to catching up on its arrears of leave, when, after only a few days, on the afternoon of 1st June, the order came to return to the trenches.

(2216)

At 1 pm on that day, angry protest broke out in the camp. The Colonel and the other officers rushed to the scene, but their attempts to control the disorder had

little or no result. At 5 pm a procession was formed and moved off to the strains of the Internationale. *The Brigade Commander, who acted with energy, was given a violently hostile reception and greeted with cries of "Kill him!"* *Insults were hurled at him. He was jostled. The stars on his cuffs and his epaulettes were ripped off, as was the flag on his car.* The Divisional Commander succeeded with difficulty in forcing his way to the town hall, in front of which the mutineers were assembled. He was unable to make himself heard above the shouts and was forced by threats to postpone the regiment's departure for the front. Meanwhile, *some of the mutineers had armed themselves with wire cutters and cut the barbed wire round the punishment centre.* The prisoners were released and one of them, a lawyer and editor of a trench newspaper, became the guiding spirit of the revolt. "Friends," he told his rescuers, "I am delighted that our movement has met with such success. We shall not be alone. I have channels of information which enable me to tell you as a fact that this evening twelve divisions have taken the same action as ourselves. Cars from Paris have set out for every sector with the mission of bringing this good news to all our comrades." The mutineers, still shouting murderous threats against their Brigadier, broke the windows and doors of the town hall with paving stones, overturned the lorries in the streets, broke the windows of houses and forced the occupants to join them.

The morning of the 2nd June began rather more calmly, though crowds of drunken soldiers were still milling about in disorderly mobs, singing the Internationale and sporting red flowers in their jackets. *The organizers of the outbreak had numerous posters stuck up on the walls bearing the words: "Vive la Paix au nom de toute l'Armée!" [Long live peace, in the name of the whole Army!]* with the result that, that evening, a new mob of demonstrators, about 2,000 strong, were repeating the exploits of the evening before, with red flags flying and shouts of "Long live the Revolution! Down with the war! Long live Peace! Down with tyrants!"

On 3rd June and during the next few days the regiment was moved in lorries to another camp, and the trouble subsided—far more quickly than could have been hoped—as the principal trouble-makers lost their hold over the men. Very soon the agitation had died down altogether and the men had returned, without exception, to the path of duty.

Further examples of violent outbreaks among fighting units and on the trains: 2nd–8th June

Other scenes of violent mutiny. On the evening of 2nd June, in the same area, there were rumblings of unrest in the cantonment of a battalion of Chasseurs

[70th Battalion of Chasseurs-à-pied of the 47th Infantry Division]. The commanding officer and a captain who stepped in vigorously were repulsed with stones and sticks and forced to take refuge in the CO's [commanding officer] lodgings. *The front of the house was sprayed with bullets from the mutineers' automatic rifles*, and the Adjutant and another officer who attempted to come to the rescue of their superior officer were chased across the neighbouring gardens. *The insurgents set fire to the huts of a company which attempted to oppose the revolt, and engaged in a veritable running battle, in which several NCOs and Chasseurs were wounded.* As night ended, they retired exhausted to their huts, and no repetition of this outbreak occurred the next day.

On the evening of 7th June, an incident took place at Château-Thierry station, where men *off a leave-train returning from Paris threw stones at the lamps in the entrance, sang the Internationale and shouted anti-war slogans.* A railway official, a man in his fifties, was savagely struck. A posse of policemen hurried to the scene and found themselves involved in a real battle. Their chief was wounded and had to be rushed to hospital. When an effort was made to get the train on its way, *the men jammed the brakes on, then charged onto the platforms and rushed the station manager's office to demand the release of two of their number who had been placed under arrest.* They did not return to their carriages until a company of armed troops had arrived to restore order, and then not before they had successfully demanded that the latter sheathe their bayonets. *And when the train did move, it was with the shouted threat: "We'll be back soon—with grenades!"*

The same thing happened at Esternay on 8th June. *The men of the leave draft, shouting noisily, rushed at the RTO [regimental transport officer], who attempted to arrest two of them and get them back on their train. They beat him with sticks, punched him in the face, knocked him down, (2217) and only let him go when he was no longer physically in any condition to exert his authority.* They manhandled another officer in the outer entrance of the station. They invaded the station master's office after breaking the windows, shouted and hurled insults at the station master when he tried to interfere, then gradually dispersed and got back into the trains bound for their various destinations.

General character of the crisis from June to September

The mutinies took many forms, of which examples of the most typical have been given above, and reached their peak on 2nd June, when seventeen outbreaks were reported. The situation remained serious up to 10th June, with an average of seven incidents a day. During the rest of the month the daily

average was one. In July the total fell to seven incidents altogether, in August to four, and in September to one.

Altogether, 151 incidents were recorded and examined, of which 110 were concerted outbreaks of genuine gravity. Out of the total of 151, 112 took place in the Aisne area behind the Chemin-des-Dames sector of the front (plus five on the other parts of the front but among units which had come from the Chemin-des-Dames sector). Eight occurred in the Monts-des-Champagne district (plus two which took place in other parts of the front but involved troops from Champagne), and twenty-two occurred in various other parts of the army zone.

A total of 110 units were affected. Sixty-eight of them were present (in the line or in reserve) on the Aisne on 16th April, and six were before Monts-de-Champagne. Between them they consisted of:

- 76 Infantry Regiments
- 2 Colonial Infantry Regiments
- 21 Chasseur Battalions
- 1 Territorial Infantry Regiment
- 8 Artillery Regiments
- 1 Regiment of Dragoons
- 1 Senegalese Battalion

These units belonged to fifty-four different divisions—that is, more than half the total number of divisions in the French army at that time.

Disturbances also occurred on 110 trains and had repercussions in 130 stations due to repeated acts of indiscipline along the whole length of the lines. These disorders were an extension of those in the interior of the country, and all converged to reach their point of greatest intensity in the area just behind the line. Angoulême, Bourdeaux, Nantes, Toulouse, St Pierre-des-Corps, St Etienne and Limoges had all been centres of serious unrest. This spread along the lines of communication towards the army zone until it reached the main lines, of which the principal was the line Paris-Châlons-Nancy.

Such was the storm of madness which for several weeks swept a harassed and distracted France, threatening to blind her both to her objectives and to her duties.

Source

Edward Spears, *Two Men Who Saved France: Pétain and De Gaulle* (New York: Stein and Day, 1966), 86–98. Used by kind permission of the family of Major-General Sir Edward Spears.

Henri Philippe Pétain (1856–1951)

Pétain came from peasant stock, and when World War I began he was merely a colonel approaching retirement. As a military theoretician, he had won a reputation for rejecting the favored doctrine of furious offense, since he argued that the conditions of modern warfare generally favored defenders rather than attackers, views that were unpopular in the prewar French army. In the early months of the war Pétain commanded the 33rd Infantry at the Battle of Charleroi, quickly winning promotion to general. During the First Battle of the Marne in September 1914 Pétain commanded a division, and in July 1915 he was appointed to head the Second Army, which held the area to the south of Verdun. Pétain quickly became known as a shrewd and careful military leader who valued the lives of his men and refused to squander them in futile assaults. On 26 February 1916 he was given direct command of the defense of Verdun. His orders were to hold this sector at all costs, an assignment in which his excellent deployment of artillery defenses, backed by outstanding organization of both supplies and manpower, won general admiration. It was at this time that Pétain made the famous statement, “*Courage, on les aura!*” (Keep heart, we will have at them!), epitomizing his country’s determination to hold on whatever the price.

Later that year Pétain, promoted to head Army Group Center, which included the Verdun sector, (2218) recommended an eventual French withdrawal from the exposed Verdun salient. In fall 1916, however, Nivelle enjoyed considerable success in retaking the strongholds of Vaux and Fort Douaumont, which brought his appointment as commander-in-chief to replace Marshal Joseph Joffre. After his own appointment in May, Pétain largely restricted himself to defensive operations, in part to give his troops the chance to recover from their losses of the previous eighteen months. In May 1918, during the final German offensive that spring, Pétain’s defensive tactics nonetheless failed to repel German forces on the Aisne, and he was subordinated to the more aggressive Marshal Ferdinand Foch, who became supreme commander of all the Allied forces for the rest of the war.

Pétain was appointed a marshal of France immediately after the armistice, and in 1925–1926 he commanded the forces that suppressed the Rif rebellion in Morocco. As vice-president of the French army’s General Staff from 1920 to 1930, Pétain oriented French military policy to the defensive, initiating the

construction of the supposedly impregnable Maginot Line, which was intended to repel any future German invasion. He served briefly as French minister of war in 1934 and was ambassador to Spain in 1939–1940. When German forces defeated France in July 1940, after six weeks of war, the 83-year-old Pétain made the most controversial decision of his career, agreeing to preside as a figurehead over the Vichy-based French government that collaborated for four years with the Nazi occupation forces. Pétain's authority diminished over time as German control became more overt, and after the Allied invasion of France in June 1944, German officials forcibly transferred him to Berlin, the German capital, where he was later captured by Allied troops. Although French courts sentenced Pétain to death for treason in August 1945, few would have wished to impose such harsh punishment upon a national hero whose collaborationist behavior many ascribed to senility and a misguided desire to protect the French nation. The Free French provisional head of government General Charles De Gaulle, who had fought under Pétain at Charleroi, immediately commuted the sentence to life imprisonment, and the aged general spent his last years in captivity on the Île d'Yeu off the Brittany coast, dying there in July 1951.

About The Document

At the time, the French authorities went to great lengths to suppress information on the French mutinies and censor all news reports on them as well as letters from the front describing or commenting on the unrest. Their efforts were so successful that even the governments of France's fellow Allies, let alone the Germans, remained unaware of the full extent of disaffection in the French ranks. Pétain wrote a personal account of the French mutinies in 1926 and subsequently handed it to Lieutenant-Colonel Edward Spears, first head of the new British Military Mission to the French government at the time the mutinies took place. According to his own account, since the war Spears had repeatedly told top French officers of his conviction that the French policy of deliberately avoiding the topic of the mutinies in official histories of the war was mistaken and that the way in which they had been overcome reflected great credit on the French army. In 1939 Spears published a book describing the year 1917 that drew heavily on Pétain's memorandum, but the press of events in 1939–1940 quickly left the book rather dated, especially in its characterization of Pétain. Spears believed that whatever his subsequent role in the Vichy government, Pétain had done his country a great service in 1917, laying the foundations of victory. The well-connected Spears realized that most of his own associates, British and French alike, would have thought it inappropriate to publish what might have seemed an apologia for the disgraced Pétain immediately after the war. Eventually, however, when the worst heat of

controversy had finally died down in the late 1960s, Spears took the opportunity to give Pétain at least a partial vindication, going so far as to link him with the great Free French leader General Charles De Gaulle, who had just left office as France's president, as one of two outstanding military officers who had saved France in two successive wars. Even in 1969, this required some courage on Spears's part and was evidence of the loyalty Pétain often inspired in those who knew him.

Pétain's memorandum, written several years after the events he recalled, was not an official document but a personal memoir, albeit one produced by a man who could refer back to many of the documents available to him in 1917. It was given to Spears in manuscript (2219) form, and the italicized portions represent those Pétain had underlined himself. In writing this, Pétain may well have been seeking to burnish his own historical reputation vis-à-vis his rival Marshal Ferdinand Foch, who eventually became Allied supreme commander. The portion of the memorandum included here is a matter-of-fact account of the rapid growth and spread of unrest among different units of the French army, beginning in late April. Pétain gave due credit to the grievances of the men in spring 1917, made no effort to depict their behavior as rowdier or more disorderly than it actually was, and acknowledged that the demonstrators often observed strict military discipline. He even showed some sympathy for the well-organized men of the 129th Infantry Regiment of the 5th Infantry Division, a good unit that had been tried almost beyond endurance, that became more radical over time, and that was eventually stripped of its regimental colors, only winning these honors back after a year of exemplary service. The sporadic attacks on officers that undoubtedly occurred on various occasions were portrayed as incidents of rowdiness that got out of hand rather than very serious efforts to do them violence. Pétain did, however, place at least some of the blame on outside agitators and revolutionary propaganda, both of which he believed helped to inflame an already difficult situation.

The rest of Pétain's report detailed the measures that he took to restore order, reaffirm military discipline, weed out "trouble-makers," and prevent the disturbances from spreading further. Pétain's memorandum was down-to-earth and pragmatic, making little use of high-flown rhetoric or ideological appeals. The report conveys much of Pétain's own character and the qualities that made him a good but perhaps limited military leader and that ultimately brought him political opprobrium. In his view, the mutinies were primarily a practical problem to be solved by mundane means, essentially by addressing the limited but very real concerns the troops themselves had raised. These included the removal of officers who had proved ineffective in suppressing the mutinies;

demands that officers develop a close relationship with their men, so that soldiers could feel confidence in their superiors' characters and ability while officers would be aware of their men's concerns and feelings; harsh penalties for the ringleaders, often enforced by their former comrades and meted out after a swift court-martial where many standard rules of evidence and procedure and the right of appeal had been suspended; personal visits by the commander-in-chief, Pétain himself, to every French military unit, where he distributed well-earned decorations, inspected the men's living conditions and canteens, and endeavored to restore morale by informally telling officers and men of his personal confidence in the ability of France and its allies to win the war; the introduction of "a realistic strategy" that would avoid "*large-scale attacks in depth* . . . until adequate manpower and material were available"; the improvement of base and transport facilities; the introduction of a fair leave system and more equitable rest periods; the provision of better rations and catering; and more effective training for men and officers alike. Pétain also demanded, albeit with only limited success, that the army be permitted to monitor and, if necessary, ban and move against potentially subversive civilian groups within the country to eradicate "defeatism." He was more effective in winning the imposition of stricter censorship rules upon the national press. Overall, he concluded, by October 1917 these measures had largely succeeded in boosting French military morale, with the result that the army was equipped to endure the forthcoming German onslaughts of spring 1918.

Further Reading

Ashworth, Tony. *Trench Warfare, 1914–1918: The Live and Let Live System*. New York: Holmes and Meier, 1980.

Atkin, Nicholas. *Pétain*. London: Longman, 1998.

Audoin-Rouzeau, Stéphane. *Men at War, 1914–1918: National Sentiment and Trench Journalism in France during the First World War*. Trans. Helen McPhail. Providence, RI: Berg, 1992.

Becker, Jean Jacques. *The Great War and the French People*. Trans. Arnold Pomerans. Dover, NH: Berg, 1985.

Buffetaut, Yves. *The 1917 Spring Offensives: Arras, Vimy, le Chemin des Dames*. Trans. Bernard Leprêtre. Paris: Histoire et Collections, 1997.

Clayton, Anthony. *Paths of Glory: The French Army, 1914–1918*. London: Cassell, 2003.

Pedroncini, Guy. *Les mutineries de 1917*. 2nd ed. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1983.

(2220)

———. *Pétain: Général en Chef, 1917–1918*. 2nd ed. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1997.

Smith, Leonard. *Between Mutiny and Obedience: The Case of the French Fifth Infantry Division during World War I*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994.

Smith, Leonard V., Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, and Annette Becker. *France and the Great War, 1914–1918*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Watt, Richard. *Dare Call It Treason: The True Story of the French Army Mutinies of 1917*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1969.

(2221)

MLA

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "20. The French Mutinies of 1917." *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*, ABC-CLIO, 2005, pp. . *ABC-CLIO eBook Collection*, legacy.abc-clio.com/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2135.

Chicago Manual of Style

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "20. The French Mutinies of 1917." In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005. <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2135>.

APA

Roberts, P. M., S. C. Tucker (2005). 20. The French Mutinies of 1917. In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia* (pp.). Retrieved from <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2135>

SECTION THREE

THE UNITED STATES AND WORLD WAR I:

THE YEARS OF NEUTRALITY

[Section Three: The United States and World War I: The Years of Neutrality](#)

[21. American Reactions to the Lusitania Crisis](#) pp. 305-324

[22. Peace Sentiment in the United States](#) pp. 315-327

[23. Plans for Postwar International Organization](#) pp. 328-338

[24. The British Financial Crisis, November–December 1916](#) pp. 339-350

Essay 21. American Reactions to the *Lusitania* Crisis

The *Lusitania* Crisis

World War I was a total war that soon became a conflict in which each power sought to maximize its own access to economic resources and deny these to the enemy. Shortly after war was declared, Britain proclaimed a naval blockade against Germany and the Low Countries, whose conditions were gradually tightened. By the end of 1914 all merchant ships trading with the Central Powers or northwestern Europe were expected to follow certain marked channels through the North Sea, which the British had mined, and were subject to search by British vessels and the seizure—with compensation—of any goods deemed to be contraband of war. The United States, the most significant neutral nation, made diplomatic protests for the record against this policy but took no further action, thereby effectively acquiescing in it. Meanwhile, Great Britain purchased ever increasing quantities of supplies in North America, from both the United States and Canada, that had to be transported across the Atlantic. The German navy sought to cut this vital commercial lifeline, using the newly invented submarines or U-boats, underwater craft (2222) whose torpedoes could sink a huge vessel but whose flimsy construction made them liable to destruction by an enemy ship's guns if, as international rules of war required, they surfaced and delivered a warning before attacking a target ship. In February 1915 the German government, increasingly eager to cut off shipments of essential war supplies from North America to its enemies Britain and France, declared the area around the British Isles a war zone in which enemy merchant vessels would be sunk on sight and neutral shipping might also be at risk. Prompted by President Woodrow Wilson, the U.S. Department of State immediately sent a note upholding its neutral rights and protesting this policy, stating that it expected "strict accountability" from Germany for any American losses. In the following ten weeks, four Americans lost their lives in German attacks on British and U.S. ships.

A major crisis arose on 7 May 1915 when, without warning, a German submarine torpedoed off the Irish coast the *Lusitania*, a British Cunard passenger liner sailing from New York to London. It sank in eighteen minutes, killing 1,198 people, among them 128 Americans. Only 764 of those on board survived, including just 33 of the 129 children. To justify their attack, German authorities later claimed that the liner was secretly carrying heavy munitions for the Allies, a claim recent investigation of the wreck has refuted, though its cargo apparently included 173 tons of rifle ammunition and small arms, quantities of gun cotton, and 51 tons of 3-inch shrapnel shells. In the course of

its voyage, the *Lusitania* also took on an additional 200 tons of ammunition from another merchant ship suffering mechanical difficulties, the SS *Queen Margaret*, together with 67 Canadian soldiers from the 6th Winnipeg Rifles. In addition, once the war began the *Lusitania* had been equipped with twelve 6-inch guns to protect itself, and the British Admiralty therefore classed it as an auxiliary cruiser. Under the U.S. neutrality proclamation of 4 August 1914, the presence of armaments and the carriage of munitions and eventually troops on the *Lusitania* was somewhat problematic. It was subsequently alleged that before the *Lusitania* sailed, British naval intelligence operatives, determined to embroil the United States in war with Germany, deliberately circulated false reports of more substantial munitions cargoes to entice their antagonist into attacking the liner, but evidence for this is at best inconclusive and, given German leaders' knowledge of the risks of war with the United States that such actions would entail, less than convincing. Before the ship sailed, however, German representatives in New York published large, black-bordered newspaper advertisements warning prospective passengers that they sailed at their own risk, announcements published with the approval of U.S. Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan. Even so, few had expected Germany to risk an attack on the most luxurious passenger liner of its day, which habitually carried numerous influential Americans.

Wilson, unwilling to compromise his country's neutral rights, quickly expressed outrage over the incident, which swung U.S. public opinion, until then somewhat ambivalent, decisively toward the Allies. In a sharp exchange of notes Wilson demanded that the German government disavow the episode, pay reparations for American deaths, and renounce further submarine warfare unless these new, vulnerable craft were prepared to observe traditional rules of warfare. In June 1915 his uncompromising stance brought the resignation of his pacifist secretary of state, William Jennings Bryan. Wilson's demands provoked sharp debate among German leaders, with military officials generally intransigent and civilians more conciliatory. In June 1915 the apprehensive German government secretly ordered its submarine commanders not to attack passenger liners, a policy breached in August 1915 when two Americans perished in the sinking of the *Arabic*, a British passenger liner. Count Johann von Bernstorff, Germany's ambassador to the United States, forthwith made public his government's policy, winning rebuke from his own government but a temporary respite in German-American tensions.

In February 1916 the German government finally offered financial reparation for the American *Lusitania* deaths. In March 1916 Germany's sinking of the cross-channel steamer the *Sussex*, carrying several Americans, provoked

renewed crisis, only temporarily resolved by a German pledge eschewing further such attacks. Germany's January 1917 decision to resume unlimited submarine warfare against merchant and neutral shipping and the loss of several American vessels to German submarines impelled Wilson to break diplomatic relations and eventually, in April 1917, prompted him to ask Congress to declare war on Germany.

(2223)

“The ‘Lusitania’ Torpedoed,” Article Appearing in *The Literary Digest* on 15 May 1915

Technically, remarks the New York *Sun*, the torpedoing of the great British liner *Lusitania* and the sacrifice of hundreds of non-combatants, including American citizens, “possesses neither more nor less significance” than the torpedoing of that other British passenger-ship, the *Falaba*, with the loss of one American life. “Technically and logically,” it adds, “the concern of our Government with this sensational event is almost incomparably less than in the case of the *Gulflight*.” Yet the fact remains, the same paper goes on to say, that “no episode of the war has startled and aroused public opinion in this country in greater degree,” and “the moral and intellectual effect is bound to be tremendous beyond measurement.” “Dastardly,” it concludes, “is the word on millions of American lips.” And ex-President [Theodore] Roosevelt, whose concern is instinctively with the human rather than the legal aspect of a problem, thinks it “inconceivable that we should refrain from taking action on this matter, for we owe it not only to humanity but to our own national self-respect.” “This represents,” he adds, “not merely piracy, but piracy on a vaster scale of murder than any old-time pirate ever practiced.” It is “the warfare which destroyed [the Belgian cities of] Louvain and Dinant, and hundreds of men, women, and children in Belgium” applied to “our own fellow countrymen and country women.”

The *Lusitania*, with 2,104 persons on board, including 187 Americans, was torpedoed without warning, at a few minutes after two o'clock on the afternoon of May 7, and went to the bottom in about twenty minutes. The attack took place only a few miles off the south coast of Ireland, just as she was rounding into St. George's Channel. So sudden was the disaster that the loss of life was enormous. On the day she left New York the papers of this city contained a notice, signed “Imperial German Embassy,” warning transatlantic travelers that if they entered the “war-zone” on “ships of Great Britain or her allies” they did so “at their own risk.” Many prominent passengers on the *Lusitania* also received telegrams, signed with fictitious names, stating that the ship was to be

torpedoed and advising them to cancel their passage; and others, on reaching the pier, were accosted by strangers who warned them to remain ashore.

The intensity of feeling aroused in American minds may be gaged by the fact that several leading papers hint at strong measures. The New York *Tribune* closes a vigorous editorial with the words: “The nation which remembered the sailors of the *Maine* will not forget the civilians of the *Lusitania*!” “From our Department of State,” says the New York *Times*, “there must go to the Imperial Government at Berlin a demand that the Germans shall no longer make war like savages drunk with blood, that they shall cease to seek the attainment of their ends by the assassination of combatants and non-neutrals.” In fact, “America is suddenly brought into the maelstrom of this gigantic war” by this “villainous blow,” declares the Philadelphia *Press*, and “we have a right to expect that our Government will take quick and decided action on this foul deed of enormous barbarity.” America “can and must” demand “an immediate accounting,” thinks the Boston *Herald*, and “now, if ever, is the time for the United States to speak for itself and for humanity—and would that there were a [John] Hay, an [Richard] Olney, or a [Elihu] Root [all former U.S. secretaries of state] to frame the momentous message.” Even more insistent is the appeal of the Memphis *Commercial Appeal*, which says:

“The United States should notify Germany that the loss of American life and passenger-ships by torpedoing without taking off the passengers will be regarded as an act of war, and demand an answer. If the answer is not satisfactory, Congress should be called in extra session to consider a declaration of war.”

Condemnation of the act seems to be limited only by the restrictions of the English language. “If ever wholesale murder was premeditated, this slaughter on the high seas was,” exclaims the New York *Herald*, which adds that “it is a time of gravity in American history unmatched since the Civil War.” The New York *World* brands “the whole German submarine policy” as “a revival of piracy—piracy organized, systematized, and nationalized.” As for the German defense:

“The German authorities claim in extenuation that fair warning was given to Americans by the (2224) German Embassy in Washington that the *Lusitania* was about to be torpedoed. Murder does not become innocent and innocuous because the victim has been warned in advance that the blow would be struck if he persisted in the exercise of his lawful rights.”

The Chicago *Herald*, too, holds that “the idea that neutrals under such circumstances have cut loose from all protection of international law is untenable.” The Springfield *Republican* fears more horrors are to come, for—

“The very success of the attack on this splendid ship may unfortunately stiffen the Germans in their determination to make the most of their opportunities on the sea, utterly regardless of the murderous deterioration in the moral character of the warfare which submarine attacks on passengerships involve.

“The base inhumanity of torpedoing such ships without warning tends to place the submarine on the level of the assassin, and from this point of view modern civilization will be unable to escape its fearful responsibility in reshaping the laws of war when the final accounting takes place in the great ultimate assize of the nations.”

Yet the belief is felt by the Philadelphia *Record* that this event need not involve us in “insurmountable” difficulties with the German Government, and the Chicago *Tribune*, while not blinking the gravity of the case, appeals to the country with this calming and steadying counsel:

“To the slaughter of the innocents in Belgium and in Poland has been added the slaughter of the innocents on the *Lusitania*. This last massacre violates all previous laws of the seas. . . .

“Whether the American Government will acquiesce in this new German law of the seas is a question which will agitate all American hearts to-day and all days until the decision is announced.

“We do not propose to weigh the value (if any) of the defense as compared with the evil of the deed. That is a function which belongs to our official Government, under the leadership of President Wilson, and which, in a crisis as grave as this one, should belong exclusively to our official government.

“It is not for any good American now to cloud its counsels with unsought advice or to attempt to force its decision.

“We can only stand and wait, united in our determination to enforce the will of our Government, whatever that may be.”

The German-American press emphasize the fact that the *Lusitania*’s passengers had been amply warned, and argue that when they disregarded these warnings

“they had only themselves to blame for what happened.” Thus in the *New-Yorker Staats-Zeitung* we read:

“Whoever sails the seas in these war-times, taking passage under the British flag, assumes the risk attaching thereto. There can be no responsibility of the Government of the United States to protect British shipping in British waters. There is one way to safeguard American life, and that is by staying at home. Travel at sea is decidedly dangerous at the present time in the neighborhood of the English Channel.

“The submarine peril has been characterized in this country variously as a ‘bluff,’ a ‘blunder,’ and as further evidence of ‘German savagery.’ The sinking of the *Lusitania* will change the temper of this thought both in England and in the United States.”

Noting that the *Lusitania*’s cargo included a large quantity of ammunition, the New York *Herald* says:

“The manifest showed enormous quantities of war-material, among which were no fewer than 5,471 cases of ammunition, valued at \$200,000. The fact is, the steamer might be considered not a passenger-ship but an army-supply ship. We are not quite certain whether the United States law permits a passenger-steamer to depart with such a highly dangerous cargo; at any rate, the Cunard Company seems not very solicitous about the security of its passengers. Suppose a fire had started near these ammunition-cases!”

George Sylvester Viereck, editor of *The Fatherland* (New York), argues that Secretary Bryan has been (2225) remiss in not warning Americans to avoid the “war-zone.” He says:

“The United States Government warned Americans away from the Mexican war-zone, but not a word of warning has been officially uttered against Americans visiting the war-zone established by Germany around the British Isles. It is time for this Government to warn Americans that their lives are in constant danger aboard any British merchantman. If American ships are not good enough for American travelers, let them stay at home.”

The *Lusitania* incident, adds Mr. Viereck, “will be a revelation to Americans and convince them that Germany is not bluffing in this war.” Capt. Max Moeller, superintendent of the North German Lloyd [shipping line], informs an interviewer that “it will be far-reaching and beneficial and show the world that Germans are good and thorough fighters.”

Source

“The ‘Lusitania’ Torpedoed,” *The Literary Digest* 50(20) (15 May 1915): 1133–1134.

About The Document

The U.S. public did not display one consistent attitude toward the European war, complicating the diplomatic efforts of the Wilson administration. A vocal and influential portion of the intelligentsia and upper-class elite of the northeastern part of the country, including such prominent figures as former President Theodore Roosevelt and leading bankers, lawyers, college presidents, and journal editors and publishers, was immediately and staunchly pro-Allied in outlook, in many cases favoring U.S. intervention in the conflict on the Allied side. A substantial portion of the American population, however, was of ethnic German origin. Many such individuals were strongly pro-German, and several thousand reservists who had immigrated to the United States from Germany went so far as to volunteer for the Fatherland’s forces in 1914, though in practice British control of the seas generally made it impossible for them to enlist. German Americans did, however, contribute millions of dollars to German war loans and relief efforts, and journalists and academic publicists such as George Sylvester Viereck and Hugo Munsterberg worked with the German embassy in Washington to mount a major propaganda offensive on behalf of the Central Powers. The sizable Irish Catholic population in the United States was generally fervently anti-British, due to the lengthy history of British subjugation of Ireland. Swedish Americans, whose native country looked to Germany for protection against Russia, were also generally pro-German. Given a long history of American Jewish activism against tsarist Russia’s persecution of its Jewish population and the inclusion of Russia among the Allies, many, though not all, American Jews were, if not pro-German, far from pro-Allied.

The great majority of Americans, however, may well have been neutral in attitude, seeking primarily to distance themselves from the brutal European conflict and hoping that their country would not be drawn into the hostilities. Woodrow Wilson recognized this prevailing sentiment when, two weeks into the war, he supplemented his original proclamation of formal U.S. neutrality by telling his countrymen, in his 18 August 1914 “Appeal to the American People,” “[t]he United States must be neutral in fact, as well as in name,” and appealing to them to “be impartial in thought, as well as action.” The *Lusitania* crisis, with its heavy loss of American life, represented the first major crisis U.S. neutrality policies had encountered. It came at a time when the

codification of rules of international warfare made unannounced attacks on civilians, especially citizens of neutral countries, seem particularly shocking, a breach of the standards civilized nations were expected to display toward each other.

This article from the periodical *The Literary Digest*, which published weekly summaries of press reaction to a range of the most prominent contemporary issues, nicely demonstrates the divisions among American public opinion that the president had to meet and satisfy. On the one hand, he sought to defend his country's rights as a neutral and to assure the security and safety of its citizens; on the other, he did not wish to push disputes with Germany to the point of outright war. Written and published one week after the sinking of the *Lusitania*, the article highlighted demands by newspapers around the country that the United States react strongly to the sinking and, if necessary, "notify Germany that the loss of American life and passenger-ships by torpedoing without taking off the passengers will be regarded as an act of war." German actions (2226) were repeatedly characterized as "piracy" and "murder." Even so, the *Philadelphia Record* and *Chicago Tribune*, published in two cities with substantial German and Irish populations, suggested that although German behavior had been reprehensible calmness was essential and that the country should support whatever policies the Wilson administration decided to follow. The German-American press went further, stressing that passengers on the *Lusitania* had received ample warning and "had only themselves to blame for what had happened." Moreover, it emphasized that the liner had been carrying munitions of war and suggested that the secretary of state had been negligent in not warning Americans to avoid the European war zone.

In the following weeks, similar divisions would continue to characterize American press attitudes toward the evolving crisis, reflecting the disagreements over the war that plagued the United States. Northeastern and mainstream newspapers reported calls for forceful government action, including demands that Germany cease all submarine attacks on merchant shipping, that might easily, had Germany remained unresponsive, have brought the United States into the war. Many newspapers also urged all Americans to rally behind the president in a show of national unity. The German-American press generally stressed that several aspects of British blockade policies contravened international law, that the British were attempting to starve the civilian population of the Central Powers, and that the *Lusitania* and other Allied passenger vessels had been armed and transporting munitions. German-American newspapers and spokesmen also urged that as a means of preventing future crises, the U.S. government should embargo all war trade with any

belligerent, a policy that would have disproportionately affected the Allies, whose control of the seas effectively blocked most transatlantic trade with the Central Powers, and should also forbid Americans to travel on ships of belligerent nations. In 1915 and 1916, politicians unsuccessfully introduced resolutions to this effect in Congress. These debates reflected broader ambivalence in U.S. policies and attitudes toward the war, which demonstrated both a definite desire to maintain the country's rights but also a pronounced preoccupation with avoiding outright intervention in the conflict.

Further Reading

Bailey, Thomas A., and Paul B. Ryan. *The Lusitania Disaster: An Episode in Modern Warfare and Diplomacy*. New York: Free Press, 1975.

Ballard, Robert D., with Spencer Dunmore. *Exploring the Lusitania: Probing the Mysteries of the Sinking That Changed History*. New York: Warner, 1995.

Beesly, Patrick. *Room 40: British Naval Intelligence, 1914–18*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982.

Butler, Daniel Allen. *The Lusitania: The Life, Loss, and Legacy of an Ocean Legend*. Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole, 2000.

Devlin, Patrick. *Too Proud to Fight: Woodrow Wilson's Neutrality*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1975.

Gertz, Elmer. *Odyssey of a Barbarian: The Biography of George Sylvester Viereck*. Buffalo, NY: Prometheus, 1978.

Johnson, Charles Thomas. *Culture at Twilight: The National German-American Alliance, 1901–1918*. New York: Peter Lang, 1999.

Jonas, Manfred. *The United States and Germany: A Diplomatic History*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984.

Keller, Phyllis. *States of Belonging: German-American Intellectuals and the First World War*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979.

O'Sullivan, Patrick. *The Lusitania: Unravelling the Mysteries*. Westlink Park, Doughcloyne, Cork: Collins, 1998.

MLA

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "21. American Reactions to the Lusitania Crisis." *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*, ABC-CLIO, 2005, pp. . *ABC-CLIO eBook Collection*, legacy.abc-clio.com/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2141.

Chicago Manual of Style

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "21. American Reactions to the Lusitania Crisis." In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005. <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2141>.

APA

Roberts, P. M., S. C. Tucker (2005). 21. American Reactions to the Lusitania Crisis. In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia* (pp.). Retrieved from <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2141>

Essay 22. Peace Sentiment in the United States

American Socialists and War

Like the left in belligerent states, American socialists and labor organizations split over the war. The accommodationist American Federation of Labor remained carefully neutral on the war until April 1917, after which it staunchly supported the government. Samuel Gompers, its leader, perceived the war as an opportunity for labor to display loyalty to the state in order to win greater recognition and benefits and inclusion in political and social decision making. The radical syndicalist Industrial Workers of the World (IWW, or Wobblies), founded in 1905, a labor organization whose strength was concentrated in the states of the American Far West, generally strongly opposed U.S. intervention both before and after April 1917, a stance that exposed them to fierce persecution.

(2227)

Socialist opposition to the war was epitomized in the person of the leader of the American Socialist Party, Eugene V. Debs (1855–1926). A former locomotive fireman and labor activist who ran five times for the presidency as a Socialist candidate between 1904 and 1920, Debs saw little difference between either side in the war, whose outbreak he blamed on the competitive international system of imperialism. In 1915 he supported the Zimmerwald socialist conference's appeal for peace negotiations, expressing the hope that such a peace would bring about disarmament and that the peoples of conquered territories would be allowed to determine their own form of government. On several occasions before April 1917, Debs made speeches and published articles explaining why he believed the United States should not join the war. After the outbreak of war he and other Socialists openly criticized restrictions imposed on free speech under the Espionage Act, which allowed the government to censor both the press and public speakers. In June 1918 Debs was arrested for giving an address on this theme in Canton, Ohio, and subsequently sentenced to ten years in prison. Running from jail for the presidency in 1920 on a platform that proposed improved labor, housing, and welfare legislation, he won almost 1 million votes. Pardoned in 1921 by President Warren G. Harding, the individualistic Debs refused to endorse the policies of the Soviet Union and the American Communist Party, both of which he considered undesirably dictatorial. As with Addams, Debs's treatment during the war illustrated the difficulties that peace activists faced in

propounding their position and the limited effectiveness of even the most respected antiwar advocates.

Jane Addams to Woodrow Wilson, 29 October 1915

Feeling sure that you wish to get from all sources the sense of the American people in regard to great national questions, officers of the Women's Peace Party venture to call to your attention certain views which they have reason to believe are widespread, although finding no adequate expression in the press.

We believe in real defense against real dangers, but not in a preposterous "preparedness" against hypothetical dangers.

If an exhausted Europe could be an increased menace to our rich, resourceful republic, protected by two oceans, it must be a still greater menace to every other nation.

Whatever increase of war preparedness we may make would compel poorer nations to imitate us. These preparations would create rivalry, suspicion and taxation in every country.

At this crisis of the world, to establish a "citizen soldiery" and enormously to increase our fighting equipment would inevitably make all other nations fear instead of trust us.

It has been the proud hope of American citizens who love their kind, a hope nobly expressed in several of your own messages, that to the United States might be granted the unique privilege not only of helping the war-worn world to a lasting peace, but of aiding toward a gradual and proportional lessening of that vast burden of armament which has crushed to poverty the peoples of the old world.

Most important of all, it is obvious that increased war preparations in the United States would tend to disqualify our National Executive from rendering the epochal service which this world crisis offers for the establishment of permanent peace.

Source

The Jane Addams Papers, 1860–1935 (Bell & Howell Information and Learning, 1985, Ann Arbor, MI), Reel 9, Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Records of the Women's International League for Peace and

Freedom, U.S. Section, reprinted in Andrew Carroll, ed., *War Letters: Extraordinary Correspondence from American Wars* (New York: Scribner, 2001), 125–126. Swarthmore College Peace Collection.

Antiwar American Labor Activists: The 1916 Songbook of the Industrial Workers of the World

John F. Kendrick, “Christians at War,” 1916

Onward, Christian soldiers! Duty’s way is plain;
Slay your Christian neighbors, or by them be slain,
Pulpiteers are spouting effervescent swill,
God above is calling you to rob and rape and kill,
All your acts are sanctified by the Lamb on high;
(2228)

If you love the Holy Ghost, go murder, pray and die.

Onward, Christian soldiers! Rip and tear and smite!
Let the gentle Jesus bless your dynamite.
Splinter skulls with shrapnel, fertilize the sod;
Folks who do not speak your tongue deserve the curse of God.
Smash the doors of every home, pretty maidens seize;
Use your might and sacred right to treat them as you please.

Onward, Christian soldiers! Eat and drink your fill;
Rob with bloody fingers, Christ okays the bill,

Steal the farmers' savings, take their grain and meat;
 Even though the children starve, the Savior's bums must eat,
 Burn the peasants' cottages, orphans leave bereft;
 In Jehovah's holy name, wreak ruin right and left.
 Onward, Christian soldiers! Drench the land with gore;
 Mercy is a weakness all the gods abhor.
 Bayonet the babies, jab the mothers, too;
 Hoist the cross of Calvary to hallow all you do.
 File your bullets' noses flat, poison every well;
 God decrees your enemies must all go plumb to hell.

Onward, Christian soldiers! Blight all that you meet;
 Trample human freedom under pious feet.
 Praise the Lord whose dollar sign dupes his favored race!
 Make the foreign trash respect your bullion brand of grace.
 Trust in mock salvation, serve as tyrant's tools;
 History will say of you: "That pack of G.. d.. fools."

Source

History in Song, <http://www.fortunecity.com/tinpan/parton/2/christia.html>; first published in Industrial Workers of the World, *Little Red Songbook*, 9th ed. (Joe Hill Memorial Edition), March 1916.

Eugene V. Debs, "The Prospect for Peace," *American Socialist*, 19 February 1916

There is no doubt that the belligerent nations of Europe are all heartily sick of war and that they would all welcome peace even if they could not dictate all its terms.

But it should not be overlooked that this frightful upheaval is but a symptom of the international readjustment which the underlying economic forces are bringing about, as well as the fundamental changes which are being wrought in our industrial and political institutions. Still, every war must end and so must this. The destruction of both life and property has been so appalling during the eighteen months that the war has been waged that we may well conclude that the fury of the conflict is largely spent and that, with bankruptcy and ruin such as the world never beheld staring them in the face, the lords of capitalist misrule are about ready to sue for peace.

From the point of view of the working class, the chief sufferers in this as in every war, the most promising indication of peace is the international conference recently held in Zimmerwald, Switzerland, attended by representatives of all European neutral nations and some of the belligerent powers. This conference, consisting wholly of representatives of the working class, issued a ringing manifesto in favor of the international re-organization on a permanent and uncompromising anti-war basis and of putting forth all possible efforts to end the bloody conflict which for a year and a half has shocked Christendom and outraged the civilization of the world.

The manifesto above referred to has been received with enthusiasm by the workers of all of the belligerent nations and the sentiment in favor of its acceptance and of the program of procedure it lays down is spreading rapidly in labor circles in the nations at war as well as in those at peace.

It would no doubt do much to clear the situation and expedite peace overtures if a decisive battle were fought and the indications are that such a battle, or series of battles, will be fought between now and spring. But the opportune moment for pressing peace negotiations can be determined only by the logic of events and when this comes the people of the United States should (2229) be ready to help in every way in their power to terminate this unholy massacre and bring peace to the world.

As to the terms upon which peace is to be restored these will no doubt be determined mainly by the status of the several belligerent powers when the war is ended. A program of disarmament looking to the prevention of another such catastrophe would seem to be suggested by the present heart-breaking situation but as experience has demonstrated that capitalist nations have no honor and

that the most solemn treaty is but a “scrap of paper” in their mad rivalry for conquest and plunder, such a program, even if adopted, might prove abortive and barren of results.

The matter of the conquered provinces will no doubt figure largely in the peace negotiations and the only way to settle that in accordance with the higher principles of civilized nations is to allow the people of each province in dispute to decide for themselves by popular vote what nation they desire to be annexed to, or to remain, if they prefer, independent sovereignties.

Permanent peace, however, peace based upon social justice, will never prevail until national industrial despotism has been supplanted by international industrial democracy. The end of profit and plunder among nations will also mean the end of war and the dawning of the era of “Peace on Earth and Good Will among Men.”

Source

Marxists.org Internet Archive,
<http://www.marxists.org/archive/debs/works/1916/peace.htm>.

The Gore Resolution: Senate Concurrent Resolution 14, 17 February 1916

Whereas a number of leading powers of the world are now engaged in a war of unexampled proportions; and

Whereas the United States is happily at peace with all of the belligerent nations; and

Whereas it is equally the desire and the interest of the American people to remain at peace with all nations; and

Whereas the President has recently afforded fresh and signal proofs of the superiority of diplomacy to butchery as a method of settling international disputes; and

Whereas the right of American citizens to travel on armed belligerent vessels rather than upon unarmed vessels is essential neither to their life, liberty, or safety, nor to the independence, dignity, or security of the United States; and

Whereas Congress alone has been vested with the power to declare war, which involves the obligation to prevent war by all proper means consistent with the honor and vital interest of the Nation:

Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives concurring), That it is the sense of the Congress, vested as it is with the sole power to declare war, that all persons owing allegiance to the United States should, in behalf of their own safety and the vital interest of the United States, forbear to exercise the right to travel as passengers upon any armed vessel of any belligerent power, whether such vessel is armed for offensive or defensive purposes; and it is the further sense of the Congress that no passport should be issued or renewed by the Secretary of State or by anyone acting under him to be used by any person owing allegiance to the United States for purpose of travel upon any such armed vessel of a belligerent power.

Source

Congressional Record, 64 Cong., 1st Sess. (25 February 1916), 3120.

Peace Sentiment in the United States, 1914–1916

Once war began in Europe, the question of the attitude the United States should adopt toward the conflict quickly became a burning political issue. Many members of the Northeastern elite of the United States, including some prominent individuals within the administration of President Woodrow Wilson such as his second Secretary of State Robert Lansing, tended to be fiercely pro-Allied in sympathy, but equally numerous Americans strongly opposed any potential intervention in the war by their country. Since German submarine warfare policies made it likely that if the United States did join the fighting it would be against Germany, Americans of German extraction were generally antiwar, as were the largely anti-British Irish Americans. Socialists and progressives also tended to oppose measures that might involve the United States in war.

Political controversy soon developed over several issues related to the war, of which the most significant (2230) were whether American businessmen should continue to trade with belligerent nations and, if necessary, help to finance such commerce, even at the risk of war; whether American citizens should be free to travel as passengers on merchant ships flying the flags of belligerent states; and whether, given the increased risk of involvement in a major war, the United

States should upgrade its own defensive capabilities. In most cases American peace activists were ready to compromise on the rights of citizens of the neutral United States to trade and travel, arguing that the interests of the broader community in maintaining peace should take priority over the rights of individuals. By early 1916, a number of prominent American politicians feared that clashes over travel by Americans on belligerent ships and war trade with the Allies would drag the United States into war. Various congressional resolutions were introduced with the intention of minimizing this risk. Some, including one sponsored by the Texan politicians Senator Thomas P. Gore and Congressman Jeff McLemore, would have banned travel by Americans on armed belligerent merchant ships. With support from Wilson, who was unwilling to yield to German pressure by relinquishing what he considered to be legitimate U.S. rights, in March 1916 both Congress and the Senate tabled this resolution, which meant it would fail to pass. Supporters of peace also generally opposed the substantial increases in U.S. armed forces and the major naval-building program mandated under the National Defense Act and Navy Act of 1916, even though Wilson presented these as precautionary measures designed to make war less rather than more likely. Ultimately, however, the potential impact of U.S. decisions on the outcome of the European war set in motion German policies of unrestricted submarine warfare that in April 1917 led Wilson to request that the U.S. Congress declare war on Germany.

Jane Addams (1860–1935)

By the time World War I began, the Illinois-born Jane Addams was one of the most prominent American progressive activists. A pioneering urban social worker, reformer, feminist, and founder of the Chicago settlement Hull House, Addams had helped to set up the National Federation of Settlements and Neighborhood Centers in 1911, was prominent in the Consumers League, and was the first woman president of the National Conference of Charities and Corrections (later the National Conference of Social Work). Active in numerous other such organizations and a strong supporter of the woman suffrage campaign, child labor laws, compulsory education, and other social welfare measures, Addams was also a prolific writer and publicist. In 1912 she was one of the founders of the Progressive Party, the most successful third party in the history of the United States, which nominated former President Theodore Roosevelt as its candidate. According to the British Fabian socialist Beatrice Webb, by 1915 Addams had “become a world celebrity—the most famous woman of the U.S.A., representing the best aspects of the feminist

movement and the most distinguished elements in the social reform movement.”

Well before World War I began, Addams was active in the international peace movement, lecturing on the subject at the University of Wisconsin in 1906 and visiting The Hague Peace Palace in 1913. In January 1915 she helped to organize the Women’s Peace Party, of which she became the first president. In spring 1915 Addams visited Europe, attending an International Congress of Women convened at The Hague as a representative of neutral women and accepting the organization’s presidency. After this meeting she and other women pacifists personally attempted to persuade political leaders in Britain, France, Germany, Belgium, Italy, Hungary, and Austria of the desirability of peace. Most were friendly but noncommittal; according to Webb, Addams apparently “found [British Foreign Secretary] Sir Edward Grey politely encouraging, expressing his own personal pacific sentiments, but saying nothing about his government.” After the conference Addams and other leading American antiwar activists also suggested to the maverick automobile magnate Henry Ford that he sponsor another such international meeting in neutral Stockholm to discuss ways of ending the conflict. The publicity-conscious Ford decided to charter a ship of American peace activists to sail to Europe for this purpose. Amid great fanfare and press coverage, much of it uncomplimentary, the *Oskar II* sailed from Hoboken, New Jersey, in December 1915, arriving at Stockholm the following month, where representatives from neutral Denmark, Holland, Norway, Sweden, and the United States met in conference but could not persuade any counterparts from the warring (2231) countries to attend. However predictable this outcome may have been, Addams and others who took part in the gathering found it disappointing.

By fall 1915 the growing threat of war, especially the recent *Lusitania* crisis precipitated when a German submarine sank a British passenger liner, causing the deaths of more than 100 Americans, had impelled Wilson to decide to upgrade U.S. defenses by increasing armaments production and doubling the size of the army. In correspondence with the president, on behalf of the Women’s Peace Party Addams questioned the need for such measures, and she also opposed the more extensive subsequent increases in national defense spending to enhance U.S. “preparedness” against attack passed the following year. When the United States declared war on Germany in April 1917, Addams openly opposed the decision, a stance that exposed her to considerable public opprobrium and brought her expulsion from the conservative elite organization the Daughters of the American Revolution. During the war Addams satisfied her humanitarian instincts and found an outlet for her formidable energies by

working in the American Relief Association under future President Herbert Hoover to provide food for the women and children of enemy nations. Shortly after the war, in 1920, Addams actively endorsed the foundation of the American Civil Liberties Union. A supporter of U.S. membership in the League of Nations, in 1919 Addams became first president of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, which developed out of the Women's Peace Party and the International Congress of Women. She remained president until 1929, when ill health forced her to resign, and received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1931.

About The Documents

Each document included here—a letter to the president of the United States, antiwar songs circulated by a radical labor union, an article in a socialist journal, and a congressional resolution—represents an attempt of some kind to promote the cause of peace within the United States. Jane Addams was writing to Wilson to lobby him on behalf of the Women's Peace Party, suggesting that recent increases in defense spending were unjustified, inasmuch as no “exhausted” European power would be able to pose any postwar threat to the United States. Perhaps deliberately, she ignored the possibility that a danger of hostilities might arise from some war-generated crisis, as had already been the case after a German submarine sank the *Lusitania*. Clearly envisaging that the United States would take the lead in the international efforts to end the war and eliminate future conflicts, she also appealed to the historic mission of the United States to lead the rest of the world “to a lasting peace” based upon disarmament. Wilson replied politely but refused to alter the policies on which he had already decided.

The staunchly antiwar IWW, or Wobblies, developed a strong folk tradition and were known for their love of music. The 1916 edition of their official songbook included several pacifist poems meant to be sung, usually to familiar tunes. “Christians at War,” an adaptation of the well-known hymn “Onward Christian Soldiers,” was not only a rousing song but also appealed to religious authority, deliberately highlighting the contrasts between Christian teachings that one should love one's neighbor and forgive one's enemies and emphasizing the damage, destruction, and atrocities wreaked by war. One suspects, however, that for the most part the message of this song only reached those who already agreed with it, since most Wobblies would be true believers in international peace and brotherhood among working men. This was, indeed, a major weakness of much antiwar propaganda—that its proponents were preaching primarily to the converted.

This was also true of the article by Debs, published in the *American Socialist*, a venue that ensured most of its readers were likely to be sympathetic to his themes. Debs optimistically argued that eighteen months of war had proved so destructive that every nation of Europe would welcome a compromise peace. In his view, “the lords of capitalist misrule are about ready to sue for peace.” In reality, as the damage mounted political leaders tended to feel that only a sweeping victory could justify the sacrifices their peoples had been forced to endure. Blaming the war on the rivalries of international capitalism and imperialism, Debs strongly endorsed the call for a negotiated peace of justice issued by the recent socialist conference held at Zimmerwald, Switzerland, a manifesto he inaccurately alleged the working classes of all belligerent nations had welcomed enthusiastically. He hoped that a decisive battle or battles would take place in the (2232) near future and would impel one or the other side to sue for peace, and he urged the United States to stand ready to help in such negotiations when the moment arose. The peace settlement itself, according to Debs, should be based upon principles of international justice, the self-determination of nations, and industrial democracy, which would end the capitalist rivalries to which Debs ascribed the outbreak of war. Optimistic in outlook, Debs’s article also revealed how unfamiliar he was with conditions in most of the belligerent nations of Europe.

The fourth document was a draft congressional resolution that Senator Thomas Gore and Congressman Jeff McLemore submitted almost simultaneously with Debs’s article in the hope of taking concrete action that would preclude the occasion for any future diplomatic crises with Germany over submarine attacks on armed merchant ships of belligerent nations carrying American passengers. Its formal, legalistic language defined the actions by American citizens likely to provoke such disputes and sought to forbid such behavior. Although Americans would be forbidden to travel on armed ships of any belligerent nation, in practice, given Allied control of the seas, this meant Allied vessels. All those politicians dealing with the resolution recognized these implications. While the resolution’s congressional supporters were willing to compromise some American rights in order to avoid war, their attitude ran counter to the diplomatic posture adopted by the president, who felt that any indication that he might waive certain U.S. national rights in order to avoid being drawn into war would only encourage belligerent powers to take further liberties with and demand additional concessions from his country. Although the resolution enjoyed substantial congressional support, Wilson therefore mounted a major lobbying effort against its passage, and eventually it was tabled, or set aside, in both houses of Congress.

Further Reading

Addams, Jane. *Peace and Bread in Time of War*. New York: Macmillan, 1922.

Alonso, Harriet Hyman. *Peace as a Women's Issue: A History of the U.S. Movement for World Peace and Women's Rights*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1993.

Bird, Stewart, Dan Georgakas, and Deborah Shaffer. *Solidarity Forever: An Oral History of the IWW*. Chicago: Lake View Press, 1985.

Davis, Allen F. *American Heroine: The Life and Legend of Jane Addams*. Rev. ed. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2000.

Dubofsky, Melvyn. *We Shall Be All: A History of the Industrial Workers of the World*. Chicago: Quadrangle, 1969.

Elshtain, Jean Bethke. *Jane Addams and the Dream of American Democracy: A Life*. New York: Basic Books, 2002.

Knock, Thomas J. *To End All Wars: Woodrow Wilson and the Quest for a New World Order*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992.

Linn, James Weber. *Jane Addams: A Biography*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000.

Rupp, Leila J. *Worlds of Women: The Making of an International Women's Movement*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997.

Young, Marguerite. *Harp Song for a Radical: The Life and Times of Eugene Victor Debs*. Ed. Charles Ruas. New York: Knopf, 1999.

MLA

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "22. Peace Sentiment in the United States." *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*, ABC-CLIO, 2005, pp. . *ABC-CLIO eBook Collection*, legacy.abc-clio.com/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2145.

Chicago Manual of Style

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "22. Peace Sentiment in the United States." In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005. <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2145>.

APA

Roberts, P. M., S. C. Tucker (2005). 22. Peace Sentiment in the United States. In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia* (pp.). Retrieved from <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2145>

Essay 23. Plans for Postwar International Organization

Wartime Plans for an International Organization

In both Europe and the United States, there existed a sizable prewar peace movement, focused primarily on the arbitration of international disputes and the formulation of rules for the humane conduct of war. Within a few months of the outbreak of war, private groups in both Great Britain and the United States, most possessing ties to the prewar international arbitration and peace movement, were organizing in support of the establishment of a postwar international organization that would attempt to prevent future wars. In many though not all cases, members of such groups thought an Allied victory the essential prerequisite of their plans. From late 1914 onward James, Viscount Bryce, Liberal statesman and former ambassador to the United States, took the lead in devising British proposals for a postwar "League of Peace" that would prevent future wars by means of arbitration, backed up, if necessary, by collective economic or military sanctions. In May 1915 British liberals established a League of Nations Society to promote similar ideas, and for the next two years it carried on quiet propaganda to this effect, gaining a membership of 400 by the end of 1916. The society's supporters were not pacifists, and they carefully avoided criticizing the government's wartime policies (2233) or calling for a negotiated peace. Even so, at this time British energies were essentially focused on prosecuting the war effectively rather than on making definite plans for peace.

In the United States, a comparable movement quickly developed. The most prominent group involved was the League to Enforce Peace, established in spring 1915 on the initiative of Hamilton Holt, editor of the *Independent* journal and a leader in the New York Peace Society. Its founding members included several prominent Republicans, including the lawyer ex-President William Howard Taft; A. Lawrence Lowell, president of Harvard University; and Theodore Marburg, former U.S. ambassador to Belgium. In June 1915 the newly formed League to Enforce Peace, meeting in Philadelphia, formally adopted a platform calling for American membership in a league of nations with the power to arbitrate international disputes and impose economic and military penalties on countries that went to war and for the promulgation of regular conferences "to formulate and codify rules of international law." Since the United States was still neutral at this time, the organization had greater leeway than its British counterpart to launch a vigorous propaganda campaign throughout the United States that quickly generated considerable public support. Democrats as well as Republicans soon joined the movement, which

had the advantage of appealing both to those who supported an Allied victory and, in many cases, American intervention in the conflict and those who favored a negotiated peace. In May 1916 U.S. President Woodrow Wilson publicly addressed the first National Congress of the League to Enforce Peace, where he committed the United States in principle to the postwar creation of an international organization to prevent future wars.

British officials had not yet formally endorsed such proposals and would not do so until 1918. In conversations during 1915 and 1916 with Colonel Edward M. House, Wilson's confidential advisor, British Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey, probably motivated by a mixture of genuine conviction and a desire to conciliate the American president, expressed broad support for such ideas and his hope that the United States would be a member of any such organization. Grey did, however, stress that he was speaking in a personal rather than official capacity and could not commit his government. In fall 1916 Lord Robert Cecil, undersecretary of state for foreign affairs, was assigned to draft proposals on behalf of the British government. He produced a memorandum that was circulated around the Foreign Office and the British cabinet and attempted to imagine how such a body would be organized and would function. Although Cecil's proposals were modified substantially over the next two years, by both himself and other officials, this marked the beginning of British governmental efforts to formulate plans for international organization.

After the United States entered the war, and especially once Woodrow Wilson pressured the Allies to endorse a "new diplomacy"—based on "open covenants openly arrived at," nonpunitive peace principles, and the creation of an international association of nations—the other Allied governments had greater incentives to make more specific plans for postwar international organization. After close to three years of costly and still inconclusive warfare, they also had to motivate their own populations to continue the fight. From 1917 onward, therefore, British officials allowed nongovernmental organizations to launch much more extensive publicity efforts on behalf of a postwar league of nations, a cause quickly and enthusiastically taken up by liberals and the Labour Party. In May 1917 the League of Nations Society held a mass meeting at Central Hall, Westminster, London, chaired by Viscount Bryce and addressed by General Jan Christian Smuts, a future South African premier who at that time represented his country in the British Empire's Imperial War Cabinet. Admitting that there would be difficulties in devising a suitable form of organization, Smuts recommended the formation of a joint Anglo-American committee to explore the possibilities, a motion the meeting accepted with enthusiasm. This marked the beginning of much more widespread public

campaigning on the subject, spearheaded by the League of Nations Society. In late 1917 the Labour Party informed the British government that continuing support for industrial mobilization measures and conscription depended on the government's clear endorsement of the creation of a permanent postwar international organization.

In a major public speech in January 1918, British Premier David Lloyd George committed his government to this objective and to a program of liberal war aims similar to those set out in Wilson's Fourteen (2234) Points speech a few days later. Cecil and Smuts both contributed to the final version of Lloyd George's speech. From mid-1917, Cecil had pressured the British government to consider the league issue in-depth, decide on a suitable scheme, and work to implement it. Wilson, who rather distrusted the British, proved unwilling to establish a joint Anglo-American committee to discuss the league, so in January 1918 the British Foreign Office established an exclusively British group, chaired by Lord Phillimore, to study the question. Their interim report, submitted in March 1918, and their final report the following June both suggested a league of sovereign states, all of whom would commit themselves to remain at peace with each other until all avenues of arbitration had been exhausted and could use the mechanisms of the league to settle disputes arising among themselves. Failure to observe these provisions would expose transgressors to military, financial, and economic sanctions and action by the other member states. Speaking before the League of Nations Society, Grey, now retired, publicly endorsed proposals along these lines. The British government, however, refused to publish the Phillimore report, in part because Wilson opposed the promulgation of any definite scheme and, while expressing broad support for a general guarantee of all nations' political and territorial integrity, universal compulsory arbitration by a body that could forcibly impose its decisions using coercive measures if necessary, and general disarmament, still feared committing himself to any specific model of a league of nations. Once an armistice with Germany was signed in November 1918, memoranda by Cecil and Smuts, particularly the latter, were influential in the drafting of the League of Nations Covenant created at the Paris Peace Conference in the first half of 1918 and incorporated in the Treaty of Versailles and the other peace agreements.

United States: Platform for "League of Peace" Adopted at the Century Club, 9 April 1915, as Revised by William Howard Taft the Following Morning

It is desirable for the United States to join a League of the great nations binding the signatories to the following:

First, all justiciable questions arising between the signatory powers not settled by negotiation, shall be submitted to a judicial tribunal for hearing and judgment both upon the merits and upon any issue as to its jurisdiction of the question.

Second, all non-justiciable questions arising between the signatories and not settled by negotiations, shall be submitted to a Council of Conciliation for hearing, consideration and recommendation.

Third, the signatory powers shall jointly use their military forces to prevent any one of their number from going to war or committing acts of hostility against another of the signatories before any question arising shall be submitted as provided in the following.

Fourth, that conferences between the signatory powers shall be held from time to time to formulate and codify rules of international law which, unless some signatory shall signify its dissent within a stated period, shall thereafter govern in the decisions of the Judicial Tribunal mentioned in article one.

Source

League to Enforce Peace: American Branch, Independence Hall Conference held in city of Philadelphia (New York: League to Enforce Peace, 1915) p. 4. Records of the League to Enforce Peace. Swarthmore College Peace Collection.

Lord Robert Cecil, Memorandum on Proposals for Diminishing the Occasion of Future Wars, September 1916

It is estimated that the total number of killed and wounded in this war approaches 50,000,000—more than the population of the British islands—and that of these 7,000,000 have been killed. . . . We have so far spent between 2,000 and 3,000 millions of pounds. Assuming our Allies have spent as much and our enemies half as much again the total expenditure has been not less than some 8,000 or 9,000 millions, and may well have been much more. Taken altogether, the impoverishment of the world by waste of life, waste of labour, and destruction of material has been appalling. Human suffering has resulted on a scale unprecedented in the history of the world. A small battle recorded as the capture of a few yards of trench involves the death by torture of hundreds, (2235) perhaps thousands of young men, the maiming or blinding of as many more, and for the lucky ones horrible wounds inflicted by jagged fragments of

high-explosive shells. Perhaps even harder to bear are the anxiety, the grief and the bereavement which fall on the women at home.

It is not too much to say that it has endangered the fabric of our civilisation, and if it is to be repeated the whole European system may probably disappear in anarchy. It is surely, therefore, most urgent that we should try to think out some plan to lessen the possibility of future war. What can be done? The only possible way out appears to be to try to substitute for war some other way of settling international disputes. Two expedients suggest themselves: arbitration and conference of the Powers-European Concert. The difficulty of arbitration is to discover the arbitrators to whom sovereign powers will be content to submit questions of vital importance. The same objection does not apply to conferences. But, as was found in the present war, no machinery exists to force unwilling powers to agree to a conference and await its decision. It would be simple to include in the Treaty of Peace general agreement to that effect. But what if a group of Powers were determined on war, how are they to be compelled to enter a conference? In other words, what is to be the sanction? A provision that all the Powers shall combine to punish by force of arms a breach of the treaty will probably by itself be ineffective. As far as Europe is concerned, there will always be a tendency for the Powers to form themselves into two groups more or less equal in strength, and if one of these becomes aggressive it may and probably will ignore all treaties. Under these circumstances the risks of war are so great that few countries would enter it merely in support of treaties and international right, and the settlement of the dispute will be left to war between the Powers immediately concerned.

If, however, an instrument could be found which would exert considerable pressure on a recalcitrant Power without causing excessive risk to the Powers using it, a solution of the difficulty might perhaps be found. I believe that in blockade as developed in this war such an instrument exists. No doubt for its full effect an over-whelming naval power is requisite. But much could be done even by overwhelming financial power, and with the two combined no modern State could ultimately resist its pressure. Suppose in July 1914 it had been possible for the Entente Powers to say to Germany and Austria, unless the ultimatum to Serbia is modified or a conference is called, we will cut off all commercial and financial intercourse from you, it is very doubtful whether the Central Powers would have proceeded.

If the United States could have been induced to join in such a declaration, the effect would have been enormously increased. And though it is certainly hopeless to expect America to fight in a European quarrel unless her interests are directly affected, it does not seem so certain that she would refuse to join in

organized economic action to preserve peace. It is assumed as a necessary condition of this proposal that a territorial settlement of a reasonable sort is arrived at in the treaty, and its maintenance is guaranteed by the signatory Powers. . . . I append a rough draft to explain the working of the scheme.

Proposals for Maintenance of Future Peace

The High Contracting Powers further agree that the territorial arrangements hereinbefore set forth shall remain unaltered for the next five years. At, or if any of the High Contracting Powers so demands then before, the end of that period a conference of the High Contracting powers shall be summoned, and any rearrangements of territory which have become necessary or desirable shall be then considered and, if agreed upon, shall be forthwith carried out.

If any difference or controversy shall arise between any of the High Contracting Powers with respect to the meaning of any of the articles of this treaty, or with respect to the rights of any of the parties thereto, or with respect to any other matter, a conference of the Powers shall forthwith be summoned, and the controversy shall be submitted to it, and no action shall be taken by any of the parties to the controversy until the conference has met and considered the matter, and has either come to a decision thereon or has failed for a period of three months after its meeting to come to such a decision. Any decision agreed upon at such conference shall be maintained and enforced by all the High Contracting Powers as if it were one of the articles of this treaty.

(2236)

Each of the High Contracting Powers guarantees and agrees to maintain the provisions of this treaty if necessary by force of arms, and in particular undertakes that if any Power shall refuse or fail to submit any controversy to a conference as provided in the last preceding article of this treaty, or shall otherwise infringe any of the provisions of this treaty, each of the High Contracting Powers shall thereupon cut off all commercial and financial intercourse with the wrongdoing Power, and as far as possible shall prevent such Power from having any commercial or financial intercourse with any other Power, whether a party to this treaty or not; and it is hereby further agreed that for the purpose of enforcing this provision, any of the High Contracting Powers may detain any ship or goods belonging to any of the subjects of the wrongdoing Powers or coming from or destined for any person residing in the territory of such Power, and with the same object may take any other similar step which may seem desirable or necessary.

Source

Great Britain, National Archives, Foreign Office Files, Reference FO 371/3082.

Lord Robert Cecil (1864–1958)

Cecil was the third son of the third Marquess of Salisbury, Conservative British prime minister and foreign secretary in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He entered the British Parliament in 1906 and from 1915 to 1918 served as parliamentary undersecretary of state for foreign affairs, a post that from 1916 he combined with that of minister of blockade. After Wilson endorsed the creation of an international body to prevent future wars, Cecil set about drafting proposals on behalf of the British government. By late 1916 Cecil was personally shocked by the devastation and loss that war was inflicting on his own country and other European nations. For Cecil, this memorandum marked the beginning of an interest in what would become the League of Nations that was to dominate the rest of his life and would eventually win him the 1937 Nobel Peace Prize. In 1917 and 1918 he consistently pressed the somewhat reluctant British government to commit itself firmly and publicly to the formation of a postwar international organization and to formulate and endorse a definite scheme to this end. Some observers believed that one reason Cecil, a committed Christian, became so dedicated a supporter of the League of Nations was his guilt over the part he had played as minister of blockade in denying food to the German population during the war and thus contributing to substantial numbers of German civilian deaths.

Cecil attended the Paris Peace Conference as a British delegate and, with Smuts and a few others, was one of the most dedicated advocates of the creation of the League of Nations. After the war Cecil became president of the League of Nations Union, a pressure group to support the League, and in 1923 he served for a few months as Lord Privy Seal in the Conservative government, with special responsibility for League of Nations affairs. When the Conservatives regained power in late 1924, Cecil became chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, resigning in 1927 over the breakdown of disarmament talks in Geneva. From 1929 to 1932 he represented the Labour government, and the National government that succeeded it, at the League of Nations. He never held public office after that time but continued as president of the League of Nations Union throughout the 1930s, though he differed from many of its more pacifist members in supporting massive British rearmament.

About The Documents

The two documents here are very different in type, inasmuch as one is a public statement by a nongovernmental lobbying group, albeit an organization whose members included several influential public figures, and the second is an internal Foreign Office memorandum not intended for general consumption. At its inception the League to Enforce Peace was an elite pressure group, as demonstrated by the fact that its platform was drafted at the exclusive Century Club in New York and that one of those who helped to formulate this statement was former President William Howard Taft, whom Woodrow Wilson had defeated in the 1912 election. Until World War I began, schemes for international arbitration and organization did not normally envisage the use of coercive measures, whether military action or economic sanctions, to prevent war breaking out or to enforce judgments. The outbreak of a major war helped to convince supporters of peace that measures more effective than (2237) simple arbitration were needed to maintain peace. The statement therefore went further than previous efforts in that it envisaged the use of such sanctions to prevent any power signatory to the anticipated organization from resorting to war before arbitration had been attempted. The statement remained silent, however, as to whether military or economic sanctions should be imposed if the recommendations of the “Council of Conciliation” were ignored. One reason for this was that at this time those elite Americans involved in founding the League to Enforce Peace were not themselves in agreement on the subject; a second was that overly ambitious plans calling for the employment of U.S. military forces might well alienate potential supporters. The creation of the League to Enforce Peace was, however, symbolic of the fact that once World War I began, a number of influential Americans campaigned actively for their country to assume a greater international role than heretofore.

Like the platform, Cecil’s memorandum was a preliminary document, marking the beginning rather than the end of efforts to devise acceptable postwar mechanisms for maintaining peace. It was one of several major memoranda on the subject of a league of nations he would draft over the following two years and was drafted to help the British government clarify its thinking and position on the subject. The fact that Cecil was entrusted with drawing up this document was evidence that British officials were taking the subject of international organization seriously and embarking on definite planning for it. Cecil’s actual suggestions, like those in most early drafts, were designed to provoke thought and discussion rather than as a final proposal and were therefore expected to be subject to appreciable modifications before any eventual implementation.

At this stage Cecil advocated a system of mandatory and regular international conferences to settle disputes that might arise between states. Should any state or states reject subjecting controversies to such decision, he advocated the imposition of financial, economic, and commercial sanctions against the offending party. He did not, however, mandate that the decisions of any such conferences, which in any case would have to be unanimous, should be made compulsory. Cecil hoped that the United States, the one major power not yet involved in the war, would join any such organization. Although a little hazy on the subject, Cecil's proposals also envisaged that if economic methods did not succeed, the signatory powers would "maintain the provisions of this treaty if necessary by force of arms." Cecil further expected that the provisions of any postwar settlement should not be subject to renegotiation until after a period of at least five years. In October 1916 Cecil's memorandum was circulated within the Foreign Office, whose top officials, including Sir Eyre Crowe, head of the Contraband Department, expressed some doubts as to the feasibility of relying on economic sanctions alone and skepticism over the possibility of obtaining unanimous conference decisions on any subject. Crowe felt that in any such organization, member nations would divide according to their interests on any particular issue, and the balance of power still represented the most reliable mechanism for the prevention of wars. The following May Cecil's proposals were printed for the British cabinet, at which time Cecil suggested that holding a conference and imposing a three-month moratorium on hostile actions should be made compulsory during any international crisis.

This memorandum marked only the beginning of Cecil's career as the wartime British government's most dedicated advocate of the league. Perhaps in response to Crowe's and similar criticisms, Cecil's objectives became more ambitious as the war went on, and by late 1917 he had come to favor a full-scale international organization to resolve disputes peacefully, together with national self-determination and acceptance of the sanctity of treaties. By mid-1918 he was a strong supporter of the Phillimore report and urged the British and U.S. governments and others in favor to unite behind its proposals for universal compulsory arbitration and a general territorial guarantee and to work toward their implementation. As he would then and later, Cecil considered that close Anglo-American cooperation would be essential to any future league. Even so, his plans for the league remained relatively limited, envisaging compulsory arbitration, together with a cooling-off period, prior to any potential war, in the hope that the force of international public opinion would prevent crisis escalating into actual conflict. Like the League to Enforce Peace's initial prospectus, Cecil's proposals illustrated the continuing tensions between national sovereignty and the authority of any future international

organization that would bedevil the League of Nations eventually created at Paris in (2238) 1919, a body lacking the military and economic power to enforce whatever decisions it might promulgate.

Further Reading

Ceadel, Martin. *Semi-Detached Idealists: The British Peace Movement and International Relations, 1854–1945*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Cecil, Robert, Viscount of Chelwood. *A Great Experiment: An Autobiography*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1941.

———. *All the Way*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1949.

Crosby, Gerda Richards. *Disarmament and Peace in British Politics, 1914–1919*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957.

Egerton, George W. *Great Britain and the Creation of the League of Nations: Strategy, Politics, and International Organization, 1914–1919*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978.

Knock, Thomas J. *To End All Wars: Woodrow Wilson and the Quest for a New World Order*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.

Kuehl, Warren F. *Seeking World Order: The United States and International Organization to 1920*. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 1969.

Marchand, C. Roland. *The American Peace Movement and Social Reform, 1898–1918*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972.

Patterson, David S. *Toward a Warless World: The Travail of the American Peace Movement, 1887–1914*. Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1976.

Rose, Kenneth. *The Later Cecils*. New York: Harper and Row, 1975.

Winkler, Henry R. *The League of Nations Movement in Great Britain, 1914–1919*. Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow, 1967.

MLA

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "23. Plans for Postwar International Organization." *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*, ABC-

CLIO, 2005, pp. . *ABC-CLIO eBook Collection*, legacy.abc-clio.com/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2154.

Chicago Manual of Style

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "23. Plans for Postwar International Organization." In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005. <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2154>.

APA

Roberts, P. M., S. C. Tucker (2005). 23. Plans for Postwar International Organization. In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia* (pp.). Retrieved from <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2154>

Essay 24. The British Financial Crisis, November–December 1916

Anglo-American Wartime Economic and Commercial Relations

One major advantage the Allied Powers enjoyed in World War I was their ability to tap into both the industrial and financial resources of the United States, the world's greatest economic power. Besides being a military conflict, the war was also a competition as to which coalition of belligerent states could most effectively mobilize its own and other nations' economic assets against its enemies. British control of the seas and strict enforcement of a blockade against the Central Powers meant that the latter, by contrast, were largely unable to utilize such outside resources. By the end of 1914 the British and other Allied governments were placing large and ever-growing orders for every kind of war supply in the United States. Within two years the United States had become a creditor rather than debtor nation on its balance of trade. The administration of President Woodrow Wilson initially decided that private Americans could not make loans to the Allies but could only offer short-term credits, a policy quietly relaxed in mid-1915 as the dollar exchange resources available to the Allies came ever closer to exhaustion. The British government had by then effectively exhausted much of its reserves of gold and dollar exchange and, by imposing a highly discriminatory punitive tax rate on dividends from U.S. stocks and bonds, had successfully commandeered and sold many American securities owned by British citizens. In September 1915 the British and French governments floated a loan of \$500 million in the United States with the bonds to be bought by American investors, the first of several such offerings issued on the U.S. market in the period before that country entered the war. The Allied Powers also benefited from favorable official policies on acceptances, the short-term obligations used to finance overseas purchases, that the newly created Federal Reserve Board ruled could be renewed for periods of up to eighteen months in all, long after the goods they were supposed to represent had been received.

In 1914 Britain was the world's greatest financial power, but as the war progressed its demands increasingly strained even the British Empire's massive resources. By late 1916, 40% of British war expenditures were made in North America, in either Canada or the United States. Large portions of these purchases were funded by loans or credits from private American sources, either banks or individuals, and the continuance of such finance depended on the benign acquiescence of the U.S. government. In autumn 1916 Anglo-American tensions rose, due in part to the British practices of blacklisting

American firms that dealt with Germany, of censoring all cable traffic between the United States and Europe, and of intercepting American cargos bound for Germany in defiance of the blockade zone Britain had (2239) declared around the continent. As the U.S. Congress threatened retaliatory measures and Wilson contemplated seeking congressional authority to restrict loans and exports to the Allied Powers, the British Foreign Office summoned an interdepartmental committee to determine, in the words of the brilliant young economist John Maynard Keynes, just “how far this country is dependent commercially and financially on the United States and to what extent measures of reprisal by the United States could effectively be met by commercial or other forms of retaliation.” Keynes, who represented the British Treasury on this committee, unambiguously stressed Britain’s extreme financial dependence upon the United States, which he considered an alarming development.

Within a few weeks, Keynes’s apprehensions were shown to be well-founded. In early November 1916 Democratic President Woodrow Wilson was narrowly reelected after a hard-fought campaign in which he emphasized his past success in avoiding war and implicitly promised to continue such policies. In the opinion of Sir Cecil Spring Rice, British ambassador to the United States, “[t]he elections have clearly shown that the great mass of the Americans desire nothing so much as to keep out of the war.” Throughout the war Wilson was far less pro-Allied than many leading officials in his administration, and he also feared that if he did not take decisive action to bring about a mediated, compromise settlement of the war, a German resumption of submarine warfare might well embroil his country, however reluctantly, in the conflict. He therefore decided to appeal to both belligerent alliances to state the minimum peace terms on which they would be prepared to end the war, after which he hoped to broker a settlement that would be acceptable to all.

Coincidentally, at this time the firm of J. P. Morgan and Company, which acted as U.S. financial agent for both Great Britain and France, proposed to offer at least \$500 million of short-term British Treasury bills on the American market, a scheme that required at least implicit approval from the Federal Reserve Board. For almost two years debate as to whether the growing volume of short-term foreign—mostly Allied—commercial paper in the American financial system was desirable had periodically divided the Federal Reserve Board. Those members who were pro-Allied in sympathy generally supported its increase, whereas those who were neutral or pro-German considered the ever-escalating amount of what were often unsecured credits ultimately guaranteed by the Allied governments as representing an unsound abuse that had regrettably been allowed to creep into the system. In the previous weeks,

particularly fierce Federal Reserve disputes had flared up on the subject. Faced with yet more Allied demands on U.S. credit facilities, the Federal Reserve Board decided to issue a statement warning Americans against lending further money to any of the belligerent nations. Since the Allies raised by far the great majority of such loan, this action was liable to affect them disproportionately. Conscious that this was an action with important diplomatic ramifications, Federal Reserve Board chairman W. P. G. Harding sent the draft statement to Wilson, who not only approved it but asked that it be strengthened so as to warn not just the Federal Reserve system's member banks but also private investors that securities such as the projected Treasury bills were not necessarily a prudent investment. Wilson took this action in the hope that economic and financial stringency would pressure the Allies to acquiesce in the peace effort he intended to launch in the near future. Interestingly, the Federal Reserve statement also anticipated that after the war the United States would play a far greater international role than in the past.

In 1916, just as in the early twenty-first century, American investors followed Federal Reserve Board pronouncements with great attention. When eventually issued on 28 November, the statement included here killed, at least temporarily, the American market for Allied government securities. Allied bonds immediately plummeted on the New York market, and the British government was forced to support the sterling exchange rate by making heavy purchases for its own account. Until early December these outgoings ran at almost \$20 million (£4 million) a day, by which time the British Treasury's gold reserves were perilously close to total depletion. Due to lack of available funding, in the months following the Federal Reserve Board's statement American exports to the Allies declined abruptly. The J. P. Morgan partners accurately described the announcement as "the most serious financial development [for the Allies] in this (2240) country since the outbreak of the war." It seemed that financial strictures would succeed in cutting the vital lifeline of American supplies on which the Allied war effort had become heavily dependent.

Despite their economic plight, Allied leaders remained polite but unresponsive to Wilson's peace overtures, as did the Central Powers. Interestingly and rather remarkably, no top officials in any country, not even the U.S. president, seem to have appreciated just how serious the Allies' financial position had become or the potential implications for their ability to continue waging war at full capacity. Ironically, within a few weeks German military leaders successfully persuaded Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany to sanction the resumption of unlimited submarine warfare against Allied and neutral shipping, a policy they knew was likely to provoke U.S. intervention in the war but, they optimistically

argued, would starve the Allies of imports of vital supplies and force them to capitulate within a year, before the Wilson administration could fully mobilize the United States for active participation in the conflict. As it transpired, these calculations were inaccurate, and although the Allies came close to defeat in early 1918, American supplies and eventually U.S. troops arrived in Europe in sufficient quantities to tip the balance in what had been a stalemated war in favor of the Allies. Even so, the episode had cogently revealed how much leverage U.S. financial might gave that country in its dealings with the Allied belligerent powers, whose greatest outside supplier the United States had in two years of war become. Wilson's readiness to exert financial pressure foreshadowed the economic and military predominance the United States would exercise vis-à-vis its allies and clients for many decades later in the twentieth century.

John Maynard Keynes, "The Financial Dependence of the United Kingdom on the United States of America," 10 October 1916

Of the £5 million which the Treasury have to find daily for the prosecution of the war, about £2 million has to be found in North America.

There is no prospect of any sensible diminution in this amount without a radical change in the policy and activities of the war departments both of this country and of the other allies.

During recent months about three-fifths of the sums required have been obtained by the sale of gold and securities, and about two-fifths by loans. The former resources are nearly independent of any action that the American executive is able to take, except that the Assay Office could put practicable difficulties in the way of the sale of gold at a sufficient rate. But the extent to which such resources can be used in the future will be greatly inferior to what it has been recently, and they cannot be relied on to supply more than one-fifth of the total requirements during the next six months.

Thus to the extent of four-fifths of their needs the allied powers must depend upon the issue of public loans. A statement from the United States executive deprecating or disapproving of such loans would render their flotation in sufficient volume a practical impossibility and thus lead to a situation of the utmost gravity.

It is not necessary, however, that matters should go so far as an overt act of the executive, in order that the financial arrangements of the allies should be prejudiced. Any feeling of irritation or lack of sympathy with this country or

with its policy in the minds of the American public (and equally any lack of confidence in the military situation as interpreted by this public) would render it exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to carry through financial operations on a scale adequate to our needs. The sums which this country will require to borrow in the United States of America in the next six or nine months are so enormous, amounting to several times the entire national debt of that country, that it will be necessary to appeal to every class and section of the investing public.

It is hardly an exaggeration to say that in a few months time the American executive and the American public will be in a position to dictate to this country on matters that affect us more nearly than them.

It is, therefore, the view of the Treasury, having regard to their special responsibilities, that the policy of this country towards the U.S.A. should be so directed as not only to avoid any form of reprisal or active irritation but also to conciliate and to please.

Source

John Maynard Keynes, *The Collected Writings of John Maynard Keynes*, Vol. 16, *Activities, 1914–1919: The Treasury and Versailles*, ed. Elizabeth Johnson (Macmillan: St. Martin's, 1971), 197–198. Reproduced with permission of Palgrave Macmillan.

(2241)

The Federal Reserve Board Restricts Foreign Borrowing in the United States, November 1916

Woodrow Wilson to William Procter Gould Harding, 26 November 1916

I am taking the liberty of using my own pen (for so I regard this typewriter) to make reply to the question you put to me yesterday about the enclosed statement.

I like it. I am glad that the Board has determined that it is its duty to make it. Such advice to the banks seems to me very timely and indeed very necessary. My only suggestion is that the statement be made a little stronger and more pointed and be made to carry rather explicit advice against these investments, as against the whole policy and purpose of the Federal Reserve Act, rather than convey a mere caution. The securities spoken of, though nominally liquid, will

in the event, I should say, certainly not be so, and our domestic transactions might be seriously embarrassed and impeded should the national banks tie up their resources in them.

Thank you very much for consulting me on this extremely important matter, which might at any time be radically affected by a change in the foreign policy of our government.

Enclosed Statement by the Federal Reserve Board, 27 November 1916

The Federal Reserve Board today made public the following statement relating to foreign credits, which is to appear in the next issue of the Federal Reserve Bulletin:

In view of the contradictory reports which have appeared in the press regarding its attitude toward the purchasing by banks in this country of Treasury bills of foreign governments, the Board deems it a duty to define its position clearly. In making this statement the Board desires to disclaim any intention of discussing the finances or of reflecting upon the financial stability of any nation, but wishes it understood that it seeks to deal only with general principles which affect all alike.

The Board does not share the view frequently expressed of late, that further importations of large amounts of gold must of necessity prove a source of danger or disturbance to this country. That danger, the Board believes, will arise only in case the inflowing gold should remain uncontrolled and be permitted to become the basis of undesirable loan expansion and of inflation. There are means, however, of controlling accessions of gold by proper and voluntary cooperation of the banks or if need be by legislative enactment. An important step in this direction would be the anticipation of the final transfer of reserves contemplated by the Federal Reserve Act to become effective on November 16, 1917. This date could be advanced to February or March 1917. Member banks would then be placed on the permanent basis of their reserve requirements and fictitious reserves would then disappear and the banks have a clearer conception of actual reserve and financial conditions. It will then appear that while a large increase in the country's gold holdings has taken place the expansion of loans and deposits has been such that there will not remain any excess of reserves, apart from the important reserve loaning power of the Federal Reserve Board.

In these circumstances the Board feels that member banks should pursue a policy of keeping themselves liquid; of not loaning down to the legal limit, but

of maintaining an excess of reserves—not with reserve agents, where their balances are loaned out and constitute no actual reserve, but in their own vaults or preferably with their Federal Reserve Banks. The Board believes that at this time banks should proceed with much caution in locking up their funds in long-term obligations or in investments, which are short term in form but which, either by contract or through force of circumstances, may in the aggregate have to be renewed until normal conditions return. The Board does not undertake to forecast probabilities or to specify circumstances which may become important factors in determining future conditions. Its concern and responsibility lie primarily with the banking situation. If, however, our banking institutions have to intervene because foreign securities are offered faster than they can be absorbed by investors—that is, their depositors—an element would be introduced into the situation which, if not kept under control, would tend toward instability, and ultimate injury to the economic development of the country. The natural absorbing power of the investment market supplies an important regulator of the volume of our sales to foreign countries in excess of the goods that they send us. The form which the most recent borrowing is taking, apart from (2242) reference to its intrinsic merits, makes it appear particularly attractive as a banking investment. The Board, as a matter of fact, understands that it is expected to place it primarily with banks. In fact it would appear so attractive that unless a broader and national point of view be adopted, individual banks might easily be tempted to invest in it to such an extent that the banking resources of this country employed in this manner might run into many hundreds of millions of dollars. While the loans may be short in form, and severally may be collected at maturity, the object of the borrower must be to attempt to renew them collectively, with the result that the aggregate amount placed here will remain until such time as it may be advantageously converted into a long-term obligation. It would, therefore, seem as a consequence that liquid funds of our banks, which should be available for short-credit facilities to our merchants, manufacturers and farmers, would be exposed to the danger of being absorbed for other purposes to a disproportionate degree, especially in view of the fact that many of our banks and trust companies are already carrying substantial amounts of foreign obligations, and of acceptances which they are under agreement to renew. The Board deems it therefore its duty to caution the member banks that it does not regard it in the interest of the country at this time that they invest in foreign Treasury bills of this character.

The Board does not consider that it is called upon to advise private investors but as the United States is fast becoming the banker of foreign countries in all parts of the world, it takes occasion to suggest that the investor should receive full and authoritative data—particularly in the case of unsecured loans—in

order that he may judge the future intelligently in the light of present conditions and in conjunction with the economic developments of the past.

The United States has now attained a position of wealth and of international financial power, which, in the natural course of events, it could not have reached for a generation. We must be careful not to impair this position of strength and independence. While it is true that a slowing down in the process of credit extension may mean some curtailment of our abnormally stimulated export trade to certain countries we need not fear that our business will fall off precipitately should we become more conservative in the manner of investing in loans, because there are still hundreds of millions of our own and foreign securities held abroad which our investors would be glad to take over, and moreover trade can be stimulated in other directions.

In the opinion of the Board, it is the duty of our banks to remain liquid in order that they may be able to continue to respond to our home requirements, the nature and scope of which none can foresee, and in order that our present economic and financial strength may be maintained when at the end of the war we shall wish to do our full share in the work of international reconstruction and development which will then lie ahead of us, and when a clearer understanding of economic conditions as they will then exist, will enable this country more safely and intelligently to do its proper part in the financial rehabilitation of the world.

Source

Arthur S. Link, ed., *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, Vol. 40 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982), 77–80.

About The Documents

Although both official in nature, the two documents included here are otherwise very different in kind. The first was a confidential memorandum written by the brilliant and unorthodox young Treasury official John Maynard Keynes, one of the most influential economists of the twentieth century, in response to a Foreign Office request for an assessment of Britain's commercial and financial dependence on the United States. Keynes bluntly and rather grimly concluded that British indebtedness to the United States and its dependence on that country for war supplies meant that before long "the American executive and the American public will be in a position to dictate to this country on matters that affect us more nearly than them." On behalf of the Treasury, he therefore recommended that British policies toward the United

States “should be so directed as not only to avoid any form of reprisal or active irritation but also to conciliate and to please.” Keynes was a prominent member of the Bloomsbury Group, the rarefied circle of upper-middle-class intellectuals that included the novelist Virginia Woolf and her husband Leonard, Fabian socialist and editor of *The New Statesman and Nation*; the writer Lytton Strachey; and the painters Virginia Bell and Duncan Grant. Almost all its members were pacifist in sympathy, as was Keynes himself. The historian (2243)

Niall Ferguson, who generally thinks rather poorly of Keynes’s intellectual abilities, has suggested that in an effort to persuade influential figures within the British government to consider a negotiated peace settlement, Keynes deliberately exaggerated both the economic pressure the United States might be likely to exert upon the Allies and the gravity of the financial crisis that occurred soon afterward in late 1916. Wilson would not, Ferguson argues, as does Hew Strachan, have been likely to jeopardize American prosperity by cutting off U.S. finance for the war trade, which had to date been so advantageous to the United States.

The evidence of the president’s own actions, however, as demonstrated by the second document, suggests otherwise. Ferguson perhaps underestimates the priority Wilson gave at this stage of the conflict to averting the possibility that the United States would be drawn into war with Germany. Given a suitable occasion, in November 1916 Wilson eagerly seized the first available opportunity to subject the Allied Powers to financial pressure. Most public statements by official bodies such as the Federal Reserve Board are drafted by more than one hand, but few are the cases in which the president himself suggests refinements. Despite its rather cool and technical language, the Federal Reserve statement was of enormous significance to the Allies’ ability to continue to raise large amounts of financing in the United States, and its authors recognized this. It was quite deliberately written to discourage all further American investment, institutional or individual, in Allied securities, in the full knowledge that it would be closely scrutinized by everyone who took an interest in the financial markets, and it had the desired effects. Moreover, regardless of the consequences to the American economy, in the following weeks Wilson showed no sign of relenting or of easing the new financial constraints to which the Allies were now subject. Just reelected, he had a far freer hand to instigate measures that might in the short run be economically detrimental to his country than had been the case immediately before a close election. Ultimately, it was German intransigence, not any weakening on

Woodrow Wilson's part, that undercut the president's ability to steer his country away from the shoals of war.

Further Reading

Burk, Kathleen. *Britain, America and the Sinews of War, 1914–1918*. Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1985.

Cooper, John Milton, Jr. "The Command of Gold Reversed: American Loans to Britain, 1915–1917." *Pacific Historical Review* 45:2 (May 1976), 209–230.

Ferguson, Niall. *The Pity of War*. London: Allen Lane, 1998.

Horn, Martin. *Britain, France, and the Financing of the First World War*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002.

Keynes, John Maynard. *The Collected Writings of John Maynard Keynes*, Vol. 16, *Activities, 1914–1919: The Treasury and Versailles*, ed. Elizabeth Johnson. London: Macmillan, 1971.

Moggridge, D. E. *Maynard Keynes: An Economist's Biography*. London: Routledge, 1992.

Neilson, Keith. *Strategy and Supply: The Anglo-Russian Alliance, 1914–17*. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1984.

Roberts, Priscilla. "'Quis Custodiet Ipsos Custodes?' The Federal Reserve System's Founding Fathers and Allied Finances in the First World War." *Business History Review* 72(4) (Winter 1998): 585–620.

Skidelsky, Robert. *John Maynard Keynes*. 3 vols. London: Macmillan, 1983–2001.

Strachan, Hew. *The First World War*, Vol. 1, *To Arms*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

(2444)

MLA

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "24. The British Financial Crisis, November–December 1916." *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*, ABC-

CLIO, 2005, pp. . *ABC-CLIO eBook Collection*, legacy.abc-clio.com/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2160.

Chicago Manual of Style

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "24. The British Financial Crisis, November–December 1916." In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005. <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2160>.

APA

Roberts, P. M., S. C. Tucker (2005). 24. The British Financial Crisis, November–December 1916. In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia* (pp.). Retrieved from <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2160>

(2245)

This page intentionally left blank

SECTION FOUR

THE POLITICAL IMPACT OF WAR AND THE HOME FRONTS

[Section Four: The Political Impact of War and the Home Fronts](#)

[25. Progressive and Left-Wing Forces Rally to Their Own Governments](#) pp. 352-368

[26. German War Aims, 1915](#) pp. 369-384

[27. The Eastern Front](#) pp. 385-395

[28. War Finance](#) pp. 396-410

[29. The British Home Front](#) pp. 411-423

[30. The Growth of Statism](#) pp. 424-444

[31. Superpatriotism and 100 Percent Americanism on the U.S. Home Front](#) pp. 445-457

[32. Wartime Demands for Greater Democracy](#) pp. 458-470

[33. Demands for Postwar Social Justice](#) pp. 471-487

[34. African Americans and the Great War](#) pp. 488-509

[35. Women and War](#) pp. 510-528

Essay 25.

Progressive and Left-Wing Forces Rally to Their Own Governments

The Prewar Left and World War I

From the mid-nineteenth century until 1914, the parties of the left—socialist, labor, progressive, or liberal—had burgeoned throughout Europe. Most espoused greater political democracy; trade union rights; social legislation including pensions, unemployment benefits, and the regulation of wages and working conditions designed to protect labor, free education, and health care for all; and the redistribution of wealth through taxation of large incomes. At least in theory the majority of the left also opposed imperialism and militarism, which they often characterized as the products of unbridled industrialism; supported disarmament; and attacked war as the product of capitalist-driven competition for colonies, commerce, and investment. To oppose the excesses of international capitalism, the European left likewise resorted to transnational cooperation. The Second Socialist International, founded at Paris in 1889, included representatives of the socialist and labor parties of all the major European countries, both revolutionary Marxists who believed in the need to overthrow the existing system and create a new one (2246) and gradualist reformists who believed in incremental progress toward socialism. All sought to form a united front to advance the interests of labor and the working class as a whole. German Social Democrats, drawn from what was perhaps the most radical parliamentary party in Europe, predominated in the organization. Its adherents believed that by joining together, the international working class could prevent the outbreak of future wars by refusing to fight or work to support any such conflicts, rejecting nationalism and embracing international class solidarity.

The outbreak of European war soon proved that most of these hopes were illusory. The broad support of labor and the left for the war reflected the fact that few prewar socialists had been outright pacifists. Most believed in arbitration and the better management of foreign policy but were prepared, albeit somewhat reluctantly, to accept and endorse war in certain circumstances. As military conscription and industrial mobilization became ever more extensive, most labor leaders perceived the war primarily as an opportunity to win improved pay and benefits for the working class, demands they presented as the just reward working men deserved for their patriotic endeavors on behalf of their country. In every European country, patriotism

trumped class interests, as the great majority of politicians and others rallied around their national governments, while the working class supported the war effort, either as conscripts or as industrial workers. French, British, German, Austrian, and Russian socialists and workers overall had little appetite for opposing their own governments in ways that might give aid and comfort to enemy nations when, for the most part, they shared the general popular dislike of their own country's opponents.

In Germany a *Burgfrieden*, or political truce, was proclaimed on 4 August 1914. The uniformed Kaiser Wilhelm II addressed the German Reichstag; outlined Germany's reasons for going to war, stressing the need to defend the country's economic and political position; and called upon all his listeners to eschew party loyalties for the duration of the war, stating that he now "recognize[d] no parties, but only Germans." This provoked a wild orgy of handshaking and patriotic enthusiasm among the assembled politicians, and later in the day the radical Social Democrats—with one exception, the revolutionary Karl Liebknecht—voted with the rest to authorize the war credits the government had requested to finance military spending on the conflict. The same day Raymond Poincaré, the French president, appealed to an enthusiastic French chamber of deputies for a *union sacrée* of all political parties in support of the war, and again all the socialists voted in favor of war credits. Four days earlier an extremist nationalist had already shot dead a likely opponent of war credits and France's most pacifist socialist leader, Auguste Jaurès, depriving antiwar elements in his party of their most effective spokesman. Labor leaders and socialists all rallied behind the government. In the Russian Duma, convened for the first time in several years, similar declarations of loyalty to the nation at war were made by representatives of all parties except those of the far left. Everywhere, national unity became the watchword. Several antiwar British Liberal politicians resigned from the cabinet of Prime Minister Herbert Asquith over the decision to intervene. But Asquith's only potential heavyweight opponent, the eloquent, charismatic Chancellor of the Exchequer David Lloyd George, despite his earlier criticism of the Boer War and radical reputation, decided to support the war effort. The majority of Labour Party members decided to do likewise, and for the most part those British politicians opposed to the war, such as J. Ramsay MacDonald, who resigned the chairmanship of the Labour Party and gravitated to the more pacifist Independent Labour Party (ILP), simply chose not to accept government office. Although ILP and Liberal Party members who favored peace as soon as possible came together in November 1914 to establish the Union for Democratic Control, favoring open diplomacy, national self-determination,

disarmament, and greater parliamentary control of foreign policy, their program implicitly accepted the British commitment to the existing war.

In every belligerent country, moreover, governments assumed sweeping powers to suppress and punish dissent and could use censorship to silence public opposition to the war. Wartime government repression offered harsh punishment to those who dissented from the war, and censorship soon silenced the voices of conscientious objectors, such as the British philosopher Bertrand Russell, and left-wing critics of the war, such as the Polish-German socialist Rosa Luxemburg. Waves of intolerant patriotic fervor swept all the belligerents, and only small minorities of radical socialists (2247) or labor leaders dissented from the general commitment to war.

German Social-Democracy and the War: Report in *Vorwärts*, 4 August 1914

In today's session of the Reichstag the Social-Democratic "Fraktion" [political grouping] voted the war credits demanded by the Government. At the same time it outlined its position as follows:

We are face to face with destiny. The result of the imperialistic policy which introduced an era of competitive preparation for war and roused the antagonistic elements in the different nations is breaking over Europe like a tidal wave. The responsibility for this disaster rests upon the supporters of the imperialistic policy which we reject.

Social-Democracy has always done all in its power to fight this disastrous development, and up to the last moment has worked for the maintenance of peace by strong demonstrations in all countries, especially in close co-operation with our French comrades. Its efforts have been in vain.

Now we face the inexorable fact of war. We are threatened by the horror of hostile invasion. Today it is not for us to decide for or against war but to consider the means necessary for the defense of our country.

We must now think of the millions of fellow-countrymen who are drawn into this disaster without any fault of their own. It is they who suffer most from the horrors of war. Our warmest wishes go with all those, irrespective of party, who have been called to arms.

But we are thinking also of the mothers who must give up their sons, of the women and children who are deprived of the husband and father who supported

them. For them the fear for their loved ones is mingled with the dread of need and of actual hunger. And this army of women and children will soon be joined by tens of thousands of wounded and crippled soldiers.

To help all of them, to lighten their lot, to ease their suffering, this we consider our urgent duty.

Everything is at stake for our nation and its development toward liberty in the future if Russian despotism stained with the best blood of its own people should be victorious.

It is our duty to ward off this danger, to protect the civilization [*Kultur*] and independence of our own country. Thus we carry out what we have always emphasized: In the hour of danger we shall not desert the Fatherland. In saying this we feel ourselves in accord with the International which has always recognized the right of every nation to national independence and self-defense, just as we agree with it in condemning any war of aggression or conquest.

We hope that the cruel experience of suffering in this war will awaken in many millions of people the abhorrence of war and will win them for the ideals of socialism and world peace.

We demand that as soon as the aim of security has been achieved and our opponents are disposed to make peace this war shall be brought to an end by a treaty of peace which makes friendship possible with our neighbors. We ask this not only in the interest of national solidarity for which we have always contended but also in the interest of the German people.

With these principles in mind we vote the desired war credits.

Source

Ralph Haswell Lutz, ed., *Fall of the German Empire, 1914–1918*, 2 vols. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1932), 2:6–7.

Support in the Duma for Tsar Nicholas II, 8 August 1914

(i) Speech in the Duma by Mikhail Rodzianko, 8 August 1914

The Emperor has deigned, in this difficult hour through which our fatherland is passing, to convoke the State Duma, for the sake of a union of the Russian Tsar with his loyal people. The State Duma has already answered the Sovereign's

call at today's reception by His Majesty. We all know that Russia did not desire war, and that the Russian people has no idea of conquest, but fate itself has seen fit to drag us into the fight. The lot is cast, and we are confronted by the gigantic problem of defending the integrity and unity of the State.

In this rapid whirl of events, unprecedented in the history of the world, it is a comfort to see the majestic and dignified calm which has taken possession of all of us, without exception, and which emphasizes before the whole world, most strikingly and without any superfluous words the might and greatness of the Russian spirit. (Stormy applause. Cries of "Bravo!" and "Hurrah!" on (2248) all benches.) Calmly and without blustering we may say to our attackers: "Hands off!" (Applause and cries of "Hurrah! throughout the Duma.) Don't dare to touch our holy Russia! Our people is peace-loving and good, but terrible and powerful when forced to protect itself." (Stormy applause.) "Look at us," we might say to them. "You thought we were divided by strife and hatred, and yet all the nationalities living in Russia were welded into a single fraternal family when danger threatened our common fatherland." (Applause on all benches.) Nor will the Russian giant hang his head in discouragement, no matter what trials he may have to undergo. His powerful shoulders will bear everything and, after repulsing the enemy, our common, inseparable native land will again shine forth in peace, prosperity, and happiness in the full glory of its indestructible greatness. (Continued applause.)

Gentlemen, Members of the State Duma! At this hour our thoughts and wishes are on our frontiers, where our gallant army, our glorious navy go into action unflinchingly. (Applause on all benches.) Our thoughts are with our sons and brothers where they personify the greatness of our country with their inherent bravery. May the Supreme Lord aid them, strengthen and protect them. Our fervent wishes for success and glory will always be with them, our heroes. We, who remain at home, will assume the obligation to work unceasingly in caring for the families left without providers, and may they know, in our army, that not merely in word, but in deed we will see to it that they suffer no acute distress. (Stormy and continuous applause; cries of "Bravo!" The Deputies rise; there are calls for the national hymn, which is sung, accompanied by shouts of "Hurrah!")

(ii) Speech of Aleksandr Kerensky, Representative of the Labor Group, in the Duma, 8 August 1914

A sore trial has been visited upon our native land and great sorrow has overwhelmed the whole country! Thousands upon thousands of youthful lives

are doomed to inhuman sufferings, and poverty and hunger are about to ruin the welfare of the bereaved families of the toiling masses.

We are unshakably convinced that the great, irresistible power of the Russian democracy, with all the other forces, will offer determined resistance to the attacks of the enemy (Applause on the left, center, and right), and will defend the native land and culture, created in the sweat and blood of generations! We believe that on the fields of battle, in great sufferings, the brotherhood of all the nationalities of Russia will be consolidated (Applause on the left, center and right), and that there will be born a single will to free the country from its terrible internal shackles.

The culpability of the Governments of all the European countries which, in the interests of the ruling classes, drove their peoples to this fratricidal war is unforgivable. The Socialists of all belligerent countries—France, England, Belgium, and Germany—tried to protest against the war that has now broken out. Only we, the Russian democracy, were prevented, even in the last terrible hour, from lifting our voice betimes against the approaching war. But, believing firmly in the unity of the laboring classes of all countries, we send our fraternal greetings to those who did protest against this fratricidal slaughter among the nations, while it was being prepared.

Citizens of Russia! Remember that you have no enemies among the laboring classes of the belligerent countries. While defending to the last everything that is our own, against attempted seizures by the Governments of Germany and Austria, which are hostile to us, remember that this frightful war would not have come had the great ideals of democracy, liberty, equality, and fraternity inspired the activity of Russia's rulers and the Governments of all other countries.

Unfortunately our Government, even at this dreadful hour, has no desire to forget internal strife. It denies amnesty to those who are fighting for the freedom and the happiness of our country, and it does not seek reconciliation with the non-Russian nationalities, who have forgiven everything and are, with us, fighting enthusiastically for our common fatherland. And, instead of ameliorating the condition of the laboring classes of the nation, it imposes upon these very classes the main weight of war expenditures, increasing the burdens of indirect taxation.

You, peasants and workers, all you who desire the happiness and welfare of Russia, strengthen your spirit in these sore trials, gather all your forces, and then, having defended our country, set it free. To you, our brothers, who are

shedding their blood for our native land, (2249) our humble homage and fraternal greetings. (Applause on the left, center, and some seats on the right.)

(iii) Speech of Pavel Miliukov in the Duma, 8 August 1914

The Faction of Popular Freedom has repeatedly spoken in the Duma on the problems touched upon by the first two speakers on this platform. Its opinions on these problems are generally known, and, of course, cannot be altered by extraneous circumstances. When the time comes, the Faction will again speak of these problems and again point out the only possible road toward Russia's regeneration. It trusts that in passing through the sore trials which confront us the country may come nearer to its cherished aim.

At this moment, however, we have all been deeply impressed by other matters. Another problem, terrible and awful, stands before us and imperatively demands immediate solution. We must concentrate all our forces upon defending the country from a foreign foe, who is bent on pushing us aside, on his way towards world dominion. Our cause is a righteous cause. We fight for the freedom of our native land from foreign invasion, for the freedom of Europe and Slavdom from German domination (*Voices on the left*: "Bravo!"), and the freedom of the whole world from the unendurable yoke of constantly growing armaments, ruinous to peaceful labor (*Voices on the left*: "Bravo!"), causing more and more armed conflicts.

In this struggle we are all as one; we present no conditions or demands, we simply throw upon the scales of battle our firm determination to overcome the violator. (Applause on all benches. *Cries*: "Bravo!") This is why the Central Committee of our party, guided by these considerations, has addressed itself to its followers, in these words, which the Faction whole-heartedly approves, and which we consider our duty to proclaim from this high tribune:

At this difficult moment, when the foreign enemy is at the gate, when our brothers have gone forth to meet him, when Russian blood is ready to be shed for the salvation of our country, and when those who remain behind are called upon, in the very nature of things, to make great sacrifices, both spiritual and material, the leaders of the Faction of Popular Freedom express their firm conviction that their political friends and followers, wherever they may be found and in whatever condition the war may overtake them, will fulfill their

duty to the very end as Russian citizens in the impending struggle. Whatever our attitude towards the internal policies of the Government may be, our first duty remains to preserve our country, one and inseparable (Stormy applause in the center, on the right, and left), and to maintain for it that position in the ranks of the world powers which is being contested by our foes.

Let us, then, lay aside our internal quarrels, let us give no cause to the enemy for hope that discord may divide us (Stormy applause on the right, center, and left), and let us well remember that our first and only duty now is to support our soldiers with faith in the justice of our cause, to inspire them with a calm courage and confidence in the success of our arms. May the moral support of the whole country combine to give to our army all the effective strength of which it is capable. May our defenders not look behind in alarm, but go forward boldly, toward victory and a brighter future. (Stormy applause on the right, left, and center.)

(iv) Speech of Deputy Friedman in the Duma, 8 August 1914

The high honor of expressing those sentiments which inspire the Jewish people at the present historical moment has fallen to me. In this grand enthusiasm which has aroused all the tribes and nationalities of great Russia, the Jews march on the battlefield, shoulder to shoulder with all the other nationalities. We, the Jews, have lived, and continue to live, under exceptionally harsh legal conditions. Nevertheless, we have always felt ourselves to be citizens of Russia, have always been loyal sons of our fatherland. No power whatsoever can tear us from our native Russia, from the soil to which we are bound by ties, centuries old. In defending our country against foreign invasion, we act not only from a sense of duty, but also from a sense of profound attachment. In this hour of trial, following the call that has come from the heights of the throne, we, Russian Jews, will, as one man, take our stand under the banners of Russia, and devote all our strength to the repulsion of the enemy. The Jewish people will do their duty to the last. (Tumultuous applause of the entire Duma.)

Source

Frank Alfred Golder, *Documents of Russian History, 1914–1917* (New York: Century, 1927), 32–36.

(2250)

David Lloyd George, “Through Terror to Triumph,” Speech on the War, Delivered at the Queen’s Hall, London, 19 September 1914

There is no man who has always regarded the prospect of engaging in a great war with greater reluctance and with greater repugnance than I have done throughout the whole of my political life. There is no man more convinced that we could not have avoided it without national dishonour. I am fully alive to the fact that every nation who has ever engaged in any war has always invoked the sacred name of honour. Many a crime has been committed in its name; there are some being committed now. All the same, national honour is a reality, and any nation that disregards it is doomed. Why is our honour as a country involved in this war? Because, in the first instance, we are bound by honourable obligations to defend the independence, the liberty, the integrity of a small neighbour who has always lived peaceably. She could not have compelled us; she was weak; but the man who declines to discharge his duty because his creditor is too poor to enforce it is a blackguard. We entered into a treaty—a solemn treaty—two treaties—to defend Belgium and her integrity. Our signatures are attached to the documents. Our signatures do not stand alone there; this country was not the only country that undertook to defend the integrity of Belgium. Russia, France, Austria, Prussia—they are all there. Why are Austria and Prussia not performing the obligations of their bond? . . .

It is the interest of Prussia to-day to break the treaty, and she has done it. She avows it with cynical contempt for every principle of justice. She says: “Treaties only bind you when it is your interest to keep them.” “What is a treaty?” says the German Chancellor? “A scrap of paper.” . . .

Treaties are the currency of international statesmanship. . . . This doctrine of the scrap of paper, this doctrine which is proclaimed by Bernhardt, that treaties only bind a nation as long as it is to its interest, goes under the root of all public law. It is the straight road to barbarism. It is as if you were to revoke the Magnetic Pole because it was in the way of a German cruiser. The whole navigation of the seas would become dangerous, difficult and impossible; and the whole machinery of civilisation will break down if this doctrine wins in this war. We are fighting against barbarism, and there is only one way of putting it right. If there are nations that say they will only respect treaties when it is in their interest to do so, we must make it to their interest to do for the future. . . .

But Belgium is not the only little nation that has been attacked in this war, and I make no excuse for referring to the case of the other little nation, the case of Serbia. The history of Serbia is not unblotted. Whose history, in the category of nations, is unblotted? The first nation that is without sin, let her cast a stone at Serbia. She was a nation trained in a horrible school, but she won her freedom with a tenacious valour, and she has maintained it by the same courage. If any Serbians were mixed up in the assassination of the Grand Duke, they ought to

be punished. Serbia admits that. The Serbian Government had nothing to do with it. Not even Austria claims that. The Serbian Prime Minister is one of the most capable and honoured men in Europe. Serbia was willing to punish any one of her subjects who had been proved to have any complicity in that assassination. What more could you expect?

What were the Austrian demands? Serbia sympathised with her fellow-countrymen in Bosnia—that was one of her crimes. She must do so no more. Her newspapers were saying nasty things about Austria; they must do so no longer. . . .

But that was not enough. She must dismiss from her army the officers whom Austria should subsequently name—those officers who had just emerged from a war where they had added lustre to the Serbian arms. They were gallant, brave and efficient. I wonder whether it was their guilt or their efficiency that prompted Austria's action! But, mark you, the officers were not named; Serbia was to undertake in advance to dismiss them from the army, the names to be sent in subsequently. Can you name a country in the world that would have stood that? . . .

Then came Russia's turn. Russia has a special regard for Serbia; she has a special interest in Serbia. Russians have shed their blood for Serbian independence many a time, for Serbia is a member of Russia's family, and she cannot see Serbia maltreated. Austria knew that. Germany knew it, and she turned round to Russia and said: "I insist that you shall stand by with your arms folded whilst Austria is strangling your little brother to death." What answer did the Russian Slav (2251) give? He gave the only answer that becomes a man. He turned to Austria and said: "You lay hands on that little fellow, and I will tear your ramshackle Empire limb from limb." And he will do it!

That is the story of two little nations. The world owes much to little nations—and to little men! . . . [I]f we had stood by when two little nations were being crushed and broken by the brutal hands of barbarism, our shame would have rung down the everlasting ages.

But Germany insists that this is an attack by a lower civilisation upon a higher one. As a matter of fact, the attack was begun by the civilisation which calls itself the higher one. I am no apologist for Russia: she has perpetrated deeds of which I have no doubt her best sons are ashamed. Which Empire has not? But Germany is the last Empire to point the finger of reproach at Russia. Russia has made sacrifices for freedom—great sacrifices. . . . Can you name a single country in the world for the freedom of which modern Prussia has ever

sacrificed a single life? By the test of our faith, the highest standard of civilisation is the readiness to sacrifice for others.

I will not say a single word in disparagement of the German people. They are a great people, and have great qualities of head and hand and heart. I believe, in spite of recent events, that there is as great a store of kindliness in the German peasant as in any peasant in the world; but he has been drilled into a false idea of civilisation. It is efficient, it is capable; but it is a hard civilisation; it is a selfish civilisation; it is a material civilisation. They cannot comprehend the action of Britain at the present moment; they say so. They say, "France we can understand; she is out for vengeance; she is out for territory—Alsace and Lorraine." They say they can understand Russia—she is fighting for mastery—she wants Galicia. They can understand you fighting for greed of territory; but they cannot understand a great Empire pledging its resources, pledging its might, pledging the lives of its children, pledging its very existence, to protect a little nation that seeks to defend herself. God made man in His own image, high of purpose, in the region of the spirit; German civilisation would re-create him in the image of a Diesel machine—precise, accurate, powerful, but with no room for soul to operate. . . .

Have you read the Kaiser's speeches? If you have not a copy I advise you to buy one; they will soon be out of print, and you will not have many more of the same sort. They are full of the glitter and bluster of German militarism—"mailed fist" and "shining armour." . . .

Lunacy is always distressing, but sometimes it is dangerous; and when you get it manifested in the head of the State, and it has become the policy of a great Empire, it is about time that it should be ruthlessly put away. I do not believe he meant all those speeches; it was simply the martial straddle he had acquired. But there were men around him who meant every word of them. This was their religion. Treaties? They tangle the feet of Germany in her advance. Cut them with the sword! Little nations? They hinder the advance of Germany. Trample them in the mire under the German heel! The Russian Slav? He challenges the supremacy of Germany and Europe. Hurl your legions at him and massacre him! Britain? She is a constant menace to the predominancy of Germany in the world. Wrest the trident out of her hand! Christianity? Sickly sentimentalism about sacrifice for others! Poor pap for German digestion! We will have a new diet. We will force it upon the world. It will be made in Germany—a diet of blood and iron. What remains? Treaties have gone. The honour of nations has gone. Liberty has gone. What is left? Germany! Germany is left!—"Deutschland über Alles!"

This is what we are fighting—that claim to predominancy of a material, hard civilisation, a civilisation which if it once rules and sways the world, liberty goes, democracy vanishes. And unless Britain and her sons come to the rescue it will be a dark day for humanity.

We are not fighting the German people. The German people are under the heel of this military caste, and it will be a day of rejoicing for the German peasant, artisan, and trader when the military caste is broken. You know its pretensions. They give themselves the airs of demigods. They walk the pavements, and civilians and their wives are swept into the gutter; they have no right to stand in the way of a great Prussian soldier. Men, women, nations—they all have to go. He thinks all he has to say is “We are in a hurry.” That is the answer he gave to Belgium—“Rapidity of action is Germany’s greatest asset,” which means “I am in a hurry; clear out of my way.” You know the type of motorist, the terror of the roads, with a 60 horse-power car, who thinks the roads are made for him, and knocks down anybody who impedes the action of his car by a (2252) single mile an hour. The Prussian Junker is the road-hog of Europe. Small nationalities in his way are hurled to the roadside, bleeding and broken. Women and children are crushed under the wheels of his cruel car, and Britain is ordered out of his road. All I can say is this: if the old British spirit is alive in British hearts, that bully will be torn from his seat. Were he to win, it would be the greatest catastrophe that has befallen democracy since the day of the Holy Alliance and its ascendancy.

. . . It has pleased them to believe and to preach the belief that we are a decadent and degenerate people. They proclaim to the world through their professors that we are a non-heroic nation skulking behind our mahogany counters, while we egg on more gallant races to their destruction. This is the description given of us in Germany—“a timorous, craven nation, trusting to its Fleet.” I think they are beginning to find their mistake out already—and there are half a million young men of Britain who have already registered a vow to their King that they will cross the seas and hurl that insult to British courage against its perpetrators on the battlefields of France and Germany. We want half a million more; and we shall get them.

I envy you young people your opportunity. They have put up the age limit for the Army, but I am sorry to say I have marched a good many years even beyond that. It is a great opportunity, an opportunity that only comes once in many centuries to the children of men. For most generations sacrifice comes in drabness and weariness of spirit. It comes to you to-day, and it comes to-day to us all, in the form of the glow and thrill of a great movement for liberty, that impels millions throughout Europe to the same noble end. It is a great war for

the emancipation of Europe from the thralldom of a military caste which has thrown its shadows upon two generations of men, and is now plunging the world into a welter of bloodshed and death. Some have already given their lives. There are some who have given more than their own lives; they have given the lives of those who are dear to them. I honour their courage, and may God be their comfort and their strength. But their reward is at hand; those who have fallen have died consecrated deaths. They have taken their part in the making of a new Europe—a new world. I can see signs of its coming in the glare of the battlefield.

The people will gain more by this struggle in all lands than they comprehend at the present moment. It is true that they will be free of the greatest menace to their freedom. That is not all. There is something infinitely greater and more enduring which is emerging already out of this great conflict—a new patriotism, richer, nobler, and more exalted than the old. I see amongst all classes, high and low, shedding themselves of selfishness, a new recognition that the honour of the country does not depend merely on the maintenance of its glory in the stricken field, but also in protecting its homes from distress. It is bringing a new outlook for all classes. The great flood of luxury and sloth which had submerged the land is receding, and a new Britain is appearing. We can see for the first time the fundamental things that matter in life, and that have been obscured from our vision by the tropical growth of prosperity.

. . . We have been too comfortable and too indulgent, many, perhaps, too selfish, and the stern hand of fate has scourged us to an elevation where we can see the everlasting things that matter for a nation—the great peaks we had forgotten, of Honour, Duty, Patriotism, and, clad in glittering white, the towering pinnacle of Sacrifice pointing like a rugged finger to Heaven. We shall descend into the valleys again; but as long as the men and women of this generation last, they will carry in their hearts the image of those mighty peaks whose foundations are not shaken, though Europe rock and sway in the convulsions of a great war.

Source

David Lloyd George, *The Great Crusade: Extracts from Speeches Delivered during the War* (New York: George H. Doran, 1918), 273–289.

David Lloyd George (1863–1945)

Lloyd George, a Welsh solicitor, won election to Parliament as a Liberal in 1890 and quickly became one of the leaders of his party's influential radical

wing, gaining a reputation as an opponent of privilege. A staunch opponent of the Boer War, in 1908 he became chancellor of the exchequer, responsible for imposing controversial income tax increases on the wealthy to fund naval armaments spending and domestic social welfare programs, including old age pensions and unemployment insurance. Lloyd George initially opposed British (2253) intervention in the war but switched to favoring it after the German invasion of Belgium. After a shortage of artillery shells in spring 1915 brought about government reorganization, resulting in a coalition that included various leading Conservatives, Lloyd George became a dynamic minister of munitions, vigorously introducing measures to maximize British industrial production and at the same time improving working conditions and wages for employees. In June 1916 he was appointed secretary of war, and the following December he replaced Liberal Prime Minister Herbert Asquith, a move that split the Liberal Party and left Lloyd George heading a coalition government dependent on Conservative support. He remained prime minister until 1922, seeing the war to a victorious conclusion and leading the British delegation at the subsequent Paris Peace Conference. A self-made man and political opportunist of great ability, energy, and drive, Lloyd George, distrusted by many, was a transitional figure whose machinations facilitated the downfall of the Liberals as one of Britain's two leading political parties, a role Labour inherited in the aftermath of World War I.

About The Documents

The three documents here are all transcripts of the text of public political speeches, setting forth the position on the war of leading left-wing or progressive figures in three different countries: Germany, Russia, and Great Britain. In all cases, speakers who had once opposed war now decided to support their national war effort. Almost all, however, expressed their sympathy with the working class and ordinary people of the countries whom they were fighting, blaming the war on reactionary and conservative leadership elites.

Though soon subject to censorship, the German Social Democratic journal *Vorwärts* retained a considerable degree of independence throughout the war. On 4 August 1914 it published a special edition describing events in the German Reichstag, or parliamentary assembly. The official attitude of German Social Democrats was that although they might have reservations over the outbreak of war and blamed it on their country's mistaken policies in the past, they also felt obliged to demonstrate their support for the war by voting for war credits and underlining their loyalty to their country. They nonetheless

expressed their hope that in return for fighting and perhaps dying for their country, soldiers and their families would receive additional welfare benefits.

The Russian Tsar Nicholas II had never been particularly popular, but, as often happens, the outbreak of war temporarily boosted his standing. Due to the national crisis, he summoned the Russian Duma, where all liberals except those on the extreme left expressed their support for the war. Most socialists argued that even though Russia would not have found itself at war had it been a democracy, the people of Russia were now in danger from Germany, whose victory would mean their exploitation, and must therefore be defended. The most outspoken politician was Aleksandr Kerensky, a Socialist from the Labor Group, who expressed his regret that the tsar had not granted amnesty to dissenters and that the working class would suffer a heavy burden of indirect taxation. He also hoped that the war would bring sweeping social change within Russia. Rather less radical were the speeches of Mikhail Rodzianko, a leader of the Octobrist Party and a member of the Progressive Bloc, who was at that time president of the State Duma; Pavel Miliukov, another Progressive who was a founder-member of the Constitutional Democratic Party (Cadets); and an unnamed Jewish deputy. These proclaimed “the righteous cause” of “Holy Russia” and stated that whatever their differences with the government on internal policies, they would “lay aside our internal quarrels” and fight to the end in defense of their country. The Jewish deputy, speaking in a country notorious for its anti-Semitic pogroms, took the opportunity to stress his people’s loyalty to Russia, effectively staking a claim for their recognition as equal citizens with other Russians. All were laying down markers for the future, an ominous indication that, despite the immediate response to rally round the government against the common enemy, the tsarist regime might well soon find itself facing serious domestic criticism.

Lloyd George’s address was widely published in contemporary newspapers and later included in a volume of his most significant speeches published at the end of the war. Given his vehemently antiwar stance during the Boer War, he faced the problem of explaining to his long-time Liberal supporters his about-face (2254) on World War I and of presenting this as a principled rather than opportunistic stand. In a public address toward the end of September 1914, he expounded his position on the war in terms similar to those used by many other Allied liberals, progressives, and socialists. Lloyd George deliberately highlighted Britain’s obligation to protect Belgium’s integrity rather than emphasizing matters of national security and strategic interests. He carefully presented this in the context of the need to preserve and defend the entire structure of international law and treaty obligations, without which

international anarchy would soon ensue and as therefore forming part of Britain's duty as a civilized nation. Lloyd George also characterized Serbia as a small nation threatened by a larger international bully, Austria-Hungary. Many British liberals disliked autocratic Russia, Britain's wartime ally. Lloyd George argued, however, that Germany's behavior was far worse than that of Russia. Like all Lloyd George's addresses, this one displayed his rhetorical eloquence to the fullest, memorably describing "the Prussian Junker" as "the road-hog of Europe." His speech was also pervaded by the belief that war might bring beneficial domestic effects in terms of promoting patriotism, sacrifice, and national unity while eliminating "selfishness" and "luxury and sloth," an attitude common among all the belligerents in the early days of the Great War.

Further Reading

Berger, Stefan. *The British Labour Party and the German Social Democrats, 1900–1931*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.

Geifman, Anna, ed. *Russia under the Last Tsar: Opposition and Subversion, 1894–1917*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1999.

Gilbert, Bentley Brinkerhoff. *David Lloyd George: A Political Life*. 2 vols. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1987–1992.

Grigg, John. *From Peace to War: Lloyd George, 1912–1916*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985.

Hanna, Martha. *The Mobilization of Intellect: French Scholars and Writers during the Great War*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996.

Horne, John N. *Labour at War: France and Britain, 1914–1918*. Oxford, UK: Clarendon, 1991.

Joll, James. *The Second International, 1889–1914*. Rev ed. Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974.

Moyer, Laurence. *Victory Must Be Ours: Germany in the Great War, 1914–1918*. New York: Hippocrene, 1995.

Stockdale, Melissa Kirschke. *Paul Miliukov and the Quest for a Liberal Russia, 1880–1918*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996.

MLA

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "25. Progressive and Left-Wing Forces Rally to Their Own Governments." *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*, ABC-CLIO, 2005, pp. . *ABC-CLIO eBook Collection*, legacy.abc-clio.com/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2166.

Chicago Manual of Style

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "25. Progressive and Left-Wing Forces Rally to Their Own Governments." In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005. <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2166>.

APA

Roberts, P. M., S. C. Tucker (2005). 25. Progressive and Left-Wing Forces Rally to Their Own Governments. In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia* (pp.). Retrieved from <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2166>

Essay 26. German War Aims, 1915

German War Aims in World War I

One of the more controversial questions of World War I is whether Germany embarked on war in 1914 because, rightly or wrongly, it felt encircled and threatened by France and Russia or made a deliberate bid to enhance its territorial and economic position. In the 1960s the German historian Fritz Fischer generated enormous historical controversy when he argued in *Germany's Aims in the First World War* that in July 1914 German civilian leaders deliberately went to war in pursuit of a program of expansionism intended to ensure permanent German predominance in Europe and beyond. Prominent among the evidence he used to support this argument was a memorandum drafted by German Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg in September 1914, a few weeks after the war began. In this document, written when it still seemed plausible that German armies would succeed in knocking France out of the war in a matter of weeks, Bethmann Hollweg put forward an ambitious program of war aims that would have effectively ensured German hegemony in Europe and beyond. These included the cession to Germany of strategically and economically important French and Belgium territories, including the channel ports and major iron and coal deposits; the imposition of heavy war indemnities on both countries and their effective reduction to vassal states economically and politically dependent upon Germany; the inclusion of Luxemburg as a German federal state; the creation of a "central European economic association" extending as far as Poland, under effective German domination; the German acquisition of colonies of other European states, especially those in Central Africa; and a close association of Germany and Holland, which would effectively make the Dutch junior alliance partners of Germany. Written several weeks after the war began, the September Program did not prove that the chancellor had deliberately provoked war in order to achieve these aims, but it was certainly evidence that, when sweeping German successes in Western Europe appeared (2255) likely, he would not hesitate to make the most of any advantages Germany might be able to gain from these.

In practice, the German government refrained from committing itself publicly to any definite program of war aims, and for at least the first two years of fighting German war objectives tended to be modified according to the fortunes of war. Once war began, many liberal Germans fully supported their government and even gloried in the kaiser's early triumphs. Most Germans effectively rallied behind their government, and many liberals publicly expressed deep hurt that their country should be castigated internationally as

uncivilized over the behavior of German troops in Belgium or submarine attacks on merchant shipping. At a public meeting in mid-1915, close to 900 leading intellectuals, diplomats, and civil servants presented Bethmann Hollweg with an address expressing their support for an expansive program of war aims. These included effective German domination of Belgium; the expansion of German frontiers at French, Belgian, and Russian expense; German domination of Central Europe; German settlements in Russian territory; the weakening of the British Empire and British control of the seas; the acquisition of French colonies; and heavy indemnities from Britain and France. The contemporaneous demands of nationalist organizations, such as the Pan-German League and various business and economic associations, were even more sweeping. Many urged the reduction of France and Belgium to the status of German vassals, with German expropriation of their major economic assets. They also called upon Germany to annex substantial Russian territories in the eastern Europe and the Baltic states. Most condemned any talk of a negotiated peace with one or more of the Allied powers and urged that the war be fought to the bitter end. In July 1915 Prince Hohenlohe, the Austro-Hungarian ambassador in Berlin, sent his superiors in the Foreign Ministry in Vienna a dispatch in which he sought to elucidate the various conflicting peace plans. In his view, the German "Government does not express itself officially about war aims and states that it would be best if these two conflicting views were to balance each other, so that neither one of them will become too strong at the moment. It thinks that the day has not yet arrived for the Government to come forward with a well-defined peace program."

By early 1917 Bethman Hollweg modified his earlier views because of German losses in the Verdun and Somme campaigns; the entry of the United States into the war due to Germany's resumption, against his wishes, of a campaign of unlimited submarine warfare; and growing labor unrest and support among the Social Democrats for a liberal peace without annexations or indemnities. Fearing that Germany and Austria-Hungary would otherwise ultimately face defeat, in March 1917 he met with Austro-Hungarian Foreign Minister Count Ottokar Czernin, and the two men decided that if necessary their countries should settle for a peace based on the status quo ante bellum, under which both the Allied and Central Powers would evacuate territories they currently occupied. Both men, however, still hoped that the outcome of the war would be more favorable to their countries and regarded this suggestion as one only to be taken up as a final resort. In practice, however, once Germany decided in January 1917 to resume unlimited submarine warfare, thereby provoking U.S. intervention in the war three months later, the military high command had effectively won control of the making of policy and the setting of war aims. By

late June 1917, Bethmann Hollweg felt that the German submarine campaign against Allied shipping had not lived up to the promises of those who had favored it, while the prospects of Austria-Hungary holding out much longer were bleak. He therefore warned Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg, chief of the German General Staff, that: "The prospects of a peace which we could dictate are postponed to so dim and distant a future that it could only lead to fresh and disastrous disappointments if we played with the illusion of a 'fat' peace on the long and hard way we still have to go." Bethmann Hollweg was also concerned about the growth of radicalism among German workers and soldiers, something he feared "a root-and-branch denunciation of the idea of a peace of understanding" would encourage. He therefore began to urge that Germany consider the possibility of prevailing upon Great Britain to make a separate, negotiated peace and avoid any actions, such as aerial attacks on British cities, likely to make this impossible. Such a peace settlement might have involved Germany relinquishing most of its conquests in the West in exchange for a free hand in Russia and Eastern Europe.

(2256)

By early July 1917 a political crisis was developing in Germany as members of the Reichstag demanded greater democracy within Germany and, later in the month, passed a resolution demanding peace. The military Supreme Command deplored these developments and demanded that Bethmann Hollweg align himself firmly with those who opposed any talk of a peace settlement. Both Hindenburg and his domineering assistant, Quartermaster General Erich Ludendorff, had for some time despised what they saw as Bethmann Hollweg's vacillating attitude over the outcome of the war. As the crisis intensified, Bethmann Hollweg resigned, a development in part engineered by the military, as Hindenburg formally stated to Kaiser Wilhelm II on 12 July 1917 "that it is impossible for me, as a responsible member of the Supreme Command, to feel that confidence in the Imperial Chancellor which . . . is absolutely essential for useful co-operation between the Imperial Chancellor and the Supreme Command if the war is to be brought to a successful conclusion." Hindenburg threatened that unless Bethmann Hollweg resigned, he himself would do so, effectively forcing the kaiser to require Bethmann Hollweg's resignation. Despite calls for peace from Social Democrats and others, from then until August 1918 the German military high command effectively blocked all suggestions that Germany settle for a negotiated peace that would involve the sacrifice of some German territorial gains in exchange for the recognition of its conquests elsewhere.

Source

Ralph Haswell Lutz, ed., *Fall of the German Empire 1914–1918*, 2 vols. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1932), 1:324–327; General Erich von Ludendorff, *The General Staff and Its Problems*, 2 vols. (London: Hutchinson, 1920), 2:450, 2:462.

Manifesto of 352 German Intellectuals, 330 Diplomats, and 185 High Government Officials, 20 June 1915

The German people and their Emperor have preserved peace for forty-four years, preserved it until its further maintenance was incompatible with national honor and security. Despite her increase in strength and population, Germany never thought of transgressing the narrow bounds of her possessions on the European Continent with a view to conquest. Upon the world's markets alone was she forced to make an entry, so as to insure her economic existence by peacefully competing with other nations.

To our enemies, however, even these narrow limits and a share of the world's trade necessary to our existence seemed too much, and they formed plans which aimed at the very annihilation of the German Empire. Then we Germans rose as one man, from the highest to the meanest, realizing that we must defend not only our physical existence but also our inner, spiritual, and moral life—in short, defend German and European civilization [*Kultur*] against barbarian hordes from the east, and lust for vengeance and domination from the west. With God's help, hand in hand with our trusty allies, we have been able to maintain ourselves victoriously against half a world of enemies.

Now, however, although another foe has arisen, in Italy, it is no longer sufficient for us merely to defend ourselves. Our foes have forced the sword into our hands and have compelled us to make enormous sacrifices of blood and treasure. Henceforth our aim is to protect ourselves with all our might against a repetition of such an attack from every side—against a whole succession of wars which we might have to wage against enemies who had again become strong. Moreover, we are determined to extend our territory and to establish ourselves so firmly and so securely upon it that our independent existence shall be guaranteed for generations to come.

As to these main objects, the nation is unanimous in its determination. The plain truth, which is supported by evidence from all sides, is this:—In all classes of the people there is only one single fear, which is most prevalent and deep-seated in the most simple-minded sections, viz., the fear that illusory ideas

of reconciliation, or even perhaps a nervous impatience, might lead to the conclusion of a premature and consequently patched-up peace which could never be lasting; and that, as happened a hundred years ago, the pen of the diplomats might ruin what the sword has victoriously won, and this perhaps in the most fateful hour of German history, when popular feeling has attained an intensity and unanimity, which were never known in the past and will not so easily recur in the future.

Let there be no mistake. We do not wish to dominate the world, but to have a standing in it fully corresponding (2257) to our great position as a civilized Power and to our economic and military strength. It may be that, owing to the numerical superiority of our enemies, we cannot obtain at a single stroke all that is required in order thus to insure our national position; but the military results of this war, obtained by such great sacrifices, must be utilized to the very utmost possible extent. This, we repeat, is the firm determination of the German people.

To give clear expression to this resolute popular determination, so that it may be at the service of the Government and may afford it strong support in its difficult task of enforcing Germany's necessary claims against a few faint-hearted individuals at home as well as against stubborn enemies abroad, is the duty and right of those whose education and position raise them to the level of intellectual leaders and protagonists of public opinion. We appeal to them to fulfill this duty.

Being well aware that a distinction must be drawn between the objects of the war and the final conditions of peace, that everything of necessity depends on the final success of our arms, and that it cannot be our business to discuss Austria-Hungary's and Turkey's military objects, we have drawn up the following brief statement of what, according to our conviction, constitutes for Germany the guarantee of a lasting peace and the goal to which the blood-stained roads of this war must lead:

1. FRANCE—After being threatened by France for centuries, and after hearing the cry of *revanche* from 1815 till 1870, and from 1871 till 1915, we wish to have done with the French menace once for all. All classes of our people are imbued with this desire. There must be no misplaced attempts at reconciliation, which have always been opposed by France with the utmost fanaticism; and as regards this, we would utter a most urgent warning to Germans not to deceive themselves. Even after the terrible lesson of this unsuccessful war of vengeance, France will still thirst for *revanche*, in so far as her strength permits. For the sake of our own existence we must ruthlessly weaken her both

politically and economically, and must improve our military and strategic position with regard to her. For this purpose, in our opinion, it is necessary to affect a thorough rectification of our whole Western frontier from Belfort to the coast. Part of the North French Channel-coast we must acquire, if possible, in order to be strategically safer as regards England and to secure better access to the ocean.

Special measures must be taken, in order that the German Empire may not suffer any internal injury owing to this enlargement of its frontiers and addition to its territory. In order not to have conditions such as those in Alsace-Lorraine, the most important business undertakings and estates must be transferred from anti-German ownership to German hands, France taking over and compensating the former owners. Such portion of the population as is taken over by us must be allowed absolutely no influence in the Empire.

Furthermore, we must have no mercy upon France, however terrible the financial losses her own folly and British self-seeking have already brought upon her. We must impose upon her a heavy war indemnity (of which more hereafter), and indeed upon France before our other enemies.

We must also not forget that she has disproportionately large colonial possessions, and that, should circumstances arise, England could indemnify herself out of these, if we do not help ourselves to them.

2. BELGIUM—On Belgium, in the acquisition of which so much of the best German blood has been shed, we must keep a firm hold, political, military, and economic, despite any arguments which may be urged to the contrary. On no point is public opinion so unanimous. The German people consider it an absolutely unquestionable matter of honor to keep a firm hold of Belgium.

From the political and military standpoints it is obvious that, were this not done, Belgium would be neither more nor less than a basis from which England could attack and most dangerously menace Germany—in short, a shield behind which our foes would again assemble against us. Economically Belgium means a prodigious increase of power to us.

Belgium may also bring us a considerable addition to our population, if in course of time the Flemish element, which is so closely allied to us, becomes emancipated from the artificial grip of French culture and remembers its Teutonic affinities.

As to the problems which we shall have to solve, once we possess Belgium, we would here confine ourselves to emphasizing the following principles:—(1) The inhabitants must be precluded from exercising any political influence whatever in the Empire; and (2) the (2258) most important business undertakings and estates (as in the districts to be ceded by France) must be transferred from anti-German ownership to German hands.

3. RUSSIA—On our Eastern front the population of the Russian Empire is increasing on an enormous scale—about $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 3 millions yearly. Within a generation a population of 250 millions will be attained. Against this overwhelming pressure of numbers on our eastern flank, undoubtedly the greatest danger to the German and European future, Germany can hold her ground only—(a) if a strong boundary-wall be erected both against the advancing tide of Russification, which encroaches imperceptibly in times of peace, and also against the menace of an aggressive war; and (b) if we adopt all possible measures to maintain the past healthy increase of our population. But the realization of both these conditions demands land, which Russia must cede to us. It must be agricultural land for colonization—land which will yield us healthy peasants, the rejuvenating source of all national and political energy; land which can take up part of the increase of our population, and offer to the returning German emigrants, who wish to turn their backs on hostile foreign countries, a new home in their own country; land which will increase Germany's economic independence of foreign countries, by developing her own possibilities of food-production, which will constitute the necessary counterpoise to the advancing industrialization of our people and the increase of town-dwellers, thus conserving that equilibrium of our economic resources whose inestimable value has been proved during the war, and saving us from the dangerous one-sidedness of the English economic system; land which will arrest the decline of the birth-rate, check emigration, and alleviate the dearth of dwelling-houses; land whose re-settlement and Germanization will provide new possibilities of livelihood for the professional classes also. Such land for our physical, moral, and intellectual health is to be found above all in the East.

The measure in which our Eastern frontier is to be advanced will depend on the military situation, and in particular also it should be determined by strategic considerations. As far as the rectification of the eastern frontier of Posen and Silesia and the southern frontier of East Prussia is concerned, a frontier zone, accessible to German colonization and as far as possible free of private ownership, must be created. This German frontier zone will protect the Prussian Poles against the direct and excessive influence of Russian Poland, which will perhaps attain its independence. Moreover, in this connection, we

have no hesitation whatever in drawing special attention to that ancient territory in the Russian Baltic Provinces which has been cultivated by Germans for the last 700 years. It is sparsely populated, its soil is fruitful, and it therefore promises to have a great future as a field for colonization, whilst its Lithuanian, Lettish, and Esthonian population is derived from a stock alien to the Russians, which may prove a reliable source of that supply of journeyman-labor which we so urgently need.

We based our demand for land for colonization from Russia on two grounds—the need for erecting a “boundary-wall” and the need for maintaining the increase of our population. But, in the third place, land is the form in which Russia’s war-indemnity ought to be paid to us. To obtain an indemnity from Russia in cash or in securities will probably be just as impossible after this war as it proved after the Russo-Japanese war. On the other hand, Russia can easily pay an indemnity in kind. Russia is excessively rich in territory, and we demand that the territory which Russia is to surrender to us in lieu of a war-indemnity shall be delivered to us for the most part free of private ownership. This is by no means an outrageous demand, if we bear in mind Russian administrative methods. The Russian population is not so firmly rooted in the soil as that of Western and Central Europe. Again and again, right up to the early days of the present war, Russia has transplanted parts of her population on an enormous scale and settled them in far distant provinces. The possibilities of the scheme here proposed must not be judged in accordance with the modest standards of German civilization [*Kultur*]. If the acquisition of political control over territory is to bring with it that increase of power which we so urgently need for our future, we must also obtain economic control and have in the main free disposition over it. To conclude peace with Russia without insuring the diminution of Russian preponderance, and without acquiring those territorial acquisitions which Germany needs, would be to lose a great opportunity for promoting Germany’s political, economic, and social regeneration, and to impose upon future generations the burden of the final settlement with Russia—in other words, Germany and (2259) European civilization would be confronted with the certainty of a renewal of their life-and-death struggle.

4. ENGLAND, THE EAST, COLONIES, AND OVERSEAS TRADE.—The war between us and Russia has been waged with extraordinary violence, and has led to a glorious success for our arms; and we must never forget the menace to our future presented by the enormous Russian mass encamped on our Eastern frontier, if we should fail to disintegrate it. Nevertheless, we must never for one moment lose sight of the fact that this war is, in its ultimate

origin, England's war upon the foreign trade, the naval power, and the world-prestige of Germany.

Since this is the motive of England's hostility and war against us, our war-aims against England are clear. We must wrest a free field for our foreign trade, we must enforce the recognition of our naval power and our world-prestige in spite of England.

We admit that England has taught us one lesson by her blockade, which has compelled Germany to reorganize herself for the duration of this war as a self-contained industrial state; for we have learned that, before and above all, we must win and secure a wider territorial basis in Europe (as is explained in detail above), in order that we may stand before the world in the utmost possible political, military and economic independence. And we must also create on the Continent the widest possible sphere of economic interest, directly contiguous with our country's frontiers (i.e., avoiding sea-routes), so as to free ourselves as far as possible from dependence upon the good pleasure of England and of the other world-empires, whose self-sufficiency and exclusiveness are constantly increasing. In this respect our political friendship with Austria-Hungary and Turkey, which is bound to throw open the Balkans and Western Asia to us, is of the first importance. It is therefore necessary that Austria-Hungary, the Balkans, Turkey, and Western Asia, down to the Persian Gulf, should be permanently secured against the covetousness of Russia and England. Commercial relations with our political friends must be furthered by all available means.

But, in the second place, it must be our aim to reenter the world's overseas markets, in spite of England, and even though we have already safeguarded our foundations on the Continent. Undoubtedly it will be necessary to change the direction of a considerable part of our overseas trade; but we shall also have to conquer anew our old trade and shipping connections. Herein we shall in future stand upon our own feet, and shall, e.g., eliminate the hitherto customary mediation of English bankers and brokers, English arbitrage and exchange business, and the preponderance of English marine insurance companies. England has wantonly destroyed in us the trust and confidence which all such transactions require, and must pay the penalty by losing the profits which she has hitherto derived from them at the expense of German trade. In Africa our aim must be to rebuild our Colonial Empire, making it more self-contained and stronger than before. Central Africa alone would, it is true, give us a great extent of territory, but the value of the colonial products which it contains does not correspond to its size. We must therefore look to other quarters of the globe also, if we are to secure adequate acquisitions. From this point of view the

importance of a permanent connection with the world of Islam and the vital necessity of a safe ocean highway are once more plainly evident. Those, therefore, who insist upon colonies at the sacrifice of our security against England's naval tyranny over the Channel—those who insist upon colonies in return for, and subject to, our surrender of Belgium—not only fail to realize that the acquisition of an extended European basis for our Fatherland is far more important than all colonial possessions; they are also guilty of the grave political blunder of aspiring to colonial possessions without securing their maritime communications, i.e., colonial possessions which will once more be dependent on England's arbitrary will.

We must have the freedom of the seas. For this—which is to benefit all peoples alike—we are wrestling with England. And if we are to enforce it, the first requisite is to establish ourselves firmly upon the Channel, facing England. As we have already explained above, we must retain a firm hold upon Belgium, and we must, if possible, conquer part of the Channel-coast of Northern France in addition. Further, we must break the chain of England's naval bases, which encircles the globe, or weaken it by a corresponding acquisition of German bases. But Egypt, which connects English possessions in Africa with those in Asia and converts the Indian Ocean into an English sea with Australia for its distant shore; Egypt, which forms the connecting link between the mother country and all (2260) her Eastern colonies:—Egypt is, as Bismarck said, the neck of the British Empire, the vise in which England holds East and West in subjection. There a blow may be dealt at England's vital nerve. If it is successful, the international trade route of the Suez Canal must be freed from the domination of a single Power, and the ancient rights of Turkey be protected as far as possible.

But England's power is also essentially based upon the overwhelming influence which she exercises on the Government and the Press of the whole world. In order to remedy this state of affairs and to secure counter-influence for Germany, it is vitally necessary to destroy England's monopoly of the cable-service and press-agencies. Our best ally in our fight against England's influence over the world's public opinion is freedom—freedom which we shall bring to all nations by fighting for our own liberation from the yoke imposed by England upon the world. We must not strive to dominate and exploit the world, like the English: our aim should be to safeguard our own special needs, and then to act as pathmakers and leaders of Europe, respecting and securing the free self-development of the peoples.

5. INDEMNITY FOR THE WAR—Finally, as regards indemnity for the war, we naturally desire such an indemnity as will, so far as possible, cover the

public cost of the war, make restoration possible in East Prussia and Alsace, guarantee the establishment of a pension fund for cripples, widows, and orphans, indemnify private individuals for losses inflicted on them contrary to international law, and provide for the renewal and further development of our armaments.

But we are aware that these matters depend not only upon the extent of our military successes but also upon the financial capacity of our enemies. If we found ourselves in a position to impose a war-indemnity upon England—England, which has always been so niggardly in sacrificing the lives of its own citizens—no sum in money could be great enough. England has set the whole world against us, and chiefly by her money. The purse is the sensitive spot in this nation of shopkeepers. If we have the power, we must strike at her purse above all else and without any consideration whatever. In all probability, however, we shall have to look to France (primarily, if not exclusively) for our financial indemnification. And we ought not, from a mistaken idea of generosity, to hesitate to impose upon France the heaviest indemnity. Let France turn to her ally across the Channel for the alleviation of this enforced burden. If England refuses to fulfill her financial obligations towards her ally, we shall have secured an incidental political advantage with which we may be well contented.

But we are primarily concerned to insist that, important as it is to adopt retrospective measures for the mitigation of the injuries we have already suffered, it is still more vitally important to secure such terms of peace as will throw open to our people new paths for a vigorous future development; and in proportion as a financial indemnity is unobtainable, increased political and moral justification attaches to all the demands set forth above for the acquisition of territory, for an additional supply of productive labor for our manufactures, and for colonies. If we win in this titanic struggle, we must not emerge from it with losses. Otherwise, despite all our victories, posterity will view us as the conquered party.

We refrain from expressing any decided opinion on the weighty question of the mode of payment, but we would draw attention to the following point. It would be greatly to our interest if a considerable part of the indemnity were paid in the form of foreign securities of such a kind that their possession would strengthen our economic position in the countries of our political friends, whilst freeing the latter from the preponderant influence of Britain and France.

6. A POLICY OF CIVILIZATION [*KULTURPOLITIK*] CAN ONLY BE BASED ON A POLICY OF POWER—If the signatories of this Petition—

particularly the men of science, the artists, and ecclesiastics—are reproached, on the ground that the demands which they put forward are solely to promote Germany's political and economic power, and perhaps also to satisfy some of her social requirements, whilst the purely spiritual tasks of Germany's future have been forgotten, our answer is as follows:

Care for the development of the German Mind and Genius [*die Sorge um den deutschen Geist*] cannot be made a war-aim or a condition of peace.

If, nevertheless, we are to say a few words on this subject, our position is briefly this. The German Mind is, in our opinion, beyond all doubt our one supremely valuable asset. It is the one priceless possession amongst all our possessions. It alone justifies our people's (2261) existence and their impulse to maintain and assert themselves in the world; and to it they owe their superiority over all other peoples. But, in the first place, we must emphatically insist that, if Germany is to be free to pursue her spiritual vocation, she must first of all secure her political and economic independence. And secondly, to those who advocate the so-called Policy of Civilization [*Kulturpolitik*] alone, to those whose watchword is "The German Mind without the Policy of Power," we reply: "We have no use for a 'German Mind' which is in danger of becoming, as it were, an uprooted national spirit, in danger of being itself disintegrated and the cause of disintegration in others. We have no use for a Mind which, having no healthy national body of its own, is driven to seek vainly in every country for a home and to become 'all things to all men'—a Mind which is forced to be untrue to its own character and a spurious imitation of the character of the nation that is its host. If the demands which we have formulated are satisfied, we shall create the necessary healthy body for the German Mind. The expansion of the national body which we have demanded will do the German Mind no injury, provided the precautions upon which we have also insisted are observed. On the contrary, subject to those precautions, such an expansion will strengthen the German Mind by providing it with wider opportunities."

We are well aware that the aims which we have proposed are great, and that their attainment is impossible without a spirit of resolute self-sacrifice and the most energetic skill in negotiation. But we appeal to a sentence of Bismarck's: "It is palpably true in Politics, if it is true anywhere, 'that faith removes mountains,' that Courage and Victory are not cause and effect, but identical with one another."

Source

Charles F. Horne and Warren F. Austin, eds., *Great Events of the Great War*, 7 vols. (Washington, DC: National Alumni, 1920), 3:381–392.

About The Document

This manifesto on German war aims was produced in mid-1915 at a time when the war was still going well for Germany, a fact that gave rise to heated public discussion as to what Germany should ultimately gain from the conflict. Once the war began, most German liberals and intellectuals almost automatically arrayed themselves behind their own government and regarded their country as the aggrieved party, something amply demonstrated in this document. After less than a year of war German casualties already amounted to several hundred thousand, losses that made the German public reluctant to accept any outcome to the war that did not provide some compensation for the sacrifices already made. This declaration appeared shortly after Italy decided to abandon its early neutrality and join the Allies, who offered it more acceptable territorial inducements to move to their side than did the Central Powers, to whom the Italian decision was obviously unwelcome. Those intellectuals, diplomats, and government officials who signed this manifesto, which was widely circulated and published in the press, sought to encourage the government to stand firm against any “faint-hearted” advocates of a “premature” peace. Although their proposals were by no means as extreme as some of the German nationalist and economic groups, their attitude was an excellent example of the way in which the war soon developed its own self-propelling momentum and the positions of those supporting it hardened, making compromise more difficult.

As envisaged in Bethmann Hollweg’s September Program (a document that was not published at the time and of which his nonofficial contemporaries were unaware), France and Belgium were both to be firmly subjugated to Germany, losing their strategically significant channel ports and their vital iron and steel industries, paying heavy indemnities, and ceding most of their colonial possessions to Germany. The Russian Baltic provinces and agricultural lands to the east of Germany were likewise to become German possessions, with much of their existing non-German population removed and replaced by German immigrants. Displaying an almost visceral hostility to Great Britain, whose decision to enter the war probably deprived their country of victory in the West and was therefore particularly resented, the German writers of the manifesto perceived Britain as the prime mover of the conflict, describing it as “in its ultimate origin, England’s war upon the foreign trade, the naval power, and the world-prestige of Germany.” Given the impact of the wartime British blockade

and efforts to isolate Germany economically, in the future Germany would need to make itself self-sufficient, with a wide-ranging economic sphere of influence extending across continental Europe. Germany would also need to exclude Britain (2262) from any role in German finance or commerce, to rebuild and expand its colonial empire, and to insist on the future freedom of the seas by effectively destroying British naval power. The manifesto envisaged that Germany would seek either to annex Britain's naval bases or acquire similar facilities of her own. Particularly important was the effort to destroy the British hold on Egypt, which controlled the vital Suez Canal waterway facilitating sea traffic from the Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf. The British "monopoly of the cable-service and press-agencies," which facilitated Britain's ability to set forth her own position to international public opinion, should also be destroyed. The manifesto's signatories also hoped that Germany would receive a heavy war indemnity, much of it preferably in the form of foreign securities, that would also help to erode British and French international economic power. Only such peace terms, they argued, would assure the "German Mind" and *Kultur* (civilization) the predominance they desired.

This was not an official German statement of war aims, but it did represent a public effort by a large number of relatively liberal and prominent public figures both to demonstrate their support for their government and the war and to ensure that Germany came out of the war in a more favorable international position than it had entered the conflict. It was an indication of the degree to which, once hostilities began, in every country the great majority of the liberal-cum-intellectual classes rallied behind their own nation, making it very difficult to reach a negotiated peace settlement until one side or the other had a decisive advantage. Such attitudes were quite likely to be modified according to the fortunes of war. Like Bethmann Hollweg, at a later date many of the manifesto's signatories would probably have welcomed a compromise peace, but by that time diehard military elements who were determined that nothing short of outright victory on every front would be acceptable had won control of the making of German policy.

Further Reading

Fischer, Fritz. *Germany's Aims in the First World War*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1967.

———. *From Kaiserreich to Third Reich: Elements of Continuity in German History, 1871–1945*. Trans. Roger Fletcher. London: Allen and Unwin, 1986.

French, David. *British Strategy and War Aims, 1914–16*. London: Allen and Unwin, 1986.

———. *The Strategy of the Lloyd George Coalition, 1916–1918*. Oxford, UK: Clarendon, 1995.

Gatzke, Hans W. *Germany's Drive to the West (Drang nach Westen): A Study of Germany's Western War Aims during the First World War*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1950.

Hardach, Gerd. *The First World War, 1914–1918*. Trans. Peter and Betty Ross. London: Allen Lane, 1977.

Jarausch, Konrad H. *The Enigmatic Chancellor: Bethmann Hollweg and the Hubris of Imperial Germany*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1973.

Stevenson, David. *The First World War and International Politics*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.

———. *French War Aims against Germany, 1914–1919*. Oxford, UK: Clarendon, 1982.

Strachan, Hew. *The First World War, Vol. 1, To Arms*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Welch, David. *Germany, Propaganda and Total War, 1914–1918*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2000.

MLA

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "26. German War Aims, 1915." *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*, ABC-CLIO, 2005, pp. . *ABC-CLIO eBook Collection*, legacy.abc-clio.com/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2173.

Chicago Manual of Style

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "26. German War Aims, 1915." In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005. <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2173>.

APA

Roberts, P. M., S. C. Tucker (2005). 26. German War Aims, 1915. In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia* (pp.). Retrieved from <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2173>

Essay 27. The Eastern Front

Allied Coalition Warfare and Supply Policies

On both sides, World War I was fought by coalitions of several powers who attempted, by no means always entirely successfully, to coordinate their strategies. While France and Britain concentrated their forces primarily against Germany on the Western Front, until the end of 1917 a second war, in numerical terms involving even larger numbers of men, was simultaneously under way in the East, where Russia and Serbia—and later, though briefly, Romania—confronted German and Austro-Hungarian troops. The war on the Eastern Front was largely one of movement, of spectacular successes and equally dramatic reverses on each side. Should Russia be tempted to make a separate peace with her enemies, as finally occurred in early 1918, Britain and France would find themselves facing the undiluted strength of the German military. Once it became clear that the war was likely to be protracted, Russia's allies therefore had a vested interest in ensuring that Russia remained both able and willing to fight. Although the three Allies—Britain, France, and Russia—declared in early September 1914 that none would make peace with the Central Powers independently of the others, most statesmen recognized that such proclamations (2263) denoted wavering as often as unity among coalition partners. From early in the conflict German officials periodically sought to entice Russian leaders from the war by dangling before them the prospect of an independent, moderate peace settlement. Allied leaders, by contrast, thought it vital to keep Russia in the war as an effective fighting force; their ideal scenario was, indeed, that the Russian military “steamroller” would conclusively defeat its German opponents, greatly facilitating their own endeavors. Among the inducements they offered were the prospect of major territorial gains. In late October 1914 Russia's traditional rival, Ottoman Turkey, formally joined the Central Powers and entered the war. That November, Britain and France secretly agreed that after the war Russia would be entitled to fulfill a long-cherished ambition by gaining Constantinople, the Ottoman capital, together with control of the strategically valuable Dardanelles Straits linking the Russian-controlled Black Sea to the Mediterranean.

Such promises were likely to remain a dead letter unless the Russian military continued to represent an effective fighting force. Within a few months of the beginning of war, all belligerents encountered major shortages of munitions, including heavy guns, shells of various types, rifles, and ammunition. Although each nation had amassed substantial stockpiles before August 1914, none had any real experience of a large-scale, long-term war making massive use of

artillery and employing enormous armies. Most military planners assumed that any hostilities would be relatively brief, a matter of months rather than years. Local shell deficiencies were often the product of poor logistical and transportation facilities, which caused shortages for both the German and British forces at the First Battle of the Marne in September 1914 and likewise on the Russian Northwestern and Southwestern Fronts in August 1914, though in each case substantial supplies were available farther back. On the Eastern Front, poor to nonexistent roads and railroads in Serbia and other theaters of war meant that munitions wagons of all combatant forces found it almost impossible to keep up with the units they were supplying. Discrepancies between particular guns and the caliber of shells they required were also common, especially given the inadequacies of centralized record keeping in some armies. More broadly, however, by late autumn 1914 every army—British, French, Russian, German, and Austro-Hungarian—was reporting serious overall shortages of munitions of every kind, complaints that continued through the following spring. Commanders naturally blamed these shortfalls for any military reverses they encountered.

Remedying munitions deficiencies demanded more than a quick fix. The major arms suppliers, Vickers, Nobel, and Schneider, for example, soon reached the limits of their capacity and in belligerent countries were further hampered by the enlistment of many of their skilled workers in the armed forces. Additional expansion required new plants and hiring extra labor, which then had to be trained. While these firms still accepted munitions orders, too often they failed to meet promised deadlines, sometimes by several months or more. Rather than establishing one centralized military purchasing agency, belligerent countries tended to employ a confusing maze of overlapping, uncoordinated, often rival or even mutually hostile organizations, each with a different bureaucratic and military base, and with no system for setting priorities. In many cases different agencies of the same government competed with each other for access to limited productive capacity, either in their own country or abroad, as did the various Allied governments. Early in the war, both Russia and France lost important productive capacity and mineral resources to German occupation, which required them to redeploy raw materials and plants in other parts of their territory.

Russia, like other Allied governments, tackled shortages of war matériel in part by retooling domestic industry to produce munitions, especially relatively simple items such as trench mortars whose production demanded no special skills, and also by introducing innovations in industrial techniques that facilitated increases in output. Problems with industrial mobilization also

carried political implications. In summer 1915 Russian businessmen, liberals, and would-be reformers in the Russian Duma seized on the munitions difficulties to establish a War Industries Committee that included representatives from the Duma and private business as well as the various government ministries, an organization they hoped would spearhead further erosion of the tsarist regime's powers. To add to the bureaucratic confusion, several other public-private supplementary organizations to improve the administration (2264) of the war effort were established. The historians Niall Ferguson and Hew Strachan both suggest that especially given the existing disadvantages, including the enlistment of many skilled workers and decreases in per capita output of essential raw materials, the expansion of Russian munitions production during the war was remarkably impressive, with dramatic fifteenfold growth in shell production and tenfold increases in the output of guns in the period from August 1914 to December 1916.

Small arms and heavy artillery manufacture posed greater technical difficulties, which made their domestic production less satisfactory. Russian officials therefore appealed to their allies for assistance in procuring and financing these goods overseas, bolstered by the apparent belief that the wealthy British Empire was a limitless resource of both funds and supplies. In reality, the British government often found its own orders delayed by production bottlenecks in both Britain and North America. Rightly or wrongly, British and French officials believed that the Russian purchasing system was bedeviled by corruption, kickbacks, and commissions as well as unduly rigorous inspection criteria before goods could be accepted. They also complained on many occasions of the difficulty of obtaining accurate or well-documented information on Russian needs, or indeed on the Russian military situation, outlook, or strategy. To improve their bargaining position with their allies, on occasion, in late 1915, for example, the Russians undoubtedly seriously inflated their demands. At times they persistently ignored the coordinated purchasing machinery established to handle Allied orders in the United States; they also disregarded prior agreements as to how they should handle the credits the British government placed at their disposal for overseas purchasing, jeopardizing the increasingly precarious British credit position in the United States. Given the difficulties faced in shipping goods from overseas to Russia, transportation also proved a serious bottleneck. With the Dardanelles closed to Allied shipping and the Central Powers blocking overland access, imports could only reach Russia via neutral but pro-German Sweden or through its own ports of Vladivostok, more than 3,000 miles from the front; Archangel, ice-bound half the year; or Murmansk, which lacked railway connections to the rest of Russia. More broadly, the internal Russian railroad network lagged far

behind those of Western Europe, compromising Russia's ability to transport munitions to the front. By 1916 Russian officials were seeking to place huge orders for rails, locomotives, and rolling stock in the United States. Shipping itself was also problematic, since by 1916 freight capacity was in short supply, and Russia did not possess sufficient tonnage to transport goods itself. All these difficulties helped to make the provision of supplies a subject of constant friction and contention between Great Britain and its Russian ally.

British Military Attaché Alfred W. Knox Recalls Russian Efforts to Obtain Munitions, Spring 1915

[Russian Chief of Staff] General Yanushkevich stated in March that he had mobilised 106 infantry and 33 cavalry divisions for work on the Western frontier. This represented a puny effort compared with that of France, which, as M. Delcassé pointed out, had 4,000,000 of men under arms, a burden on the economic life of the country that might be compared to 17,000,000 in Russia.

General Byelyaev always maintained that the difficulty was solely one of armament. He said he could place the infantry of three new corps in the field every month if only he had rifles.

There was, however, a good deal required besides mere rifles to make the infantry drafts of any real use when they arrived at the front. The men required longer training and energetic officers, who, while enforcing real discipline, would look properly after the comfort of their men, a proper organisation of the supply and transport services, shell to support them in attack and defence, and leading that inspired confidence.

Unfortunately, the situation on the front since the first realisation in November of the shortage of rifles and shell had not permitted of the accumulation of any reserve. Apart from the large quantities of material lost in the disaster to the 10th Army, the normal monthly wastage exceeded in quantity the supplies received from the rear. The greatest lack was still of rifles. Unarmed men had to be sent into the trenches to wait till their comrades were killed or wounded and their rifles became available. Large orders had been placed with American firms, but there was no chance of their materialising before the end of the year. On June 23rd I telegraphed that Russia would not be able to undertake any offensive for eight months owing to lack of rifles.

(2265)

In December I had been told that there was enough small arms ammunition to “throw out of the window.” Its supply now began to give anxiety, for the expenditure rose to over 100,000,000 a month, a figure which it was difficult for the factories to reach owing to lack of propellant.

The average number of guns per 1,000 bayonets was only 2.12, and many guns required retubing. Still, the number and the quality of the guns was a secondary matter as compared with the urgent necessity for the increase of the supply of shell. No shell had yet come from abroad. The Russian factories were making a great effort, but they were handicapped by the difficulty of producing fuse.

The Artillery Department had been constantly attacked in pre-war days by patriotic members of the Duma, such as M. Guchkov, for its red tapism and for its slowness in spending funds allotted by the Duma. It had come to consist largely of technical experts who were out of touch with the life and the practical requirements of their comrades in the field. Officers appointed to the Artillery Committee, which decided all technical questions, generally remained there till they died. In 1913 there were members who had served on the Committee for forty-two years.

The Department received at first with little sympathy the cry from the front for shell. It thought that shell was being wasted, and took months to awaken to its need in quantities hitherto undreamed of.

The Grand Duke Sergei Mikhailovich left his post of Inspector of Artillery to undertake the superintendence of production. A man of over six feet five and a good artillery officer, he was inspired only by patriotic motives, and toiled all day in his Palace in the Millionnaya, though he suffered from very indifferent health. He was always accessible and answered the telephone himself.

He, however, did not believe in the need for shell on the scale that the Allies in the West had found to be necessary. As a patriotic Russian, he mistrusted foreign experts, and thought that Russian experts were as good as any in the world.

He delayed a whole fortnight before receiving a French technical mission which had arrived in Petrograd at the end of January with the object of assisting the Russians to develop their production of shell. This mission, which consisted of able experts, after enquiry into the local situation, put forward four practical suggestions:

1. That in order to increase the supply of artillery ammunition, production should be simplified by manufacturing H.E. [high explosive] shell with delayed action fuse instead of the more complicated shrapnel.

The Russians objected on the ground that the French fuse would be ineffective in marshy ground.

2. That the rules of “inspection” should be made less rigorous, and useless formality generally should be abolished.

The Artillery Department was in the habit of sending men abroad as inspectors, who were without any technical knowledge, and were therefore obliged to follow the specification pedantically and without intelligence. On one occasion an officer told me his brother had gone to England to “take over” big guns. I asked if he knew anything of gunnery. The reply was: “No. He is a lawyer by education, an artist by inclination, and a cavalry officer by occupation.”

3. That labour in the mines should be militarised in order to secure a constant supply of coal.

The engineers of the Donetz Basin objected that such a measure would be equivalent to a relapse to serfdom, a reply that made the French officers not a little indignant. “Nous Français sommes donc des esclaves?” [You think we Frenchmen are slaves, then?]

4. That a constant supply of both coal and raw material should be ensured by introducing proper methods for the use and organisation of the railway rolling-stock.

Unfortunately for Russia and her Allies, the first of these suggestions was the only one that was partially approved, and it was only after some three months that the mission obtained from the Grand Duke permission to manufacture a million H.E. shell with the “fusée a retard,” under the proviso that the work should not be carried out at Petrograd or in the Donetz Basin, where the factories were occupied with the production of shrapnel.

[British Minister of War] Lord Kitchener’s idea was to induce the Russian Government to increase their orders for material abroad.

On April 10th I handed the Grand Duke a telegram offering a contract for shell with the American Locomotive Combine. He said that the Artillery Department did not intend to place any more orders for shell abroad, but required propellant

and fuses. Lord Kitchener, (2266) however, repeated his offer, strongly recommending the contract, and asking for a definite reply by 12 noon on the 15th. I read the message to the Grand Duke, who replied by confirming his previous refusal.

Russian officers were particularly bitter regarding the failure of the firm of Vickers to supply shrapnel and fuses as soon as expected. They argued that if Vickers, "who had grown rich on Russian orders," failed them, there was nothing to be hoped for from other foreign firms on whom Russia had no claim, and it was only a waste of money to pay the large advance which such firms demanded before accepting an order. On May 13th the Grand Duke Serge said: "Vickers cares only for money. He has got an advance of R[ouble]s. 4,000,000 from us, and has put it in his pocket and done nothing. I have been at his works twice and know their size. It is ridiculous for him to say that he can make no better attempt to keep his contracts, when we in Russia have increased our output of shell from the 42,000 of August [1914] to the 550,000 of April [1915]."

Lord Kitchener determined to appeal to the Commander-in-Chief, and in early May an able and energetic artillery officer, Colonel [William E.] Ellershaw, arrived with a letter for the [Russian commander-in-chief] Grand Duke Nikolas, urging the placing of additional orders for shell abroad.

Ellershaw carried out his mission with success, and returning to Petrograd from G.H.Q. on May 16th, brought with him a letter from the Chief of Staff to General Manikovski, the Governor of the Fortress of Kronstadt, and the Assistant of the Grand Duke Serge on the committee which had been specially formed to take in hand the supply of shell.

We obtained an interview with Manikovski that day and handed him the letter. He read us extracts. Yanushkevich wrote that the Commander-in-Chief had appointed Lord Kitchener as his agent for the purchase of shell, rifles and ammunition, that the giving of such powers to a foreign General was not in accordance with Russian law, but since it was a question whether Russia should be victorious or defeated, "we will spit on the law."

This was my first interview with Manikovski, whom I was afterwards to get to know well. He was a small, thick-set man, with a bluff manner. He spoke only Russian, and on this occasion in a voice loud enough to be heard by a whole regiment. We soon found that, though a fortress-gunner all his life, he took the infantry point of view that we could not have too much shell. He said that the Grand Duke Serge was a man of great ability, but that he had never "smelt

powder,” and he loved the Artillery Department and all its ways, “like a man will still love a woman, though he knows all the time that she is a bad lot.”

Next day we visited the Grand Duke Serge, and Ellershaw, speaking English, pleaded Lord Kitchener’s point of view. The Grand Duke asked: “When will Lord Kitchener deliver his first lot of shell? Will you take a bet that we get anything in the next six months?” He added that he wanted shell at the present moment and not in six months’ time, that he would have 1,500,000 shell in August, and that even in the first month of the war, when expert artillerists thought that 50 per cent. of the rounds had been wasted, he had used only 1.2 millions. We pointed out that the Russian artillery was so good that it could not fire enough to please the infantry. The Grand Duke said that the guns would burst.

Of course it was more than doubtful whether the supply from all sources would really reach 1,500,000 in August. The Grand Duke depended on large deliveries from the French Government, and the Canadian Car and Foundry Company.

Obviously the better plan was to develop home production.

The increase of the monthly production of shell in Russia by 1,300 per cent. in the nine months August [1914]–April [1915], without any practical assistance from the Allies, was, taking into consideration the backward state of Russian industrial development, at least as fine a performance as the increase in Great Britain in a similar period by 1,900 per cent. . . .

On May 26th the [British] Ambassador handed to [Foreign Minister] M. Sazonov a telegram received from the Foreign Office stating that Lord Kitchener would do his best to obtain shell for Russia, but reminding the Russian Government that it had refused two very important offers—on March 9th a contract for 5,000,000 rounds with the Bethlehem Steel Company, and on April 15th a contract for 5,000,000 rounds complete with the exception of propellant with the American Locomotive Combine.

(2267)

As the British Government had so far only helped with suggestions, but had given no practical assistance in the essential matter of hurrying up deliveries on the contracts placed by its advice, it was only natural that this communication provoked a retort [that earlier orders had not yet arrived]. . . .

It is easy to understand and to sympathise with the different points of view. The Russian Government wanted to see some return from its foreign orders before placing new ones. Lord Kitchener, who foresaw the long war, that nobody in Russia believed in, even in May, 1915, saw clearly that the orders were quite insufficient. On the whole, however, the French plan of sending out experts to expand the home Russian industries was the best, and would have borne the most fruit if the Russian Government had given these experts anything like a free hand.

Source

Alfred W. Knox, *With the Russian Army, 1914–1917* (New York: Arno, 1971, original publication London: Hutchinson, 1921), 270–276.

Major-General Sir Alfred Knox (1870–1964)

Knox was a professional British army officer, born in Ulster, who spent much of his career in India and eventually rose to the rank of major-general. He was a fluent Russian speaker, one reason for his appointment in 1911 as British military attaché in Petrograd, working from the British embassy. Knox spent six years in Russia, leaving in late 1917 shortly after the Bolsheviks, for whom he had little sympathy, came to power. Before World War I, his duties as military attaché included observing the tsarist government's campaign to modernize, upgrade, and expand the Russian army. Knox quickly developed close connections with numerous Russian and Polish military officers, and within the British government his outstanding abilities were generally recognized. With the onset of war Knox's responsibilities grew dramatically. General Sir John Hanbury Williams, the head of the British Military Mission, did not speak Russian, and the tsarist regime denied him access to much official information. Knox, therefore, spent much of his time accompanying Russian forces at the front and gathering information on the military situation. British Foreign Office functionaries universally praised the excellence of his reporting.

About The Document

Knox published his memoirs of his wartime years in Russia in 1921, when it was already becoming apparent that the Russian Civil War would end in a Bolshevik victory. One reason he produced this volume was probably to cater to the strong public interest in the fall of the tsarist empire and the revolutionary movement that succeeded it. A second, almost certainly, was to suggest that the collapse of the Russian Empire had been inevitable and that British policies had not contributed appreciably to its downfall. Accusations

were rife that Sir George Buchanan, the wartime British ambassador, and his staff had done too little to assist the Russian government to remain in the war; some Russian émigrés even alleged that they had been pro-Bolshevik in sympathy. Knox undoubtedly sought to rebut such charges, one reason his superiors did not object when he published memoirs that included not just excerpts from his diaries but even portions of some of his official reports and assessments on the Russian situation.

Given these unspoken motivations, Knox's account of the munitions position in 1915 seems reasonably fair. Lord Kitchener, one of the first military leaders on any side in the war to act on the theory that the war would be protracted, did indeed unavailingly urge the Russians in autumn 1914 to place orders for large additional quantities of shells, artillery, rifles, and munitions. In spring and summer 1915 he again attempted to persuade the Russians to do so, even placing contracts on their behalf, some of which the Russian government later rejected. Knox did not attempt to gloss over the serious difficulties that arose in Anglo-Russian relations when the British armaments firm of Vickers was unable to fill a large order it had promised the Russians. He also gave an accurate account of the French munitions mission of early 1915. Knox gave some sense of the inefficiencies inherent in the duplication and overlapping responsibilities for procurement that characterized the entire Russian military purchasing system, not to mention Russian officials' distrust and resentment of outside advice. The weakest point of Knox's account was probably his (2268) failure to give sufficient credit to the Russians for the improvements in domestic munitions production they eventually achieved.

Further Reading

Cassar, George H. *Kitchener: Architect of Victory*. London: William Kimber, 1977.

Ferguson, Niall. *The Pity of War*. London: Allen Lane, 1998.

Kettle, Michael. *The Allies and the Russian Collapse, March 1917–March 1918*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981.

Neilson, Keith. *Strategy and Supply: The Anglo-Russian Alliance, 1914–17*. Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1984.

Pollock, John. *Kitchener: Architect of Victory, Artisan of Peace*. New York: Carroll and Graf, 2001.

Rielage, Dale C. *Russian Supply Efforts in America during the First World War*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2002.

Sanborn, Joshua A. *Drafting the Russian Nation: Military Conscription, Total War, and Mass Politics, 1905–1925*. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2003.

Siegelbaum, Lewis H. *The Politics of Industrial Mobilization in Russia, 1914–17: A Study of the War-Industries Committees*. New York: St. Martin's, 1983.

Strachan, Hew. *The First World War, Vol. 1, To Arms*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Van Creveld, Martin. *Supplying War: Logistics from Wallenstein to Patton*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977.

MLA

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "27. The Eastern Front." *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*, ABC-CLIO, 2005, pp. . *ABC-CLIO eBook Collection*, legacy.abc-clio.com/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2177.

Chicago Manual of Style

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "27. The Eastern Front." In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005.
http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2177.

APA

Roberts, P. M., S. C. Tucker (2005). 27. The Eastern Front. In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia* (pp.). Retrieved from http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2177

Essay 28. War Finance

Paying for the War

For every belligerent, war was an enormously expensive undertaking that threatened to exhaust its available financial resources. Before the war, some economists and intellectuals, such as Norman Angell, had argued that modern warfare had become so immensely expensive that nations would be unable to bear its burdens for protracted periods. In practice, however, as historians including Hew Strachan have pointed out, financial constraints failed to prevent states opting for war in the first place, nor did they ever force any country to sue for peace. So long as a government had access to the essential industrial supplies that conducting war demanded, if necessary by exercising the power to requisition such goods, it was likely to continue the conflict. Even so, every warring government faced the problem of raising huge and ever-increasing amounts of funds for the war, dwarfing any prewar budgets. Armies of millions of men had to be raised, housed, fed, clothed, equipped, and trained, while their dependants received allowances, and veterans eventually expected pensions, in some cases for themselves, in others for their survivors. Large-scale warfare based on massive use of artillery, barbed wire, and tanks strained industrial production to the limit; within a few months of the outbreak of war, each country involved faced a shortage of guns and shells. Governments and the military became the biggest customers for all kinds of goods, for which they had to pay in some form or other. The ability to finance the war effort, and also, in the case of Great Britain, Germany, and the United States, to finance substantial portions of their allies war expenditures, could be crucial to the attainment of victory, especially when it enabled belligerents to import major quantities of war supplies from foreign sources.

When war began in August 1914, no state had any accurate idea of precisely how much such a conflict would cost, and all grossly underestimated the eventual burdens. In most cases, treasury officials expected the war to last at the outside two years, and many hoped it would be far shorter. Governments quickly realized that it was almost impossible to pay for the war from current expenditures. In no country could taxes, either direct or indirect, suffice to cover its costs for more than a few months. While receipts from indirect taxes grew due to broad increases in duties, the most dramatic rises occurred in the levels of incomes and profits taxes in Britain, Germany, and the United States. In Britain, the standard rate of income tax quintupled in the periods 1913–1914 and 1918–1919; supertaxes on large incomes also rose dramatically, and excess taxes were imposed on all business profits. British income taxes generated

revenues of £47.2 million in 1913, £205 million in 1916, and £291.1 million in 1918, while by the end of the war excess profits taxes accounted for almost one-half of the Treasury's budgetary receipts from direct taxation. Thresholds for income and surtaxes were lowered and rates increased, especially on unearned incomes, so that by 1916 combined rates of income, super-, and excess profits tax could be as high as 77 percent. By 1918, 80 percent of British tax revenues came from direct taxation and only 20 percent from indirect, whereas the comparable figures four years earlier had been 60 and 40 percent.

Germany was slower to raise direct taxes, in part because of deficiencies in the federal government's tax (2269) structure, and also because the Treasury minister hoped that a relatively swift victory would enable Germany to recoup its costs by imposing heavy indemnities on its defeated rivals. Although Germany's receipts from direct taxes doubled during the war, given that there was no real existing income tax system in place, almost all of Germany's receipts from direct taxes came from levies on excess profits. After a slow start, in 1916 France, which also had no real system of income taxes, likewise introduced an excess profits tax, and Italy adopted similar policies. The United States, which only introduced income taxes in 1913, raised taxes rather dramatically. In 1915 the federal government imposed income tax at only 1 percent on incomes over \$3,000 and corporation tax at the same level on profits over \$5,000, with supertax levied only on incomes over \$20,000, rising to 6 percent for incomes in excess of \$300,000. The following year, a new defense program brought a doubling of income and corporation taxes, and the maximum rate of supertax rose to 13 percent, with a special levy of 12.5 percent on the profits of munitions manufacturers. Once the United States entered the war, tax thresholds fell drastically and rates rose, so that total income taxes of 3 percent were assessed on incomes above \$1,000 and surtaxes increased by up to 50 percent, with top levels of combined income and surtaxes reaching 63 percent.

Despite substantial increases in direct and indirect taxes, in no state did such revenues cover more than a relatively small proportion of war expenditures. Although precise comparisons can be slightly problematic, Germany financed between 16 and 18 percent of wartime public spending from taxation, Britain and the United States between 23 and 26 percent, and France, Austria-Hungary, and Russia far less. Belligerent governments ran huge deficits, amounting to at least 70–80 percent of their annual budgets, which had to be met from other sources. All offered their own populations and businesses vast quantities of interest-bearing government war loans or bonds of some kind, short- or long-term, with rousing exhortations that it was a patriotic duty to buy these. No

country entirely escaped wartime inflation. In some, principally the Central Powers and Russia, the treasuries and central banks printed money in vast quantities to finance official purchases and requisitions, which in turn generated strong inflation, effectively reducing the long-term cost of borrowing and serving as an undeclared tax on wages and salaries. Whatever the precise variety of funds tapped for the purpose, under the pressure of wartime spending government budgets soared in every country that took part. While financial weakness never forced any state to leave the war, except in the United States the long-term consequences were severe. On emerging from the war, most governments were saddled with enormous debts to their own people and, in many cases, foreign investors and governments as well. Servicing these obligations proved a heavy charge on countries on whom the conflict had usually inflicted losses not just of population but also of national wealth and even, in many cases, territory. Although inflation might seem to promise an easy and attractive means of reducing the burden, the example of postwar Germany demonstrated that any such strategy risked generating domestic unrest, with unpredictable but probably undesirable social and economic consequences. For most belligerents, the postwar financial legacies of waging total war were profound and unwelcome. As in World War II, the only country to emerge from World War I in a more economically advantageous position than it had entered was the United States.

The British War Finance Acts, 1914–1917

Finance Act (Session 2), 27 November 1914

12.—(1) In order, as far as may be, to provide for the collection of income-tax (including super-tax) for the last four months of the current income-tax year at double the rates at which it is charged under the Finance Act, 1914, the following provisions shall have effect:

- (a) The amount payable in respect of any assessment already made of income-tax already chargeable otherwise than by way of deduction, or of super-tax, shall be treated as increased by one-third, and any authority to collect the tax, and remedy for non-payment of the tax, shall apply accordingly; and
- (b) An assessment of any such income-tax or super-tax not already made shall be for an amount one-third more than that for which it would have been made if this Act had not passed; and
- (c) Such deductions shall be made in accordance with regulations prescribed by the Commissioners of (2270) Inland Revenue in the case of dividends, interest,

or other annual sums (including rent) due or payable after the fifth day of December nineteen hundred and fourteen as will make the total amount deducted in respect of income-tax for the year equal to that which would have been deducted if income-tax for the year had been at the rate of one shilling and eightpence; and

(d) Subsection (1) of Section 14 of the Revenue Act, 1911, shall apply, in cases where both the half-yearly payments referred to therein have been paid before the passing of this Act, as if this Act were the Act imposing income-tax for the year, and as if one shilling and eightpence were the rate ultimately charged for the year; and

(e) Where the amount of any exemption, relief, or abatement under the Income Tax Acts is to be determined by reference to the amount of income-tax on any sum, the amount of the tax shall be calculated at one shilling and eightpence, with a proportionate reduction where relief is granted under Section 6 of the Finance Act, 1914; and where income-tax is payable in respect of a part only of a year, the tax shall be deemed to be at the rate of one shilling and eightpence.

(2) For the purpose of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act, 1913, or of continuing income-tax for any future income-tax year, the rate of income-tax for the current year shall be deemed to be two shillings and sixpence.

Source

The Income Tax Expert of the Accountant, *The War Finance Acts of 1914 to 1917* (London: Gee & Co., 1918), 17–19.

Finance Act, 29 July 1915

(10)—(1) Income-tax for the year beginning on the sixth day of April, nineteen hundred and fifteen, shall be charged at the rate of two shillings and sixpence, and super-tax shall be charged, levied, and paid for that year at double the rates mentioned in Section 3 of the Finance Act, 1914.

(2) All such enactments relating to income-tax, including super-tax, as were in force with respect to the duties of income-tax granted for the year beginning on the sixth day of April, nineteen hundred and fourteen, shall have full force and effect with respect to any duties of income tax hereby granted. . . .

Source

The Income Tax Expert of the Accountant, *The War Finance Acts of 1914 to 1917* (London: Gee & Co., 1918), 21.

Finance (No. 2) Act, 23 December 1915

20.—(1) In order, as far as may be, to provide for the collection of income-tax for the last six months of the current income-tax year at rates exceeding by forty per cent. the rates at which it is charged under the Finance Act, 1915, the following provisions shall have effect:

(a) The amount payable in respect of any assessment already made of income-tax already chargeable otherwise than by way of deduction, shall be treated as increased by twenty per cent., and any authority to collect the tax, and remedy for non-payment of the tax, shall apply accordingly; and

(b) An assessment of any such income-tax not already made shall be for an amount exceeding by twenty per cent. that for which it would have been made if this Act had not passed; and

(c) Such deductions shall be made in accordance with regulations prescribed by the Commissioners of Inland Revenue in the case of dividends, interest, or other annual sums (including rent) due or payable after the fifth day of October nineteen hundred and fifteen as will make the total amount deducted in respect of income-tax for the year equal to that which would have been deducted if income-tax for the year had been at the rate of three shillings; and

(d) Subsection (1) of Section 14 of the Revenue Act, 1911, shall apply, in cases where no further payment in respect of dividends, interest, or other annual sums is made after the fifth day of October nineteen hundred and fifteen and before the sixth day of April nineteen hundred and sixteen as if this Act were the Act imposing income-tax for the year, and as if three shillings were the rate ultimately charged for the year; and

(2) Where the amount of any exemption, relief, or abatement under the Income Tax Acts is to be determined by reference to the amount of income-tax on any sum, the amount of the tax shall be calculated at (2271) three shillings, with a proportionate reduction where relief is granted under Section 6 of the Finance Act, 1914, as amended by Section 10 of the Finance Act, 1915; and where income-tax is payable in respect of a part only of a year, the tax shall be deemed to be at the rate of three shillings. . . .

(3) For the purpose of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act, 1913, or of continuing income-tax for any future income-tax year, the rate of income-tax for the current year shall be deemed to be three shillings and sixpence. . . .

Super Tax

23.—Section 3 of the Finance Act, 1914, as amended by Section 10 of the Finance Act, 1915 (which contains the rates of super-tax), shall have effect as if the following items were substituted for the last item in Subsection (1) thereof, namely—

for every pound of the next one thousand pounds of the excess [i.e., income over £8,000]. . .	two shillings and tenpence.
For every pound of the next one thousand pounds of the excess [i.e., income over £9,000]. . .	three shillings and twopence.
For every pound of the next one thousand pounds of the excess [i.e., income over £10,000]. . .	three shillings and sixpence. . . .

Excess Profits Duty

Charge of Excess Profits Duty

38.—(1) There shall be charged, levied, and paid on the amount by which the profits arising from any trade or business to which this Part of this Act applies, in any accounting period which ended after the fourth day of August nineteen hundred and fourteen, and before the first day of July nineteen hundred and fifteen, exceeded, by more than two hundred pounds, the pre-war standard of profits, as defined for the purpose of this Part of this Act, a duty (in this Act referred to as “Excess Profits Duty”) of an amount equal to fifty per cent. of that excess.

Source

The Income Tax Expert of the Accountant, *The War Finance Acts of 1914 to 1917* (London: Gee & Co., 1918), 36–37, 48, 53, 71–72.

Finance Act, 19 July 1916

24.—(1) Income-tax for the year beginning on the sixth day of April nineteen hundred and sixteen shall be charged at the rate of five shillings, and super-tax

shall be charged, levied, and paid for that year at the same rates as those charged for the year beginning on the sixth day of April nineteen hundred and fifteen.

(2) All such enactments relating to income-tax, including super-tax, as were in force with respect to the duties of income-tax granted for the year beginning on the sixth day of April nineteen hundred and fifteen shall (with the exception of Section 20 of the Finance (No. 2) Act, 1915) have full force and effect with respect to any duties of income tax hereby granted. . . .

American Securities

(27).—(1) In addition to any other income-tax or super-tax charged under this or any other Act, there shall, subject to the provisions of this section, be charged, levied, and paid for the year beginning on the sixth day of April nineteen hundred and sixteen, in respect of any part of the income of any person to which this section applies, an additional duty of income-tax at the rate of two shillings for every pound of that part of the income.

The income to which this section applies is the income derived from securities which are for the time being included in the Treasury special list as defined by this section, while those securities are so included; and the income shall, for the purposes of this section, be deemed to be derived at the time when the interest or dividends payable in respect of the securities become payable.

(2) The additional duty under this section shall not be charged on any income derived before the twenty-ninth of July nineteen hundred and sixteen.

(3) A person shall be entitled to relief from the additional duty imposed by this section—

(a) in respect of income derived between the date of the publication of the Treasury special list and a date twenty-eight days thereafter if the securities are during that period offered to the Treasury and ultimately become at the ultimate disposal of the Treasury; and

(b) in respect of income derived from any securities included in the Treasury special list after the (2272) securities have been placed at the absolute disposal of the Treasury; and

(c) in respect of income derived from any such securities after a person has placed the securities conditionally at the disposal of the Treasury, if the

securities ultimately become at the absolute disposal of the Treasury without unreasonable delay on the part of that person; and

(d) in respect of income derived from any such securities whether they ultimately become at the absolute disposal of the Treasury or not, if it is shown to the satisfaction of the Treasury that any delay in placing or failure to place those securities at the disposal of the Treasury has arisen from circumstances beyond the control of the holders of the securities. . . .

Excess Profits Duty

Increase of Rate

45.—(1) The Finance (No. 2) Act, 1915 (in this part of this Act referred to as the principal Act), shall, so far as it relates to excess profits duty, apply, unless parliament otherwise determines, to any accounting period ending on or after the first day of July nineteen hundred and fifteen and before the first day of August nineteen hundred and seventeen, as it applies to accounting periods ended after the fourth day of August nineteen hundred and fourteen and before the said first day of July.

(2) Section 38 of the principal Act shall, as respects excess profits arising in any accounting period beginning after the expiration of a year from the commencement of the first accounting period, have effect as if sixty per cent. of the excess were substituted as the rate of duty for fifty per cent. of the excess.

Source

The Income Tax Expert of the Accountant, *The War Finance Acts of 1914 to 1917* (London: Gee & Co., 1918), 114, 117–119, 136–137.

Finance Act, 2 August 1917

10.—(1) Income-tax for the year beginning on the sixth day of April nineteen hundred and seventeen, shall be charged at the rate of five shillings, and super-tax, and the additional income-tax under section twenty-seven of the Finance Act, 1916, on securities which the Treasury are willing to purchase, shall be charged, levied, and paid for that year at the same rates as those charged for the year beginning on the sixth day of April nineteen hundred and sixteen.

(2) All such enactments relating to income-tax, including super-tax, as were in force with respect to the duties of income-tax granted for the year beginning on the sixth day of April, nineteen hundred and sixteen, shall have full force and effect with respect to any duties of income tax hereby granted. . . .

Excess Profits Duty

Increase in Rate

20.—(1) The Finance (No. 2) Act, 1915 (in this Part of this Act referred to as the principal Act), shall, so far as it relates to excess profits duty, apply, unless Parliament otherwise determined, to any accounting period ending on or after the first day of August nineteen hundred and seventeen and before the first day of August nineteen hundred and eighteen, as it applies to accounting periods ended after the fourth day of August nineteen hundred and fourteen and before the first day of August nineteen hundred and seventeen.

(2) Section thirty-eight of the principal Act shall, as respects excess profits arising in any accounting period commencing on or after the first day of January nineteen hundred and seventeen, have effect as if eighty per cent. of the excess were substituted as the rate of duty for sixty per cent. of the excess, or, in the case of an accounting period which commenced before that date but ends after that date, as if eighty per cent. were substituted for sixty per cent. as respects so much of the excess as may be apportioned under this Act to the part commencing on that date.

Source

The Income Tax Expert of the Accountant, *The War Finance Acts of 1914 to 1917* (London: Gee & Co., 1918), 154, 163–164.

A Conservative View of the German Imperial Budget for 1918, *Neue Preussische Zeitung*, 25 February 1918

The survey of our imperial finance, as presented to us by the Imperial Budget for 1918, is anything but cheering. The impression made by the war upon our imperial finance is deepening with every added year.

(2273)

Two serious gaps in the general sum total confront us—the deficit of 2,875 million marks in the Ordinary Budget, and the blank left for items of war

expenditures in the Extraordinary Budget. The deficit will have to be made good by taxation and loans—taxation, in order to meet the continued budget requirements, and loans “made necessary by the war.” Thus it was in previous years, and thus it must be on this occasion. The ladder by which the descent was made is recognizable in the financial estimates of the previous year. The war year 1914 caused no great disturbance in the budget plan; it was even able to close with a surplus of 220 million marks, in spite of a considerable falling off of revenues, because it was freed from the expenses of the army and the navy, these being handed over to the War Budget. The financial year of 1915, for which a milliard more than in the previous year had already to be placed to the service of debts, was also able to balance its revenues and expenditures without the help of new taxes. But in the advance estimate for 1916 the interest on the national debt rose already from 1,268 million marks to 2,303 million marks, so that, for the deficit of 480 million marks thus created, security had to be found by bringing in five drafts for new laws. In the year 1917, in order to ease the burden of the deficit 1,250 million marks, another turn of the taxation screw became necessary. In addition to the property taxes with 90 million marks, the tax on the exchange of wares was imposed, 225 million marks; the Tobacco Tax (war addition), 87 million marks; Bills of Lading (*Frachturkunden*), 66 million marks; state dues to the post and telegraph rates, 225 million marks. Also the customs receipts could be put at 41 million marks. These taxes resulted from the sanction granted in the previous year. They could not prevent the discrepancy just mentioned between the ordinary imperial revenues and expenditures. In the advance estimate for 1918 the series of taxes decided on by the Reichstag in the previous year is accepted, but even the collection of all these will not equalize the expenditures; the new deficit demands the imposition of yet more taxes. What new sources are to be tapped we shall not be told for a week or two.

A glance at the growth of the state debt, on which the interest demands have risen by leaps and bounds, explains the unfavorable situation of our imperial finance. The figures show how sharply the curve has risen: 1914, 250 million marks; 1916, 2,302 million marks; 1917, 3,562 million marks; and 1918, 5,908 million marks. In the last-named amount it is true that 92 million marks are for wiping out the state debt, for the earlier loans are not only to receive interest but also to be wiped out, in addition to which the Imperial Treasury warrants of 4½ per cent, issued during the two previous war years, are to be redeemed; so, from July 1, 1918, on, they are to be paid back at their current value, for which purpose 16 million marks are to be assigned for the service of debt in 1918. Even if a redemption of the war loans on a broad scale is not possible during the war, an increase in the state debt, and its consequent requirement of more

interest, is unavoidable, for, as we have already remarked, the credits to be warranted in the Extraordinary Budget still await their security. In the previous year two additional sums of 15 million marks were sanctioned, and a similar demand will also have to be reckoned with on this occasion.

Under such circumstances, the future prospects of our imperial finance appear rather gloomy. It cannot be denied that Germany's financial powers have proved quite remarkable during the war, much better than even the extreme optimists expected on the outbreak of hostilities. In our internal economic life we had gathered together such great productive riches that with their help we were able to overcome the greatest difficulties that confronted us in the field of state finance. By means of war loans and taxation we have been able to develop our national economy to such an extent that our war finance has not for one moment been endangered. The new imposition of taxes in the years 1916 and 1917 was, it is true, greeted with some murmuring, but the conviction that they were inevitable quickly silenced all objection. To the 1½ milliard marks of new taxation procured by this means was also added in 1917 the amount derived from the War Profit Tax, an addition of a round 5 milliard marks. Thereby both the state and the municipalities have collected another several hundred millions from additional war taxation, apart from the direct taxes. We have therefore been able to gather from the bulk of our population something like another 6 to 7 milliards in war taxation during the year 1917, besides 25½ milliards from long-period and several milliards from short-period loans. Our satisfaction at this proof of our (2274) financial capabilities must not, however, blind us to the fact that we shall be obliged to increase our exertions in this direction yet further. The line these increased exertions will take is the present question in our taxation policy. In the present selection of taxes the greatest weight has been laid upon their productivity, and the fear lest they might have an injurious economic effect has always been met by the objection that they were only temporary war measures, the incorporation of which in the organic structure of our whole scheme of taxation would be left an open question. In the rearrangement now imminent, it will no longer be possible to evade radical decisions in respect to a lasting solution of the financial problem. The Secretary of the State Treasury has emphasized that the economic significance of the taxation reform will be taken by the State Treasury as the guiding-thread for the work of the Imperial Treasury.

Source

Ralph Haswell Lutz, ed., *Fall of the German Empire, 1914–1918*, 2 vols. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1932), 2:213–216.

About The Documents

Two different kinds of documents are included here: extracts from successive British War Finance Acts, and a German newspaper report on the 1918 budget. Despite their dry and technical tone, the various War Finance Acts illustrate the inexorable progression of increases in income, super-, and excess profits taxes and the steadily escalating demands these imposed upon the relatively well-to-do. By mid-1916 the British government was spending £5 million per day on the war, a huge figure when one remembers that the estimated prewar British government budget for 1914 was £209.45 million. Although some of this was raised through the sale of (often tax-exempt) war bonds to the British public, much came from drastic increases in the taxation of incomes and profits, which in turn had a heavily redistributive and egalitarian effect upon incomes. Neither in the United States nor Britain did postwar taxation return to the halcyon days of early 1914; although taxes fell, government spending absorbed a substantially higher proportion of gross national product (GNP). In prewar Britain, income tax was levied at nine pence to one shilling, three pence per pound (4.5 to 6.25 percent) on incomes above £160, and supertax only on incomes in excess of £3,000. By the time the war ended, the standard rate of income tax was 30 percent on incomes over £130, and supertax took an additional 22.5 percent of incomes over £2,500. Although historians and economists have subsequently suggested that governments in all belligerent nations, including Britain and the United States, failed to utilize their powers of taxation to the fullest, at the time such increases seemed revolutionary, and their implementation would probably only have been possible at a time of national crisis, when paying taxes at such rates was considered a patriotic duty. By the end of the war, higher levels of taxation had become generally acceptable. They also had a long-term egalitarian impact. Although income taxes reached down into the upper levels of the working class, they fell most heavily on the middle and upper classes. After World War I, British spending on social welfare services averaged 8 percent of the GNP, as opposed to half that before 1914, effectively redistributing resources from the wealthy to the poor.

One other feature of the British Finance Acts of June 1916 that deserves mention is the additional 10 percent tax special provision made for income arising from American securities. To continue to finance Allied purchases in the United States, the British government desperately needed to mobilize all available dollar exchange resources, including dollar-denominated securities held by private individuals. Even during wartime, concern to preserve the sanctity of private property, especially holdings of foreign stocks and bonds,

deterred the British Treasury from simply requisitioning such securities, even with appropriate compensation. Instead, discriminatory rates of taxation were imposed in order to induce the owners to dispose of them—not usually at the most advantageous of prices—to the British government for onward sale in the United States or to be used as collateral for American loans to Britain.

The newspaper article is not only different in nature in that it is an unsigned commentary on the German budgetary situation, but it also gives an interesting example of how, despite press censorship, measured but in some ways remarkably frank conservative criticism of German governmental policies was still acceptable. In early 1918 the German military, having signed the Peace of Brest Litovsk with Russia, enabling it largely to ignore the Eastern Front, threw everything into a last-ditch effort to win the war before American troops reached (2275) France in large numbers. German resources of manpower were stretched to their limit, and so, as this editorial in a conservative Berlin newspaper pointed out, were German finances. The near exhaustion of all German matériel and human resources, together with flagging domestic morale at home, were major reasons a quick victory had become essential. As this article remarked with some restraint, revenue shortfalls meant that “the future prospects of our imperial finance appear rather gloomy.” The shortfalls in large part reflected the degree to which total war placed demands on the German economic structure—even when due allowance was made for revenues received from occupied French, Belgian, and Russian lands and especially when compounded by Germany’s exclusion from many overseas markets—and ultimately proved unsustainable. Budgetary difficulties were unlikely to bring the collapse of the German war effort, but the more deep-rooted problems, the growing shortage of both manpower and resources of which such constraints were symptomatic, contributed substantially to Germany’s defeat later that year.

Further Reading

Bogart, Ernest Ludlow. *War Costs and Their Financing: A Study of the Financing of the War and the After-War Problems of Debt and Taxation*. New York: Appleton, 1921.

Cannadine, David. *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990.

Eichengreen, Barry. *Golden Fetters: The Gold Standard and the Great Depression, 1919–1939*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.

Feldman, Gerald. *Army, Industry, and Labour in Germany, 1914–1918*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966.

———. *The Great Disorder: Politics, Economics, and Society in the German Inflation, 1914–1924*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.

Ferguson, Niall. *The Pity of War*. London: Allen Lane, 1998.

Fisk, Harvey E. *French Public Finance in the Great War and Today*. New York: Bankers Trust, 1922.

Grady, Henry F. *British War Finance, 1919–1919*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1927.

Hardach, Gerd. *The First World War, 1914–1918*. Trans. Peter and Betty Ross. London: Allen Lane, 1977.

Strachan, Hew. *The First World War, Vol. 1, To Arms*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Wilson, Trevor. *The Myriad Faces of War*. Cambridge: Polity, 1986.

Winter, J. M. *The Great War and the British People*. 2nd ed. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

MLA

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "28. War Finance." *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*, ABC-CLIO, 2005, pp. . *ABC-CLIO eBook Collection*, legacy.abc-clio.com/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2182.

Chicago Manual of Style

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "28. War Finance." In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005. <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2182>.

APA

Roberts, P. M., S. C. Tucker (2005). 28. War Finance. In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia* (pp.). Retrieved from <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2182>

Essay 29. The British Home Front

The British Home Front during World War I

Within all the belligerent countries, World War I played a major part in precipitating wide-ranging and permanent internal social changes. The great majority of these were in the direction of greater egalitarianism, something labor and socialist parties in all major European countries had demanded since at least the late nineteenth century. The wealthy and civilians were called upon to make sacrifices commensurate with those demanded of the working class and soldiers who were risking their lives. In order to mobilize the civilian population for total war, millions of men and women had to be persuaded either to enlist in the armed forces or to work long hours in the industries upon whose output the frontline war effort depended. Soldiers' families received a variety of welfare benefits, and by 1915 trade union members were awarded higher wages in return for temporarily setting aside contractual restrictions on their hours and working conditions. Throughout the war British working men were more successful than those in many other countries in obtaining substantial pay increases, effectively decreasing existing wage differentials between themselves and the middle and upper classes. Many of these pay raises were ultimately funded by the government, through its war contracts. The British war effort was also enormously expensive; according to a speech by British Prime Minister Herbert H. Asquith in the House of Commons, by late 1916 the British government spent no less than £5.07 million every day on the war, as opposed to the £72.5 million total for British defense expenditures for all of 1913. A large proportion of British war supplies came from the United States, and such purchases had to be financed in dollars, which were in increasingly short supply as the war wore on. In autumn 1915, the British government therefore imposed punitive taxes upon the British holders of American securities, with the objective of forcing the owners to relinquish these to the Treasury for resale in the United States. Throughout the war, income taxes and supertaxes on the wealthy rose dramatically, and although they fell somewhat once peace was declared, they never went back to prewar levels.

Other wartime developments affected the pre-war lifestyle of the wealthy. In spring 1916 military (2276) conscription was finally introduced in Great Britain. As manpower was in ever shorter supply at the front, several supplementary conscription acts gradually tightened the net around those originally exempt, raising the age limit and reducing the range of occupations initially exempt from conscription. Women, especially single women, were also encouraged to take jobs that would assist the war effort, in munitions factories,

as nurses, on the land, or in female auxiliary branches of the armed forces. The upper and middle classes could no longer rely upon often poorly paid servants to carry out the bulk of their household chores; many of the male servants joined the armed forces, while the women abandoned the restraints of domestic service to work in other occupations that, while often demanding and sometimes even dangerous, gave them greater personal independence as well as higher wages. As the war dragged on, increasing numbers of “nongentlemen” won commissions as officers in the armed forces, thereby overturning accepted social and class distinctions. In D. H. Lawrence’s once-banned novel *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, the gamekeeper with whom the married lady of the manor has a passionate love affair had been just such a “temporary gentleman” in the wartime army, while Lady Chatterley’s husband had received injuries that had left him permanently crippled, a scenario undoubtedly intended to symbolize the social disruptions the war had generated. High taxes, inflation, and the substantial death duties levied on the many estates whose owners were killed during the war all helped to ensure that when the war ended, far fewer well-to-do families would be able to afford the vast numbers of servants who had ministered to their needs before 1914.

Wartime shortages also promoted greater egalitarianism. Great Britain had to import much of its food from overseas. The British government gradually commandeered all available shipping for wartime purposes, reducing food shipments to the minimum necessary for survival. For almost a year from spring 1917, German submarine depredations threatened to cut this lifeline, reducing British food exports to 75 percent of the 1913 level in 1917 and a mere 65 percent in 1918 and causing serious food shortages in Britain. Until 1917 the British government had largely relied upon moral persuasion to induce the British people to economize on food and other vital commodities, but at this stage legislative rationing sugar, meat, margarine, bread, tea, fuel, and other necessities was introduced. Protests against high prices brought the introduction of government subsidies for bread and potatoes. Although a black market existed for those who could afford to pay, the massive disparities of living standards that had characterized the lifestyles of rich and poor were greatly reduced.

Businessmen also felt the impact of war. The British government effectively directed the use of capital, ensuring that it could only be employed for war-related purposes. Businesses producing goods for the war effort undoubtedly profited handsomely. At least for the war’s duration, those that could not retool themselves as war-related industries fell by the wayside, deprived of raw materials and investment. London investment bankers who had once issued

securities for business and governments from around the world only too often found themselves twiddling their thumbs, though Barings avoided idleness by undertaking a wide variety of financial tasks on behalf of the British government. Perhaps more demoralizing for all levels of society, however, was the steady drumbeat of the casualty lists, as ever greater numbers of young British men died on the Western Front, with no discernible end to the war yet in sight.

Letters by Gaspard Farrer

Farrer to John W. Sterling, 26 May 1915

The last month has been a terrible one for the people of this country and the daily casualty list is heartbreaking. It is nothing less than a war of extermination, and I believe the public generally are beginning to realise this for the first time. Happily, however bad it is for us it must be ten times worse for the Germans, but their long preparation and thorough organisation will make it a hard task for us before we can hope to win. I have lost two cousins lately, a Darwin, a lad who had inherited much of the ability of his family and great personal charm besides, an only son; also a son of my late partner Henry Le Merchant. But an even greater grief for me is the loss of Denys Stephenson who was almost like a son to me. He spent the last ten days of his life in England with me in London. Anyone more unfitted for a soldier and the rough life at front one could hardly imagine. He was one of those dear gentle boys whom (2277) everyone loves, but was quite unfitted to take care of himself in the rough and tumble of life, whether in fighting or in business or in any other way.

. . . On Sunday morning at 10 o'clock a German Taube came right over the house [at Sandwich] flying at an enormous height up, and the week before several Taubes and Zeppelins had visited Ramsgate and Deal and dropped bombs, but mercifully did very little damage. Most of my household heard the noise of explosions and gun firing, and my brother Harry got up and could see the flashing of the guns; you will not be surprised to hear that my immaculate conscience enabled me to sleep peacefully through it all.

Source

File Dep.33/16/144–147, Gaspard Farrer Letterbooks, the Baring Archives, ING Bank, London Branch.

Farrer to Robert Winsor, 17 November 1917

There has been a good deal of writing on the subject [of taxation] by people who ought to know better and irresponsible talk, but it is quite plain that nobody has really thought out what a levy of capital means. For all intents we have it already in our death duties, nor can I see in these matters that taxation of income or capital is in any way different; if by income tax and super-tax you take away a man's income and take it continuously, you take away his capital. No one yet has condescended to explain how it would be possible for the taxpayer to respond to a capital levy that would be really worth making. That in some form or another we shall have to give up by taxation all of our income but a moderate allowance for living purposes I have very little doubt; the question that is exercising my mind is whether we shall have much to give up, or whether the Labour Party in your country as well as ours will be able to enforce such terms as will practically deprive us of both income and capital. If good sense and good temper prevail, I shall look forward to a great increase in the super-tax, practically amounting to confiscation above a modest sum, and a great increase in the death duties. To me the very big individual incomes have always seemed a danger in the community and a very moderate blessing to the possessor, and the inheritance of big fortunes an unmixed evil for the inheritors. The taxation that is inevitable will bring great changes to this country and to yours, especially to this country, but I believe here we shall bear the burdens without complaint, and though we shall be worse off I doubt whether the country as a whole will be the worse for the change.

Source

File Dep.33/18/115–117, Gaspard Farrer Letterbooks, The Barings Archives, ING Bank, London Branch.

Farrer to John W. Sterling, 24 December 1917

Among the latest requests of the Government is that no one shall send Christmas greetings by cable on account of the pressure of government work in the cable departments, so this year I must content myself with a letter to send you and Blossy my best love. We have recently been four days without a cable from Boston, and a message despatched to us from Tokio on the Monday reaches us on a Saturday, so there is ample evidence of the congestion. My brothers and I are spending our Christmas in London, so as to comply with the Government's request about the Christmas travelling. We are living in one room in the hopes of eking out our coal allowance through the winter, and a trip from the sitting room to our bedrooms is like a passage to the North Pole.

However, you must not think we are grumbling; everybody has the same troubles and so far as I can see the people in the country are taking them contentedly enough. As to whether people would be equally quiet if a real shortage of food occurred remains to be seen; perhaps it will not occur; the only articles of which so far there seems to be a scarcity are milk, butter and margarine.

The whole life and business of the country is being more and more absorbed by the Government. Government officials are multiplying and office accommodation for them has necessarily to be constantly increased. Fresh buildings are constantly being erected in parks and open spaces, and fresh private houses being commandeered. One of the latest has been our next door neighbour in the [St. James's] Square, and we are in dread of being the next victims. The American Y.M.C.A. in the garden of the Square has commenced building, and I expect before long will have the place ready for the reception of your officers. There are to be bedrooms for a hundred officers with a common kitchen and common sitting-rooms. A one storied building, so that it ought not to be of any material inconvenience to us as regards either light or air. . . .

(2278)

I see that some of your papers are predicting that the War will last another five years. This would seem to me an impossibility. But I should have said the same three and a half years ago if I had been told that the War would last as long as it has done; somehow or another I cannot believe it will last much longer. In all countries, whether belligerent or neutral, the population is becoming more and more restless, and the evils which brought the restlessness to a head in Russia are likely to increase now in an accumulative ratio, and so may at any time become intolerable; and one feels confident that these evils not only prevail in enemy countries but are far worse there than elsewhere. I am hoping that as regards our own Armies they will reserve their strength until such time as yours are ready to combine in an offensive. It will no doubt mean many months of trying waiting for us, but I am confident we shall be able to hold our own on the defensive.

My nephew who found life in a Cavalry Regiment too monotonous and joined the Flying Corps last summer, was shot down while photographing over the German lines at the end of October, and last week we had definite news through the Geneva Red Cross of his death. We had indeed but little hope from the first. My other two nephews have been wounded but are now recovered. One of them escaped most luckily; a shell burst at his feet and tore his clothes to ribbons, but beyond the shock and slight wound in his head which kept him

in hospital for a few days, he escaped unhurt otherwise. This was Eddie Blair's eldest boy; his other boy, who is in the Navy, is somewhere between here and Cape Town, and we gather from his letters he is having the time of his life, though naturally enough he writes to his Mother only of his enjoyments.

Source

File Dep.33/18/134–138, Gaspard Farrer Letterbooks, The Barings Archives, ING Bank, London Branch.

Farrer to Beverley S. MacInnes (Toronto), 28 January 1918

. . . [I]ndeed I trust this year will see the end of the war and in my bones I cannot help thinking it will, though alas, one cannot point to any sign or semblance of German repentance as yet, and worse still it is obvious we are a long way yet from beating them in the field). . . .

The food shortage here is indeed unpleasant, but I gather nobody need go short of food, though they may be short of the particular things they like or are in the habit of eating. Butter, margarine and meat seem to be the scarcest articles, and it is obviously difficult to get either of the first two. At the west-end herrings have been selling as high as sevenpence and smelts as high as a shilling apiece. Happily for us ten days ago the cold weather disappeared and we have had a glorious fortnight of spring temperature, and quite dry with plenty of [illegible word] I never remember such a January before; it must have been a great relief all through the country especially as regards stocks of coal. We have been living in one room in St. James's Square to economise coal, and can now safely see ourselves through the winter with what we have remaining in stock. I have only been once to Sandwich since September as travelling is difficult and golf there at an end.

Source

File Dep.33/18/172–174, Gaspard Farrer Letterbooks, The Barings Archives, ING Bank, London Branch.

Farrer to Sterling, 3 April 1918

We have been having a strenuous fortnight, nothing like it since that first early winter of the war in October 1914. How we escaped destruction then will always be a mystery to me and makes one confident that our armies cannot have escaped then to be rolled up now. The last forty-eight hours has shown

some respite from the desperate and continuous fighting, and I hope will enable us and the French to reorganise and get reinforcements to the front. Meantime the action of your own President and people has caused us the deepest satisfaction, and I like to think that in this struggle against military tyranny and German domination we shall soon have Americans fighting shoulder to shoulder with our own people. For long past the Boss [Lord Mount Stephen, founder of the Canadian Pacific Railroad] has continued to say that it is your war as much as ours, and that is a point which obviously your own people are realising to-day.

Next week we are to have the Budget and the new Man Power Bill. We do not yet know the details of the latter, but it looks as if every clerk of capacity both at Barings' office and at Lefevres' will be swept off into the service, as well as Alfred Mildmay here and young Le Marchant next door. I expect before long John [Lord Revelstoke] and I will have to take it in turns to sweep the office out.

(2279)

Source

File Dep.33/19/30–31, Gaspard Farrer Letterbooks, The Baring Archives, ING Bank, London Branch.

Farrer to Robert Winsor, 2 May 1918

In our own case we know that all our professional regimental officers have long ago been killed; so too have nearly all the best of our young men, those of public school and university education, who, though not soldiers by profession, joined the Army in the early days of the war and were by nature leaders of men; to-day both regimental officers and troops leave much to be desired. We still have some magnificent regiments left, but we cannot repeat to-day in the way of resistance, what our little army did in 1914. How they stopped the German rush then will be always a mystery to me. One must remember too that since that time guns and machine guns on both sides have multiplied enormously, and their effects must be so much the more demoralising. Happily our enemies are suffering from the same causes as ourselves, and every time we can stop their offensive, they will find it harder to resume. . . .

. . . Life does not get any easier, but that we do not mind—indeed nothing matters but the winning of the war. We are looking forward to the day when

John [the notoriously elegant Lord Revelstoke, his senior partner] is forced to appear in the office in a £4. 7. 6. reach-me-down suit of government cloth.

Source

File Dep.33/19/62–65, Gaspard Farrer Letterbooks, The Baring Archives, ING Bank, London Branch.

Farrer to Robert Winsor, 4 July 1918

Unless experience in the U.S. differs from that here you will find that your ordinary work in the office will get less and less as the war goes on. Here at any rate the Government is gradually absorbing all the business of the country. I have no doubt we might have done more—much more—by branching out in fresh directions, but we none of us have any desire to make money out of the War, and are just doing what business comes in the ordinary way and are content with that. But it gives us plenty of spare time. We shut the office now at 4.0 [p.m.] and might almost shut it at 3.0. We have all of us work outside on government committees of sorts; some of it interesting and perhaps useful; and most of it in my opinion a vain beating of the air, attempting to lay down conditions for the future when none of us know what the future will be. Among my committees is one for the capital issues in this country; the late Governor of the Bank of England [Lord Cunliffe] our chairman, two M.Ps., the permanent secretary of the Board of Trade and myself. Probably the best abused committee of any of the hundreds that now exist in this country. As Lord Cunliffe truly says, if the war goes on much longer, neither he nor I will have a friend left in the business world of the U.K.; no thanks for any application that is granted, and a plentiful crop of curses from all those we turn down. Do let me know who constitutes the committee in your country. If it is a worrying job here, it must be a thousand times worse for you, indeed I should have thought no single committee could have undertaken it, and it would almost have to be done by committees in each State. . . .

We are lamenting [Minister of Food] Lord Rhondda's death, he has really done fine work. He had the good sense to see that he must satisfy people here that all had the same treatment—rich and poor alike, and he succeeded. Except for the prices being high there has been little matter for complaint. I have not touched butcher's meat for months, that is beef and mutton; but there has always been plenty of food of other sorts and I never felt better in my life than to-day. Lately bacon and ham have been more easily obtainable, largely I believe due to the sacrifices made by your people, though of course at this time there is plenty in the way of vegetables, eggs, etc. The most recent rationing order is for

coal and light, and I am bound to say it looks pretty stringent; for my house the allowance of electricity for the year is less than one-fourth of the amount consumed last quarter. It looks as if we should spend next winter in great coats and the place where Moses was when the candle went out. But if only we win the war nothing else matters.

Source

File Dep.33/19/100–104, Gaspard Farrer Letterbooks, The Baring Archives, ING Bank, London Branch.

Farrer to Robert Winsor, 14 November 1918

If the news from our side was wonderful when you wrote, how can we describe it now? No words that I know in their most exaggerated superlative can fit the (2280) situation. . . . It is almost impossible to realise as yet that this horrible fighting is over and that we are at peace. I expect that many of us in both countries will only now begin to realise the losses we have suffered.

I suppose the Governments of all countries will now start on demobilisation, a truly gigantic task,—indeed demobilisation of crowned heads seems the only part that is easy. In this country where everything has been under Government control it will be difficult to get back into the habits of thought that ruled our lives before the war, and perhaps still more difficult to adopt those new habits of thought and new ways of business which the changed conditions of affairs will demand.

Source

File Dep.33/20/8–9, Gaspard Farrer Letterbooks, The Baring Archives, ING Bank, London Branch.

Farrer to Michael Gavin, 14 November 1918

Since you wrote so much of tragic and transcendent moment has been happening that we all feel positively dazed. Thank Heaven this terrible war is over; and thanks to all your people to whom no doubt is due the deciding factor of the war. . . . On the whole people in this country have taken the end of the war as soberly as one could wish; a few of the very young, boys and girls, have been making merry, but the great majority of people have lost too many members of their families to do more than be thankful that the fighting is over.

I am afraid these losses will be felt more and more from now on when the excitement of a fight for existence has passed. . . .

We are all well at the [St. James's] Square, living in a single room and thankful to be able to have a fire there. The rest of the house is shut up and after dark we stumble about the passages as best we can by the light of a tallow dip. However I suppose all these minor troubles will pass away by degrees, and really nothing matters now that we have won the war. I can hardly believe that we shall ever return to our former extravagant ease of life, and I for one shall not much regret that. Some of the spartan simplicity of life, which Lord Mount Stephen used to preach but not practice, will be none the worse for any of us. The raids of an inexorable and insatiable Chancellor of the Exchequer are likely to leave us poor enough. . . .

Source

File Dep.33/20/10–11, Gaspard Farrer Letterbooks, The Baring Archives, ING Bank, London Branch.

Gaspard Farrer (1860–1939)

Gaspard Farrer was one of the leading members of the prominent British private banking house, Baring Brothers. He became a partner in 1902 and from then until his retirement in 1925 served as the firm's managing director, second only to his dominating senior partner John Baring, Lord Revelstoke. A lifelong bachelor, Farrer had numerous siblings, and he lived in considerable style with two of his brothers, who likewise never married, in a mansion designed for him by Sir Edwin Lutyens at 7 St. James's Square, London. In the country, the three also shared another Lutyens house at Sandwich, Kent. Like most bankers in the city of London, before 1914 Farrer believed that a major European war would be economically disastrous to all the participants and that it was therefore unlikely to occur. When war broke out, he initially thought that the economic and logistical demands of the conflict would prove so onerous that it could not possibly last more than one or two years; as it wore on, he came to recognize that all existing financial and economic rules had been set aside, and it was impossible to predict just how protracted the fighting would be.

About The Documents

Farrer was a prolific correspondent, and most of his letterbooks have been preserved in the archives of Baring Brothers in the City of London. From the late nineteenth century onward, Farrer had particularly close ties with

numerous prominent American and Canadian bankers and businessmen, with whom he corresponded extensively over many decades, the subjects of his letters ranging from their mutual business ventures to international politics and personal news. He usually made at least one lengthy annual visit to North America, vacationing most summers with some of his transatlantic friends at a remote fishing camp in Canada. Farrer's personal contacts, as well as his job as managing director, apparently led him to handle the bulk of Baring Brothers' correspondence with its Canadian and American business associates. The letters included here are just a few of the many Farrer wrote to his North American correspondents during World War I. Most of the recipients (2281) were leading businessmen in Canada and the United States. James W. Sterling, a wealthy lawyer and close associate of what was then the National City Bank of New York (present-day Citibank), amassed an enormous personal fortune. Robert Winsor was the head of the Boston investment bank Kidder Peabody, while Beverly MacInnes and Michael Gavin were important Canadian railway and communications executives.

From the onset of war Farrer's North American associates, whether from Canada, which was itself at war with the Central Powers, or the United States, were staunchly pro-British and anti-German in sympathy. At an early stage of the war, his letters to some of those in the United States may have had something of an ulterior motive, to demonstrate Britain's determination and resolve to fight on against its enemies and to ensure the sympathy of influential Americans for the Allied cause. For the most part, however, Farrer's letters were private missives to business associates who had long since become personal friends and with whom he had for many years corresponded freely and frankly. At most, by illustrating the sacrifices that the British were making to win the war and by making it clear that neither the length of the war nor its cost had generated defeatism among himself and his friends, he may have hoped to maintain their pro-British sympathies. In practice, however, there is no discernible sign that Farrer ever had any sense that his correspondents might lack confidence in British resolution. Interestingly, despite clearly finding the war long and wearing, and notwithstanding his prewar hopes that war might be avoided, Farrer himself never showed any sign of questioning the justice and validity of the British cause or the need, once the war had begun, to win the contest whatever the cost.

Over time, his letters vividly described the growing impact of the war upon the daily lives of even the exceptionally well-heeled upper classes in Great Britain. Unfortunately, Farrer's letters for August 1915 to June 1916 do not seem to have survived. Even so, as one reads through the remaining correspondence,

Farrer's letters ably convey the ever increasing constraints that war placed upon British life, as the "whole life and business of this country is . . . more and more absorbed by the Government." Throughout, casualties among his own family and those of close friends and colleagues are a recurrent motif. London and Sandwich, the two places where he had homes, were both subjected to German zeppelin raids. By 1917 food shortages, the rationing of fuel, government direction of the economy, and fear of social unrest had become significant. Farrer himself served on a government committee to ration capital issues, and he commented that Barings, which was known for its adherence to conservative financial principles and traditions, had no real desire to make money out of the war. In fact, throughout the war Barings took on many war-related financial tasks for the British government, helping to administer the Bank of England's takeover of British-owned American securities and even occasionally handling some British orders in the United States. By the time the war ended, Farrer anticipated that austerity and high taxes would persist for many years to come. He rejoiced when, in response to the last great spring 1918 German offensive, American troops finally began to arrive in France in large numbers. Although he welcomed the armistice, Farrer felt that the war's heavy casualties had made lighthearted celebrations inappropriate. Overall, the letters of this prudent middle-aged banker give an honest and straightforward picture of the reaction of one highly placed and well-connected British man to the conflict as it evolved. One suspects that his outlook was typical of many of his class and those slightly below it in its attachment to convention and tradition and its lack of fundamental questioning of the war.

Further Reading

Cassis, Youssef. *City Bankers, 1880–1914*. Trans. Margaret Rocques. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Davis, Belinda Joy. *Home Fires Burning: Food, Politics, and Everyday Life in World War I Berlin*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000.

De Groot, Gerard J. *Blighty: British Society in the Era of the Great War*. New York: Longman, 1996.

Orbell, John. *Baring Brothers & Co., Limited: A History to 1939*. London: Baring Brothers, 1985.

Robb, George. *British Culture and the First World War*. New York: Palgrave, 2002.

Wall, Richard, and Jay Winter, eds. *The Upheaval of War: Family, Work and Welfare in Europe, 1914–1918*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

Wilson, Trevor. *The Myriad Faces of War: Britain and the Great War, 1914–1918*. Cambridge: Polity, 1986.

Winter, Jay. *The Great War and the British People*. 2nd ed. New York: Palgrave, 2003.

(2282)

Winter, Jay, and Jean-Louis Robert, eds. *Capital Cities at War: Paris, London, Berlin, 1914–1919*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Ziegler, Philip. *The Sixth Great Power: A History of One of the Greatest of All Banking Families, The House of Barings, 1762–1929*. New York: Knopf, 1988.

MLA

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "29. The British Home Front." *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*, ABC-CLIO, 2005, pp. . *ABC-CLIO eBook Collection*, legacy.abc-clio.com/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2187.

Chicago Manual of Style

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "29. The British Home Front." In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005. <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2187>.

APA

Roberts, P. M., S. C. Tucker (2005). 29. The British Home Front. In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia* (pp.). Retrieved from <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2187>

Essay 30. The Growth of Statism

The Growth of Wartime Statism

In all the belligerent countries, World War I brought major increases in state power, as nations attempted to mobilize all their resources—human, industrial, financial, and intellectual—to meet the demands of waging total war. In some cases the enhancements in state authority were temporary, rolled back once the war had ended. In most countries, however, the post-1918 role of the state still remained substantially greater after the war than it had been in 1914. Wartime practices also set precedents for government mobilization for subsequent twentieth-century conflicts, especially World War II and to some extent even the Cold War. Moreover, the experience of strong state control during World War I probably facilitated and set the scene for the rise of authoritarian or totalitarian regimes, both Communist and Fascist, in Russia, Germany, and Italy.

Civil liberties and the suppression of dissent were usually among the first targets of state repression. Press censorship and curbs on free speech were generally justified as essential wartime measures necessary to protect national security. Even before Germany went to war against Russia and France, the kaiser's government was concerned that the majority Social Democratic deputies in the Reichstag could not be relied on to support the war, in particular to vote the funds required for its prosecution, and toyed with potential means of bypassing or reducing their political input, including the possibility of arresting dissenters. In practice, in the early weeks of the war all parties in the Reichstag, including the Social Democrats, gave overwhelming support to the war effort. Governments assumed wide powers of censorship, ensuring that for the most part only news acceptable to those in power reached their people. Immediately a state of war was declared in Germany; civil liberties were suspended and a state of martial law proclaimed. Ultimate authority in each military district now rested with the appropriate commanding officer, who had blanket powers to impose censorship, close down "seditious" businesses, break up meetings, search premises, or detain any individual viewed as a potential national security risk. Often these were exercised relatively subtly; newspaper editors received official guidance as to the kinds of stories they should include or the attitude they should take on particular questions. In 1915 and 1916, for example, German journalists were asked to take an emollient line toward the United States when discussing German-American diplomatic crises over submarine warfare, since a harshly critical approach might further inflame relations between the two countries. As a warning measure, on occasion newspapers

were closed down for a few days or weeks when they published a story the authorities found objectionable. When necessary, however, sterner measures were used. When Rosa Luxemburg, the radical Social Democrat and writer, persisted in publishing political commentaries harshly critical of government policies, German authorities incarcerated her for much of the war. Austro-Hungarian officials, presiding over a multiethnic empire with numerous component races, Serbs, Czechs, Poles, and others, each of which had produced a substantial number of nationalist activists who sought to establish separate independent states and who viewed the war as an opportunity to further their cause, often arrested and sometimes executed such individuals on charges of treason or subversion.

Allied security measures could be equally draconian. The British Defence of the Realm Act, passed four months after the war began, was typical. In the interests of national defense, it allowed the British government to suspend normal legal safeguards and judicial proceedings for those suspected of jeopardizing the country's security. A broad and inclusive piece of legislation, much of whose scope was deliberately left open, it also cracked down on individuals and organizations who dissented from the war. Although courts-martial were empowered to hear cases brought under the act, subsequent amendments gave civil courts the authority to do so, though when the government thought it appropriate such proceedings could be closed to the public and held in secret. In addition, the act gave the military authorities sweeping powers to requisition matériel needed for the war effort and to ignore standard operating procedures and regulations.

(2283)

In practice censorship regulations were often rather erratically applied; while some antiwar novels were censored, others equally critical were allowed to appear, as were Siegfried Sassoon's fiercely antiwar poems of 1917 and 1918. Conscientious objectors such as the philosopher Bertrand Russell, however, were liable to serve jail sentences unless they were prepared to undertake some other work of national importance in agriculture, the hospital services, or elsewhere. The press normally failed to report protests against the war, though here, too, the record was erratic. Especially when they possessed a leftist orientation, newspapers or periodicals that habitually questioned government policies too fiercely were liable to be closed down or to find it impossible to obtain the paper and other materials they needed.

Once the United States entered the war, it soon emulated the other belligerents. In June 1917 Congress passed the Espionage Act, under which the federal

government assumed sweeping powers to censor the press and to take draconian action against any individual or organization suspected of assisting the enemy. A new government-sponsored propaganda agency, the Committee on Public Information, whipped up public detestation of anything German, including dachshunds and sauerkraut; German literature was purged from libraries, German music banned from concert halls, and individuals with German names encouraged to anglicize them. From April 1917 onward, the Department of Justice arrested thousands of American citizens and aliens whose background, either ethnic or political, was considered undesirable. Most were of German or Austro-Hungarian origin or members of radical political organizations, such as the Socialist Party or the syndicalist labor union the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW, or Wobblies). Although most were eventually freed, around 1,200 were interned for the much of the war. In spring 1918 the United States amended the previous year's Espionage Act, which now became the Sedition Act, and made it a criminal offense to attempt to persuade others to avoid military service or to obstruct government recruiting efforts. The use of the mail service for such purposes was explicitly forbidden, and newspapers and periodicals convicted of contravening these regulations were closed down. Public protests against the war, the draft, and even the restrictions on freedom of speech were made the subject of prosecution and sometimes exposed their perpetrators to physical violence and harassment. Urging workers in war industries to strike was also made an offense. The socialists Max Eastman and Eugene V. Debs were both jailed for publishing material or making speeches querying the government's censorship policies and supporting a negotiated peace settlement, while Roger Baldwin, the future founder of the American Civil Liberties Union, was imprisoned for refusing to register for conscription.

Every belligerent government realized that victory in the war would probably go to whichever side most effectively mobilized its national resources of manpower and industrial production. France, Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Russia all had existing national conscription policies, but these were greatly tightened once war began, and more so over time, as casualties mounted and trained soldiers were in ever shorter supply. Britain only introduced conscription in spring 1916 but from then onward gradually enlarged the catchment pool, widening the age range and making increasing numbers of once "reserved" occupations eligible for call-up. Once the United States entered the war, it too quickly introduced military conscription, or the "draft," arguing that this policy represented the fairest and most equitable means of spreading the burden of military service across the entire community.

The demands of war, especially the desperate need to increase munitions production as speedily as possible, enormously enhanced state power. Governments either worked closely with representatives of industry or, when necessary, took control of various sectors of the economy. Besides fiat power, government agencies had a range of sanctions at their disposal, including the denial to uncooperative businesses of scarce raw materials and labor. In most cases, governments gradually assumed the power to direct labor to industries considered vital to the war effort, if necessary by drafting men in occupations deemed nonessential. As the war progressed and the continuing supply of troops for the warring armies became increasingly critical, such regulations were usually enforced much more harshly. Even so, labor often benefited, winning major concessions. In 1915 the British government passed the Munitions of War Act, empowering it to take direct control of factories vital to the war effort for the duration of the war, to determine wages and conditions of (2284) work, and to limit profits resulting from war-related business. Restrictive trade union practices, including the right to strike, were suspended until the war ended, but in return workers obtained high, guaranteed wages and the right to be consulted by the government on industrial conditions. The Board of Trade became ultimately responsible for the maintenance of harmonious industrial relations. The Munitions of War Act incorporated the “Treasury Agreement” of spring 1915, an accord Minister of Munitions David Lloyd George reached with the trade unions, under which they temporarily suspended existing labor union rights in exchange for their guaranteed restoration after the war. Although workers in essential industries supposedly became subject to conscription if they left one employer for another, possibly attracted by higher wages, in practice Britain’s strong labor movement ensured that this sanction remained largely a dead letter. Interestingly, in France similar penalties, of drafting young workers considered shirkers or, in some cases, overly zealous labor activists, were applied far more strictly.

By late 1916 Germany faced a manpower crisis, as the demands of the army for more troops after the major depletions of the Verdun and Somme campaigns clashed with those of agriculture and industry. The kaiser demanded a Civilian Service Bill, or Auxiliary Service Law, that passed in December and gave the government wide powers to redeploy any German man between the ages of 17 and 60 to employment considered of national value. Though not forced to do so, women were encouraged to take employment in war-related enterprises, for which they received extra rations allocations. In practice, Germany had few able-bodied men left to redeploy: 75,000 of the 118,000 additional civilians recruited for war service under this act by May 1917 were women, and another 4,000 were elderly men. Indeed, so critical was the industrial situation that in

September 1916 the German military released 1.2 million men from the army to meet production quotas and another 1.9 million nine months later. These measures were intended to facilitate the Hindenburg Program, a campaign to boost German industrial production that was dramatically announced by the War Ministry in August 1916, which it was hoped would enable Germany to mount a great effort to win a decisive victory in 1917. Ironically, the consequent increases in production were modest, though government propaganda inflated them, and the undertaking also absorbed most of Germany's depleted raw material stocks and further exhausted the labor force.

Consciously modeled on the British Munitions of War Act, the civilian service legislation exemplified the degree to which the demands of total war could dominate the entire economies of the European belligerents but also strengthened the rights of labor against employers. Under the act, so-called Standing Labor Committees secretly elected by the workers themselves and possessing the authority to call meetings with employers were to be established in all businesses and plants employing more than fifty persons, their mandate "to bring to the employer's notice all suggestions, wishes, and complaints of the workmen" on conditions of employment and their own welfare. The bill's powers were less extensive than those the military high command had sought. Top military leaders, especially Quartermaster General Erich Ludendorff, the high command's dominating spirit, also complained that workers were too highly paid, and chafed when, in spring 1917 and again a year later, serious shortages of food, fuel, and other vital commodities and high inflation provoked waves of strikes in vital industries. Historians have nonetheless concluded that, on the whole, after a shaky start each of the major belligerent powers mobilized its industrial and labor resources relatively effectively.

Even though its abundance of material and the relatively short duration of its war meant that the demands of conflict never pressed as fiercely upon the population as elsewhere, this was also true of the United States. Where possible, the government preferred to rely upon voluntarist methods rather than outright coercion. The Food and Fuel Administrations exhorted the American people to economize and exercise thrift, using the force of public opinion to persuade reluctant individuals, families, and businesses to observe "meatless" and "heatless" days. The War Industries Board sought to establish committees for all major commodities and industries, each of which was responsible for allocating war orders and raw materials for government orders, at an acceptable price. The War Trade Board gave guidance to businessmen on investment and commercial policy. The National War Labor Board, staffed with representatives of labor, business, and consumers, sought to regulate labor

conditions in (2285) industries receiving government war contracts, providing labor with good pay and benefits in exchange for pledges not to strike. Voluntarist methods were not always sufficient. To convey much-needed supplies and troops to Europe, the U.S. government financed the building of massive additional merchant shipping capacity, and for the duration of the war the Shipping Board also directed the operations of private American merchant tonnage. In May 1918, shortly after chaotic conditions, incompetence, and lack of cooperation had forced the Wilson administration to take over and operate the railroads itself, Congress passed the Overton Act, operative until six months after the war ended, permitting the president to establish or disband any executive or administrative government agency at his pleasure and effectively to take whatever measures he pleased to direct the wartime economy. In practice, however, Wilson used this grant of power very sparingly, a reflection both of his own political philosophy of limited government and of the relatively light burdens war mobilization placed upon the U.S. economy.

Censorship, Repression, and Government Direction

The Suspension of Civil Liberties in Germany: Proclamation of General von Plüskow, Commanding the Eleventh Army Corps, Cassel, 1 August 1914

TO THE POPULATION OF THE 11TH ARMY DISTRICT

His Majesty the Emperor has proclaimed the state of siege over the territory of the Empire. The reasons for this measure are not fears that the population might possibly fail to observe its duty to the Fatherland but solely to expedite the rapid and equal carrying through of the mobilization. The rapidity and safety of our advance demands a unified and clear-sighted direction of the whole executive power. No one who observes the law and follows the ordinances of the authorities will be restricted in the pursuit of his occupation by the increased rigidity of the law due to the state of siege. I am confident that the entire population will gladly and unreservedly support the military and civil authorities and therewith make it easier for us to do our highest duties to the Fatherland. Then it will also be possible to maintain the old glory of the XI Army Corps and the Army and to keep it in honor in the eyes of the Emperor and the nation.

Source

Ralph Haswell Lutz, *Fall of the German Empire, 1914–1918*, 2 vols. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1932), 1:5.

Great Britain: The Defense of the Realm Consolidation Act, 1914

An Act to consolidate and amend the Defence of the Realm Acts, 27 November 1914

Be it enacted by the King's most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

1.—(1) His Majesty in Council has power during the continuance of the present war to issue regulations for securing the public safety and the defence of the realm, and as to the powers and duties for that purpose of the Admiralty and Army Council and of the members of His Majesty's forces and other persons acting in his behalf; and may by such regulations authorize the trial by courts-martial, or in the case of minor offences by courts of summary jurisdiction, and punishment of persons committing offences against the regulations and in particular against any of the provisions of such regulations designed—

(a) to prevent persons communicating with the enemy or obtaining information for that purpose or any purpose calculated to jeopardise the success of the operations of any of His Majesty's forces or the forces of his allies or to assist the enemy; or

(b) to secure the safety of His Majesty's forces and ships and the safety of any means of communication and of railways, ports, and harbours; or

(c) to prevent the spread of false reports or reports likely to cause disaffection to His Majesty or to interfere with the success of His Majesty's forces by land or sea or to prejudice His Majesty's relations with foreign powers; or

(2286)

(d) to secure the navigation of vessels in accordance with directions given by or under the authority of the Admiralty; or

(e) otherwise to prevent assistance being given to the enemy or the successful prosecution of the war being endangered.

(2) Any such regulations may provide for the suspension of any restrictions on the acquisition or use of land, or the exercise of the power of making byelaws, or any other power under the Defence Acts, 1842 to 1875, or the Military Lands Acts, 1891 to 1903, and any such regulations or any orders made

thereunder affecting any pilotage of vessels may supersede any enactment, order, charter, byelaw, regulation or provision as to pilotage.

(3) It shall be lawful for the Admiralty or Army Council—

(a) to require that there be placed at their disposal the whole or any part of the output of any factory or workshop in which arms, ammunition, or warlike stores or equipment, or any articles required for the production thereof, are manufactured;

(b) to take possession of and use for the purpose of His Majesty's naval or military service any such factory or workshop or any plant thereof;

and regulations under this Act may be made accordingly.

(4) For the purpose of the trial of a person for an offence under the regulations by court-martial and the punishment thereof, the person may be proceeded against and dealt with as if he were a person subject to military law and had on active service committed an offence under section five of the Army Act:

Provided that where it is proved that the offence is committed with the intention of assisting the enemy a person convicted of such an offence by a court-martial shall be liable to suffer death.

(5) For the purpose of the trial of a person for an offence under the regulations by a court of summary jurisdiction and the punishment thereof, the offence shall be deemed to have been committed either at the place in which the same actually was committed or in any place in which the offender may be, and the maximum penalty which may be inflicted shall be imprisonment with or without hard labour for a term of six months or a fine of one hundred pounds, or both such imprisonments and fine. . . .

(6) The regulations may authorise a court-martial or court of summary jurisdiction, in addition to any other punishment, to order the forfeiture of any goods in respect of which an offense against the regulations has been committed.

Source

Great Britain, *Public General Statutes*, George V, c. 8 (London: HMSO, 1915), Vol. 53, pp. 21–22, col. 5.

The British Munitions of War Act, 1915

An Act to make provision for furthering the efficient manufacture, transport, and supply of Munitions for the present War; and for purposes incidental thereto. 2nd July 1915.

Part I

1.—(1) If any difference exists or is apprehended between any employer and any person employed, or between any two or more classes of persons employed, and the difference is one to which this Part of this Act applies, that difference, if not determined by the parties directly concerned or their representatives or under existing agreements, may be reported to the Board of Trade, by or on behalf of either party to the difference, and the decision of the Board of Trade as to whether a difference has been so reported, shall be conclusive for all purposes.

(2) The Board of Trade shall consider any difference so reported and take any steps which seem to them expedient to promote a settlement of the difference, and, in any case in which they think fit, may refer the matter for settlement either in accordance with the provisions of the First Schedule to this Act, or, if in their opinion suitable means for settlement already exist in pursuance of any agreement between employers and persons employed, for settlement in accordance with these means.

(3) Where a matter is referred under the last foregoing subsection for settlement otherwise than in accordance with the provisions of the First Schedule to this Act, and the settlement is in the opinion of the Board of Trade unduly delayed, the Board may annul the reference and substitute therefore a reference in accordance with the provisions of the said Schedule.

(2287)

(4) The award on any such settlement shall be binding both on employers and employed and may be retrospective; and if any employer, or person employed, thereafter acts in contravention of, or fails to comply with, the award, he shall be guilty of an offence under this Act.

2.—(1) An employer shall not declare, cause or take part in a lock-out, and a person employed shall not take part in a strike, in connexion with any difference to which this Part of this Act applies, unless the difference has been reported to the Board of Trade, and twenty-one days have elapsed since the

date of the report, and the difference has not during that time been referred by the Board of Trade for settlement in accordance with this Act.

(2) If any person acts in contravention of this section, he shall be guilty of an offence under this Act.

3. The differences [between employers and employees] to which this Part of this Act applies are differences as to rates of wages, hours of work, or otherwise as to terms or conditions of or affecting employment on the manufacture or repair of arms, ammunitions, ships, vehicles, aircraft, or any other articles required for use in war, or of the metals, machines, or tools required for that manufacture or repair (in this Act referred to as munitions work); and also any differences as to rates of wages, hours of work, or otherwise as to terms or conditions of or affecting employment on any other work of any description, if this Part of this Act is applied to such a difference by His Majesty by Proclamation on the ground that in the opinion of His Majesty the existence or continuation of the difference is directly or indirectly prejudicial to the manufacture, transport, or supply of Munitions of War.

This part of this Act may be so applied to such a difference at any time, whether a lock-out or strike is in existence in connection with the difference to which it is applied or not:

Provided that if in the case of any industry the Minister of Munitions is satisfied that effective means exist to secure the settlement without stoppage of any difference arising on work other than on munitions work, no proclamation shall be made under this section with respect to any such difference.

When this Part of this Act is applied to any difference concerning work other than munitions work the conditions of labour and the remuneration thereof prevailing before the difference arose shall be continued until the said difference is settled in accordance with the provisions of this Part of this Act.

Part II

4. If the Minister of Munitions considers it expedient for the purpose of the successful prosecution of the war that any establishment in which munitions work is carried on should be subject to the special provisions as to limitation of employers' profits and control of persons employed and other matters contained in this section, he may make an order declaring that establishment to be a controlled establishment, and on such order being made the following provisions shall apply thereto:

(1) Any excess of the net profits of the controlled establishment over the amount divisible under this Act, as ascertained in accordance with the provisions of this Act, shall be paid into the Exchequer.

(2) Any proposal for any change in the rate of wages, salary, or other emoluments of any class of persons employed in the establishment, or of any persons engaged in the management of the direction of the establishment (other than a change for giving effect to any Government conditions as to fair wages or to any agreement between the owner of the establishment and the workmen which was made before the twenty-third day of June, nineteen hundred and fifteen), shall be submitted to the Minister of Munitions, who may withhold his consent within fourteen days of the date of the submission:

Provided that if the Minister of Munitions so directs, or if the Minister's consent is withheld and the persons proposing the change so require, the matter shall be referred for settlement in accordance with the provisions of the First Schedule to this Act, and the consent of the arbitration tribunal, if given, shall in that case have the same effect as the consent of the Minister of Munitions.

If the owner of the establishment or any contractor or sub-contractor employing labour therein makes any such change, or attempts to make any such change, without submitting the proposal for the change to the Minister of Munitions or when the consent of the Minister has (2288) been withheld, he shall be guilty of an offence under this Act.

(3) Any rule, practice, or custom not having force of law which tends to restrict production or employment shall be suspended in the establishment, and if any person induces or attempts to induce any other person (whether any particular person or generally) to comply, or continue to comply, with such a rule, practice, or custom, that person shall be guilty of an offence under this Act.

If any question arise whether any rule, practice or custom is a rule, practice or custom which tends to restrict production or employment, that question shall be referred to the Board of Trade, and the Board of Trade shall either determine the question themselves or, if they think it expedient or either party requires it, refer the question for settlement in accordance with the provisions contained in the First Schedule to this Act. The decision of the Board of Trade or arbitration tribunal, as the case may be, shall be conclusive for all purposes.

(4) The owner of the establishment shall be deemed to have entered into an undertaking to carry out the provisions set out in the Second Schedule to this

Act, and any owner or contractor or sub-contractor who breaks or attempts to break such an undertaking shall be guilty of an offence under this Act.

(5) The employer and every person employed in the establishment shall comply with any regulations made applicable to that establishment by the Minister of Munitions with respect to the general ordering of the work in the establishment with a view to attaining and maintaining a proper standard of efficiency and with respect to the due observance of the rules of the establishment.

If the employer or any person so employed acts in contravention of or fails to comply with any such regulation, that employer or person shall be guilty of an offence under this Act.

(6) The owners of an establishment shall have power, notwithstanding anything in any Act, Order, or deed under which they are governed to do all things necessary for compliance with any provisions of this section, and any owner of an establishment shall comply with any reasonable requirements of the Minister of Munitions as to information or otherwise made for the purposes of this section, and, if he fails to do so, shall be guilty of an offence under this Act.

Where in any establishment munitions work is carried on in some part of the establishment but not in other parts, the Minister of Munitions may, if he considers that it is practicable to do so, treat any part of the establishment in which munitions work is not carried on as a separate establishment, and the provisions of this Act shall take effect accordingly.

5.—(1) The net profits of a controlled establishment shall be ascertained in accordance with the provisions of this section and rules made thereunder and the amount of profits divisible under this Act shall be taken to be an amount exceeding by one-fifth the standard amount of profits.

(2) The standard amount of profits for any period shall be taken to be the average of the amount of the net profits for the two financial years of the establishment completed before the outbreak of the war or a proportionate part thereof.

(3) If in any case it appears or is represented by the Minister of Munitions that the net profits or losses of all of any other establishments belonging to the same owner should be brought into account, or that the average under this section affords or may afford an unfair standard of comparison or affords no standard of comparison, the Minister may, if he thinks just, allow those net profits or losses to be brought into account, or substitute for the average such an amount

as the standard amount of profits as may be agreed upon with the owner of the establishment.

The Minister of Munitions may, if he thinks fit, and shall, if the owner of the establishment so requires, refer the matter to be determined by a referee or board of referees appointed or designated by him for the purpose, and the decision of the referee or board shall be conclusive on the matter for all purposes.

(4) The Minister of Munitions may make rules for carrying the provisions of this section into effect, and these rules shall provide for due consideration being given in carrying out the provisions of this section as respects any establishment to any special circumstances (2289) such as increase of output, provision of new machinery or plant, alteration of capital or other matters which require special consideration in relation to the particular establishment.

6.—(1) If any workman in accordance with arrangements made by the Minister of Munitions with or on behalf of trade unions enters into an undertaking with the Minister of Munitions that he will work at any controlled establishment to which he may be assigned by the Minister, and be subject to the penalty imposed by this Act, if he acts in contravention of or fails to comply with the undertaking, that workman shall if he acts in contravention of or fails to comply with his undertaking be guilty of an offence under this Act.

(2) If any employer dissuades or attempts to dissuade a workman in his employment from entering into an undertaking under this section, or retains or offers to retain in his employment any workman who has entered into such an undertaking after he has received notice from the Minister of Munitions that the workman is to work at some other establishment, that employer shall be guilty of an offence under this Act.

7.—(1) A person shall not give employment to a workman, who has within the last previous six weeks, or any other such period as may be provided by Order of the Minister of Munitions as respects any class of establishment, been employed on or in connexion with munitions work in any establishment of a class to which the provisions of this section are applied by Order of the Minister of Munitions, unless he holds a certificate from the employer by whom he was last so employed that he left work with the consent of his employer or a certificate from the munitions tribunal that the consent has been unreasonably withheld.

(2) If any workman or his trade union representative complains to a munitions tribunal in accordance with rules made with respect to those tribunals that the consent of an employer has been unreasonably withheld that tribunal may, after examining into the case, if they think fit, grant a certificate which shall, for the purposes of this section, have the same effect as a certificate from the employer.

(3) If any person gives employment in contravention of the provisions of this section, he shall be guilty of an offence under this Act. . . .

Schedule II.

1. Any departure during the war from the practice ruling in the workshops, shipyards, and other industries prior to the war, shall only be for the period of the war.

2. No change in practice made during the war shall be allowed to prejudice the position of the workmen in the owners' employment, or of their trade unions in regard to the resumption and maintenance after the war of any rules or customs existing prior to the war.

3. In any readjustment of staff which may have to be effected after the war priority of employment will be given to workmen in the owners' employment at the beginning of the war who have been serving with the colours or who were in the owners' employment when the establishment became a controlled establishment.

4. Where the custom of a shop is changed during the war by the introduction of semi-skilled men to perform work hitherto performed by a class of workmen of higher skill, the time and piece rates paid shall be the usual rates of the district for that class of work.

5. The relaxation of existing demarcation restrictions or admission of semi-skilled or female labour shall not affect adversely the rates customarily paid for the job. In cases where men who ordinarily do the work are adversely affected thereby, the necessary readjustments shall be made so that they can maintain their previous earnings.

6. A record of the nature of the departure from the conditions prevailing when the establishment became a controlled establishment shall be kept, and shall be open for inspection by the authorized representative of the Government.

7. Due notice shall be given to the workmen concerned wherever practicable of any changes of working conditions which it is desired to introduce as the result of the establishment becoming a controlled establishment, and opportunity for local consultation with workmen or their representatives shall be given if desired.

8. All differences with workmen engaged on Government work arising out of changes so introduced or with regard to wages or conditions of employment arising out of the war shall be settled in accordance with this Act without stoppage of work.

9. Nothing in this Schedule (except as provided by the fourth paragraph thereof) shall prejudice the position of employers or persons employed after the war.

(2290)

Source

John Chartres, *The Munitions of War Acts, 1915 and 1916* (5 & 6 Geo. 5 cc. 54 and 99) (London: Steven and Sons, 1916), 59–68.

The German Civilian Service Bill, 5 December 1916

We, Wilhelm, by the Grace of God, German Emperor, King of Prussia, etc., decree in the name of the Reich, with the consent of the Bundesrat and the Reichstag, as follows:

I. Every male German between the ages of 17 and 60 who is not serving in the army is bound to render patriotic auxiliary service [*vaterländischer Hilfsdienst*] for the period of the war.

II. All persons will be considered to be rendering patriotic auxiliary service who are employed in Government Offices, in official institutions, in war industry, in agriculture and forestry, in caring for the sick, in war economic organizations of any kind, or in other occupations and trades which directly or indirectly are important for war administration or national supplies, so far as the number of these persons does not exceed the need.

Those who before August 1, 1916, were engaged in agriculture or forestry need not be taken from this occupation to be transferred to another form of patriotic service.

III. The administration of the patriotic auxiliary service will be carried on by a War Department established by the Prussian War Ministry.

IV. The question whether and to what extent the number of persons employed in a Government office exceeds the need will be decided by the Reichs- or Landeszentralbehörde in agreement with the War Department. The question what is to be regarded as an official institution as well as whether and to what extent the number of persons employed by such exceeds the need, will be decided by the War Department in agreement with the Reichs- or Landeszentralbehörde.

For the rest, the question whether an occupation or trade is important in the meaning of Section II, as well as whether and to what extent the number of persons engaged in an occupation, organization, or trade exceeds the need, will be decided by committees which will be formed for the district of every Acting General Command or for parts of the district.

V. Every Committee (Section IV, Clause 2) shall consist of an officer as president, two high state officials, one of whom must belong to the Department of Trade, and two representatives each from employers and employees. The officer and the representatives of capital and labor shall be appointed by the War Department, or in Bavaria, Saxony, and Württemberg by the War Ministry, which in these states is responsible also for executing the bill in agreement with the War Department. The higher state officials are appointed by the Landeszentralbehörde or by an authority appointed by it. If the district of an Acting General Command extends over the territory of several federal states, the officials shall be appointed by the authorities of these states; in the decisions of the committee the officials of the state in whose territory the business concerned lies will take part.

VI. Complaint against the decisions of the committee (Section IV, Clause 2) shall be made to the Zentralstelle established by the War Department, consisting of two officers of the War Department, one of whom shall be president, two officials nominated by the central authority of that state to which the business, organization, or person following the occupation belongs, and one representative each from employers and employees. These representatives will be appointed as in Section V, Clause 2. If maritime interests are affected, one of the officers shall be appointed from the Imperial Navy Department. In complaints against decisions of Bavarian, Saxon, or Württemberg committees, one of the officers is to be appointed by the War Ministry of the state concerned.

VII. Men liable to auxiliary service who are not employed in the meaning of Section II may at any time be compelled to serve in some form of patriotic auxiliary service.

The calling up will be as a rule through an announcement issued by the War Department or an authority to be appointed by the Landeszentralbehörd calling on men to report themselves voluntarily. If there is not sufficient response to this appeal, then an individual summons shall be sent out in writing by a committee to be formed, as a rule, for each district of a Recruiting Commission, which shall consist of an officer as president, a high official, and two representatives each from employers and employees. When the voting is equal the president shall have the casting (2291) vote. The officer and the representatives of employers and employees shall be appointed as in Section V, Clause 2. The official shall be appointed by the Landeszentralbehörde, or an authority appointed by it.

Everyone who receives the special written summons must seek employment in one of the branches mentioned in Section II. If employment on the terms of the summons is not obtained in two weeks the committee will assign the man to an employment.

Appeals against the committee's decision will be decided by the committee formed by the Acting General Command (Section IV, Clauses 2). Appeals will not postpone the obligation to serve.

VIII. In making appointments due regard will be had as far as possible to age, family conditions, place of residence, and health, as well as to previous occupation. Also the question whether the prospective pay will be sufficient to support the employed and to provide for his dependents shall be investigated.

IX. No one may take into his employ a man liable to patriotic service who is employed in a position denoted in Section II or who has been employed during the two previous weeks unless the applicant produces a certificate from his late employer that he has agreed to the man's leaving his service. . . .

XI. In all businesses engaged in patriotic service to which Regulation 7 of the Industrial Legislation applies and in which as a rule at least fifty workmen are employed, there shall be standing committees of the workers.

If Standing Labor Committees according to Paragraph 134h of the Industrial Legislation, or according to the Mining Laws, do not exist for such businesses, they are to be established. The members of these Labor Committees shall be

chosen by workmen of full age employed in the business, or in a branch of the business, from among themselves, by direct and secret voting, on the principle of proportionate representation. Details shall be fixed by the Landeszentralbehörde.

In businesses employing more than fifty clerks there shall be formed Clerks' Committees having the same powers as the Labor Committees and formed in the same manner as the standing labor committees in Clause I above.

XII. It is the duty of the Labor Committee to promote a good understanding among the workmen and between the workmen and their employer. It must bring to the employer's notice all suggestions, wishes, and complaints of the workmen referring to the organization of the business, the wages, and the other matters concerning the workmen and their welfare and must give its opinion upon them.

If at least one-fourth of the members of the Labor Committee desire it, a meeting must be held, and the subject to be discussed must be placed upon the order of the day.

XIII. If in a business of the nature denoted in Section XI disputes arise over wages or other conditions of labor, and no agreement can be arrived at between the employer and the Labor Committee, then, unless both parties appeal to an Industrial Court or a Miners' Court or a Mercantile Court as a court of arbitration, the Committee referred to in Section IX, Clause 2, shall be called upon by each party to mediate. . . .

If the employer does not submit to the award, then the workmen shall receive, if they desire, the certificate (Section IX) entitling to leave their employment. If the workmen do not submit to the award, then the certificate will not be given to them for cause on which the award has been made.

XIV. The use of their present legal right to unite and meet shall not be restricted for persons engaged in patriotic auxiliary service.

XV. For industrial concerns of the Army and Navy Administrations, regulations shall be made by the proper superior authorities in the meaning of Sections XI and XIII.

XVI. Industrial workers appointed under this law to agricultural tasks are not subject to regulations of the legislation concerning agricultural laborers. . . .

XVIII. Imprisonment not exceeding one year and a fine not exceeding 10,000 marks, or either of these penalties, or detention, shall be the penalty for (1) anyone refusing employment assigned to him on the basis of Section VII, Clause 3, or without urgent reasons delaying to perform such work; (2) anyone employing a workman contrary to the regulation in Section IX, Clause 1; (3) anyone not imparting within the appointed time the information provided for in Section XV or wilfully making false or incomplete statements in giving his information. . . .

XX. The law comes into operation on the day of publication. The Bundesrat will fix the time when it (2292) shall be abrogated. If the Bundesrat makes no use of this power within one month after the conclusion of peace with the European Powers, then the law is annulled. Witness our own signature and our imperial seal.

Wilhelm Great Headquarters, 5 December 1916

Source

Ralph Haswell Lutz, ed., *Fall of the German Empire, 1914–1918*, 2 vols. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1932), 2:99–103.

United States Sedition Act, Approved 16 May 1918

Sec. 3. Whoever, when the United States is at war, shall willfully make or convey false reports or false statements with intent to interfere with the operation or success of the military or naval forces of the United States, or to promote the success of its enemies, or shall willfully make or convey false reports or false statements, or say or do anything except by way of bona fide and not disloyal advice to an investor or investors, with intent to obstruct the sale by the United States of bonds or other securities of the United States or the making of loans by or to the United States, and whoever when the United States is at war, shall willfully cause or attempt to cause, or incite or attempt to incite, insubordination, disloyalty, mutiny, or refusal of duty, in the military or naval forces of the United States, or shall willfully obstruct or attempt to obstruct the recruiting or enlistment services of the United States, and whoever, when the United States is at war, shall willfully utter, print, write or publish any disloyal, profane, scurrilous, or abusive language about the form of government of the United States or the Constitution of the United States, or the military or naval forces of the United States, or the flag of the United States, or the uniform of the Army or Navy of the United States, or any language intended to bring into contempt, scorn, contumely, or disrepute, or shall willfully utter,

print, write, or publish any language intended to incite, provoke, or encourage resistance to the United States, or to promote the cause of its enemies, or shall willfully display the flag of any foreign enemy, or shall willfully by utterance, writing, printing, publication, or language spoken, urge, incite, or advocate any curtailment of production in this country of any thing or things, product or products, necessary or essential to the prosecution of the war in which the United States may be engaged, with intent by such curtailment to cripple or hinder the United States in the prosecution of war, and whoever shall willfully advocate, teach, defend, or suggest the doing of any of the acts or things in this section enumerated, and whoever shall by word or act support or favor the cause of any country with which the United States is at war or by word or act oppose the cause of the United States therein, shall be punished by a fine of not more than \$10,000 or imprisonment for not more than twenty years, or both: *Provided*, That any employee or official of the United States Government who commits any disloyal act or utters any unpatriotic or disloyal language, or who, in an abusive and violent manner criticizes the Army or Navy or the flag of the United States shall be at once dismissed from the service. . . .

Sec. 4. When the United States is at war, the Postmaster General may, upon evidence satisfactory to him that any person or concern is using the mails in violation of any of the provisions of this Act, instruct the postmaster at any post office at which mail is received addressed to such person or concern to return to the postmaster at the office at which they were originally mailed all letters or other matter so addressed, with the words "Mail to this address undeliverable under Espionage Act" plainly written or stamped upon the outside thereof, and all such letters or other matter so returned to such postmasters shall be by them returned to the senders thereof under such regulations as the Postmaster General may prescribe.

Source

The United States Statutes at Large, V. 40 (April 1917–March 1919)
(Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1919), 553–554.

About The Documents

Each of these documents is an official act or order that in some manner increased a belligerent government's powers because of and for the duration of the World War I. Each was issued to meet some particular immediate need, the suppression of potential dissent, or the mobilization of all available industrial resources and manpower for the war. Some cover more than one area, for example, the suppression of dissent and the government's (2293) assumption of

extensive economic authority. Like most government acts, each is impersonal, unemotional, and even technical in tone and subject matter, setting out in some detail regulations that were to provide guidance to the officials entrusted with enforcing them, and also to the businessmen and workers affected by them. Spanning several countries from both sides of the war, they aptly illustrate that mobilization for total war posed similar problems in every combatant nation. Albeit with significant variations as to the precise implementation of policies and the relationships among government, labor, business, and the military, each country also adopted solutions that had much in common. In every major belligerent state the difficulties and dilemmas of waging war, though not identical, resembled those faced by both its allies and opponents, and the coalition that solved these most successfully was likely to emerge triumphant from the war.

Further Reading

Chickering, Roger. *Imperial Germany and the Great War, 1914–1918*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Chickering, Roger, and Stig Förster, eds. *Great War, Total War: Combat and Mobilization on the Western Front, 1914–1918*. New York and Washington, DC: Cambridge University Press and German Historical Institute, 2000.

Feldman, Gerald. *Army, Industry, and Labour in Germany, 1914–1918*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966.

Godfrey, John F. *Capitalism at War: Industrial Policy and Bureaucracy in France, 1914–1918*. Leamington Spa, UK: Berg, 1987.

Hardach, Gerd. *The First World War, 1914–1918*. Trans. Peter and Betty Ross. London: Allen Lane, 1977.

Herwig, Holger H. *The First World War: Germany and Austria-Hungary, 1914–1918*. New York: Arnold, 1997.

Horne, John, ed. *State, Society and Mobilization in Europe during the First World War*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Koistinen, Paul A. C. *Mobilizing for Modern War: The Political Economy of American Warfare, 1865–1919*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1997.

Moyer, Lawrence. *Victory Must Be Ours: Germany in the Great War, 1914–1918*. New York: Hippocrene, 1995.

Wilson, Trevor. *The Myriad Faces of War*. Cambridge: Polity, 1986.

MLA

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "30. The Growth of Statism." *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*, ABC-CLIO, 2005, pp. . *ABC-CLIO eBook Collection*, legacy.abc-clio.com/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2192.

Chicago Manual of Style

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "30. The Growth of Statism." In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005. <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2192>.

APA

Roberts, P. M., S. C. Tucker (2005). 30. The Growth of Statism. In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia* (pp.). Retrieved from <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2192>

Essay 31. Superpatriotism and 100 Percent Americanism on the U.S. Home Front

Superpatriotism in the United States during World War I

In all countries, patriotic pressure to support the war was strong, while dissent was liable to attract criticism, social ostracism, and on occasion government-sanctioned reprisals. Historians have suggested that such superpatriotism was especially pronounced in the United States because that country relied less on legislation and more on voluntaristic efforts and persuasion to win support for the war effort. During the years of American neutrality, many of the more fervid supporters of the war had been among the most vocal and dedicated advocates of U.S. intervention in the conflict, and once their country was at war with Germany they switched their energies to efforts to persuade all other Americans to emulate their own sympathies.

Such endeavors represented in part an effort by old-stock Americans to exert their own social dominance and control over those who had only recently arrived in the country and to set the standards of acceptable political discourse. Recent immigrants, especially those of German or Irish descent, were pressured to demonstrate their loyalty and patriotism by conforming, especially by speaking English and modeling their views and behavior in every way on those Americans whose families had been there for several generations. Ever since 1880, the United States had experienced a huge wave of immigration, much of it not from the northwestern regions of Europe, from which immigrants had traditionally been drawn, but from the south and east. The number of Americans of Italian, Polish, Russian, Jewish, and eastern European origin rose dramatically, while the sizable existing populations of Irish, Germans, and Scandinavians also continued to grow. Between 1907 and 1917, 650,000 immigrants were entering the United States every year, and one of every four Americans was either foreign-born or had at least one parent born outside the country. Old-stock white Anglo-Saxon Protestants (WASPs) often resented the surging influx of new immigrants, whom they considered alien to established U.S. traditions. This was particularly so since newer immigrants tended to cluster in the burgeoning cities, where they not only provided much of the labor for the massive industrialization that occurred at the turn of the century but soon began to exercise political influence. New immigrants were also well represented in the growing labor movement and in radical politics, where many anarchists, syndicalists, and socialists were recent arrivals in the United States, giving ammunition to those who argued that such individuals sought to import

“un-American” ideologies to a traditionally laissez-faire, free-enterprise society.

Even before World War I, many old-stock Americans sought to “Americanize” new immigrants; to force them to speak English; to familiarize themselves with the country’s history and with the sociopolitical ideals embodied in the U.S. Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, and the writings of the founding fathers; and to jettison many of their existing habits and practices in favor of what were considered more authentically American ways. While some such efforts, especially those of reformers associated with the urban settlement houses established since the 1880s to try to improve working-class conditions in the big cities, represented genuine attempts to help immigrants cope with the difficulties of their often confusing and arduous new lives, others were more in the nature of meddlesome endeavors to eradicate immigrant mores and impose conformity upon recent immigrants whom many older-established Americans found fundamentally unsympathetic. Even during the years of neutrality, efforts at Americanization expanded. The often fiercely pro-Allied and patrician elite perceived the opposition many “hyphenated” immigrant groups displayed to U.S. intervention, and, worse still, the strongly pro-German, anti-British, or anti-Russian outlooks of many Americans of German, Irish, or Jewish descent, as not only inherently mistaken but also as challenges to their own ability to set the national agenda. According to Willard D. Straight, a youthful New York banker and former diplomat who was one of the leaders of the interventionist pre-1917 American preparedness movement, “our national life has been diluted by an influx of many who are strange to the fundamental aspirations which have been the finest thing in our history,” leaving Americans in consequence “groping” for a sense of national identity. Social Darwinists such as former President Theodore Roosevelt, who placed a high value on physical courage, strength, and endurance at both the individual and national level, further believed that any reluctance to enter the war denoted a disturbing softness and absence of manliness, vigor, and courage in national life, something they ascribed to the detrimental impact of recent immigration and feared would lead their country to lag behind in international competition with better-disciplined and socially cohesive states.

U.S. intervention in World War I gave new scope for such propaganda. On 13 April 1917, a few days after his country declared war, the president established the Committee on Public Information (CPI), a domestic propaganda agency headed by the flamboyant and energetic publicist George Creel. The members of its board included the secretaries of state, war, and the navy, and its mission was to generate popular enthusiasm and support for the war. Using newly

developed advertising techniques, the CPI blanketed the United States with promotional materials of every kind, including an official newspaper, booklets, cartoons, posters, newsreels, press releases, and speeches. Seventy-five thousand “Four Minute Men” were recruited to give brief pep talks to audiences of every kind, and to encourage Americans to buy the Liberty Bonds that financed much of the war effort. Seeking to reach every ethnic group, the CPI often translated its output into numerous languages, including Polish, German, Swedish, Bohemian, Italian, Spanish, Yiddish, and Serbian, and where possible employed speakers fluent in those languages. Given that many Americans had only reluctantly endorsed entering the war, the CPI sought to persuade them both that German intransigence had left the United States with no alternative and that their country had moreover joined the conflict, in the words of President Woodrow Wilson’s war message to Congress, “to make the world safe for democracy.” The Germans, by contrast, were depicted as “barbaric Huns.”

Besides presenting the Wilson administration’s official version of the war, the CPI also sought to promote the Americanization of immigrants. One of its pamphlets, *The Meaning of America*, urged immigrants to “speak the English language . . . salute the flag . . . [and] cultivate patriotism in children,” and also to learn the (2295) words of the “Star Spangled Banner,” the American national anthem. In much of the United States, such policies fanned the flames of intolerant superpatriotism. Individuals with German names were often suspected—groundlessly, in most cases—of espionage and treason and in several thousand cases were arrested, with 1,200 interned for much of the war. German Americans were often banned from serving in war-related institutions and excluded or dropped from official organizations. Many experienced heavy social pressure to demonstrate incontrovertibly their undivided loyalties to the United States by such means as heavy subscriptions to war bonds, ceasing to use the German language, condemning German policies, and even anglicizing their names. As had occurred in Allied countries, libraries dropped German books, orchestras and opera houses ceased to perform German music, and museums put German artifacts in storage, while German dogs (dachshunds and German shepherds) and foods (hamburgers and sauerkraut) received less controversial names, metamorphosing into “liberty pups,” “Alsations,” “liberty sandwiches,” and “liberty cabbage.” American towns originally known as Frankfurt, Berlin, or Hamburg often rechristened themselves with more patriotic names. Under the 1917 Espionage Act and the even more expansive 1918 Sedition Act that succeeded it, German-language newspapers became the target of particular suspicion and were often closed down. The president also had the power to seize or close down without any appeal radio stations whose

broadcasts were considered subversive, while the government banned a list of seventy-five questionable books on the grounds that these were “vicious German propaganda,” “morbid,” or even “salacious.” Theoretically, the government could exercise total control over the country’s media.

American intolerance by no means restricted itself to German Americans but, in defiance of the constitutional protections of freedom of speech provided in the Bill of Rights, proved sufficiently expansive to include all real or potential dissenters from war. The democratic values for which the United States purported to be fighting were often little in evidence at home. Pacifists, socialists, labor activists, and radicals made particularly attractive targets. U.S. Attorney General Thomas W. Gregory allowed the Federal Bureau of Investigation to police and spy on suspicious organizations and individuals. He also actively encouraged a wide variety of self-appointed private vigilante groups, some established by businesses, others in local communities, that sought to root out all disloyalty and dissent, and he claimed that he had enlisted several hundred private citizens in such enterprises, which included the Chicago-based American Protective League, Boy Spies of America, the National Security League, and the American Defense Society. Federal troops suppressed strikes, arrested labor activists, and raided union offices. In fall 1917 the federal government arrested the fifteen top national leaders of the radical and antiwar Industrial Workers of the World (IWW, or Wobblies) who had opposed U.S. intervention and subsequently tried to discourage young men from enlisting in the armed forces, and under the Espionage Act they received twenty-year jail sentences.

Numerous other socialists and antiwar activists who were arrested for antiwar activities received similarly harsh treatment. With unofficial encouragement from the authorities, vigilante mobs often attacked, harassed, and roughed up antiwar speakers, and in Butte, Montana, one prominent IWW organizer was even castrated and lynched in summer 1917. After the Bolshevik Revolution of November 1917, radical labor groups became if possible even more suspect, while socialists and Russian immigrants also attracted special hostility. Antiradical sentiment, in part probably the product of the major social and economic disruptions consequent upon military and industrial mobilization, continued even after the armistice was signed, peaking in summer and fall 1919 when the Wilson administration responded to bombings and a wave of labor unrest by arresting and deporting without trial several thousand alien immigrants, while the New York legislature refused to allow several Socialist representatives who had won election to take their seats.

Source

Priscilla Roberts, "Willard Straight, the First World War and 'Internationalism of All Sorts': The Inconsistencies of an American Liberal Interventionist," *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 44:4 (December 1998), 505; President Woodrow Wilson quoted in Byron Farwell, *Over There: The United States in the Great War, 1917–1918* (New York: Norton, 1999), 123, 126.

(2296)

American Civilians Are Exhorted to Support the War Effort

"The Soldiers' Question: 'We Have Given Ourselves. What Will You Give?'," 19 July 1917

To a group of New York's leading bankers a leading worker for the Young Men's Christian Association, who had been in the trenches and seen the heroism of the soldiers, and who had learned to appreciate the marvelous consecration of these men as they offered their lives in the great battle for civilization, said

"In the light of what I have seen of self-sacrifice, of heroism, there is not one of you in this room worthy to blacken the shoes of the men who are in the trenches."

This was said to a group of men of the highest morality, of a patriotism which has led the nation, of broad generosity in giving to the work of the Red Cross and the Young Men's Christian Association and kindred interests, and giving not by thousands, but by millions. It was not an exaggerated statement, but it was made for the purpose of trying to impress upon these great bankers that the man who gives only of his money, even though he gives deeply of his principal, is giving less than the men who are so willingly giving their lives. The superb sacrifice of 7,000,000 men whose bodies have already covered the battlefields of Europe, while millions of wounded have suffered untold agonies on the battlefields and in hospitals, calls the world as nothing else in all human history of the late nineteen centuries to sacrifice that it may serve.

The man or woman who, facing the awful realities of this war, can move along in his or her accustomed way, seeking to accumulate money, or to pass his or her time in the pleasures or the frivolities or even the usual routine of duties, has not at all grasped the significance of the agony and tragedy through which the world is passing.

Some thousands of American soldiers have already landed in France, and other thousands, and hundreds of thousands and millions will have to follow. These men are not at all unmindful of the reality of the struggle upon which they are entering. Each one knows full well that he is offering his life; and if perchance he be saved to return to his loved ones, comrades all around him and by his side he knows will die. Each man realizes fully that he is going into a war for service. These men are not going from any thoughtless desire for adventure; they are not going without a full understanding of what is meant to lie in the trenches day after day and night after night, and crawl out over the trenches to and through the barbed wires and struggle in a great death grapple. These things are before them, and yet they go forward with a courage which should stir every latent quality of good in every human heart. Before such men those who cannot go should stand with uncovered heads and bemoan the fate that makes it necessary for them to be saved by the sacrifice of the lives of others.

These are the living realities, the verities, of this hour. They call in thunder tones to the nation. They call to every human heart to honor the soldiers and the sailors; to throw around them every possible safeguard to protect them from every temptation; to make their task as light as possible; to furnish every comfort and convenience; to lighten their work and lessen their sorrows; to provide the means for their healthful enjoyment around every camp, and to banish from every camp the accursed liquor traffic and all the evils which follow; to provide the nurses and the stretcher-bearers, and the physicians, and the hospitals which may minister unto them in hours of agony; to provide the facilities for the training of the body and mind afforded by the Young Men's Christian Association in every camp.

For these things the American people must work wholeheartedly, with an enthusiasm which matches that of the men in the battle line.

Out of the nation's work and the wealth that may be accumulated therefrom must be poured to the fullest limit the money needed for these things.

A few weeks ago Maryland troops on a parade in the interest of the Liberty Loan carried a banner on which was inscribed:

We have given ourselves,

What will you give?

That is the question which the life of every soldier puts before every man and woman in this country.

What will you give to the men who are giving their lives? What service will you render to them to lessen their burdens, to lighten their homesickness, to soften their agony on the battlefield, to save their bodies and to save their souls? What answer will the American (2297) people give to the question, "We have given ourselves; what will you give?"

Source

This editorial originally appeared in *The Manufacturers' Record*, 72 (19 July 1917): 54; reprinted in Albert Bushnell Hart, ed., *America at War: A Handbook of Patriotic Education References* (New York: George H. Doran, 1918), 266–268.

"The Children of the Crucible," 11 September 1917

We Americans are the children of the crucible. It has been our boast that out of the crucible, the melting pot of life in this free land, all the men and women of all the nations who come hither emerge as Americans and as nothing else; Americans who proudly challenge as a right, not as a favor, that they "belong" just as much as any other Americans and that they stand on a full and complete equality with them; Americans therefore, who must, even more strongly, insist that they have renounced completely and without reserve, all allegiance to the lands from which they or their forefathers came, and that it is a binding duty on every citizen of this country in every important crisis, to act solidly with all his fellow Americans, having regard only to the honor and interest of America and treating every other nation purely on its conduct in that crisis, without reference to his ancestral predilections or antipathies. If he does not so act, he is false to the teachings and the lives of Washington and Lincoln, he is not entitled to any part or lot in our country, and he should be sent out of it. If he does not act purely as an American, he shows that in his case the crucible has failed to do its work. The crucible must melt all who are cast in it; it must turn them out in one American mould; and this must be the mould shaped a hundred and forty years ago by the men who under Washington founded this as a free nation, separate from all others. Even at that time, true Americans were of many different race strains; Paul Revere and Charles Carroll, Marion Herkimer, Sullivan, Schuyler and Muhlenberg, stood on an equality of service and achieved respect with Lighthorse Harry Lee and Israel Putnam. But the majority of the leaders and of their followers were of English blood. They did not, because of this, hesitate to resist and antagonize Great Britain when Great Britain wronged this nation: they stood for liberty and for the eternal rule of right and justice and they stood as Americans and nothing else.

All Americans of other race origin must act towards the countries from which their ancestors sprang as Washington and his associates in their day acted. Otherwise they are traitors to America. This applies especially today to all Americans of German blood who directly or indirectly in any manner support Germany as against the United States and the Allies of the United States; it applies no less specifically to all American citizens of Irish blood who are led into following the same course not by their love of Germany but by their hatred of England. One motive is as inexcusable as the other; and in each case the action is treasonable to the United States.

The professional pacifists have, during the last three years, proved themselves the evil enemies of their country. They now advocate an inconclusive peace. In so doing they have shown themselves to be the spiritual heirs of the Tories who in the name of peace opposed Washington, and of the Copperheads who in the name of peace opposed Lincoln. We regard these men and women as traitors to the republic; we regard them as traitors to the great cause of justice and humanity. This war is a war for the vital interests of America. When we fight for America abroad we save our children from fighting for America at home beside their own ruined hearthstones. We believe that the large majority of Americans are proudly ready to fight to the last for the overthrow of the brutal German militarism which threatens America no less than every other civilized nation. We believe that it would be an act of baseness and infamy, an act of unworthy cowardice and a betrayal of this country and of mankind to accept any peace except the peace of overwhelming victory, a peace based on the complete overthrow of the Prussianized Germany of the Hohenzollerns.

We hold that the true test of loyal Americanism today is effective service against Germany. We should exert as speedily as possible every particle of our vast lazy strength to win the triumph over Germany. Therefore we should demand that the Government act at once with unrelenting severity against the traitors here at home, whether their treasonable activity take the form of editing and publishing newspapers, of uttering speeches, or of intrigue and conspiracy.

We must have but one flag. We must also have but one language. That must be the language of (2298) the Declaration of Independence, of Washington's Farewell Address, of Lincoln's Gettysburg Speech and Second Inaugural. We cannot tolerate any attempt to oppose or supplant the language and culture that has come down to us from the builders of this Republic with the language of any European country. The greatness of this nation depends on the swift assimilation of the aliens she welcomes to her shores. Any force which attempts to retard that assimilative process is a force hostile to the highest interests of our country. It is a force which, if allowed to develop, will, for the

benefit of this group or that, undermine our national institutions and pervert our national ideals. Whatever may have been our judgment in normal times, we are convinced that today our most dangerous foe is the foreign language press and every similar agency such as the German-American Alliance, which holds the alien to his former associations and through them to his former allegiance. We call upon all loyal and unadulterated Americans to man the trenches against the enemy within our gates.

We ask that good Americans . . . uphold the hands of the Government at every point efficiently and resolutely against our foreign and domestic foes, and that they constantly spur the Government to speedier and more effective action. Furthermore, we ask that where governmental action cannot be taken, they arouse an effective and indignant public opinion against the enemies of our country, whether these enemies masquerade as pacifists, or proclaim themselves the enemies of our Allies, or act through organizations such as the I.W.W. [Industrial Workers of the World] and the Socialist party machine, or appear nakedly as the champions of Germany. Above all, we ask that they teach our people to spurn any peace save the peace of overwhelming victory in the war to which we have set our hands.

Of us who sign some are Protestants, some are Catholics, some are Jews. Most of us were born in this country of parents born in various countries of the old world—in Germany, France, England, Ireland, Italy, the Slavonic and the Scandinavian lands; some of us were born abroad; some of us are of Revolutionary stock. All of us are Americans, and nothing but Americans.

Source

Albert Bushnell Hart, ed., *America at War: A Handbook of Patriotic Education References* (New York: George H. Doran, 1918), 314–316.

About The Documents

Both these documents are taken from a handbook published in 1918 with the endorsement of the CPI, its mission to give Americans, especially those who wished to undertake prowar speaking and other publicity, information on the causes of the war and the issues it involved. Albert Bushnell Hart, who compiled the collection, was an eminent historian at the prestigious Harvard University, whose authority lent additional credibility to this anthology. It is perhaps worth noting that although the handbook included several exhortations to Americans of German descent to demonstrate their support for the war and also to renounce the German language, it also included at least one piece by the

impeccably WASP George A. Plimpton published in February 1917, expressing “confidence in German citizens” and stating “that in case of a war with Germany we should find that some of the very strongest upholders of our Government would be our German-American citizens.”

The two documents included here are somewhat different in emphasis. The first was a fairly standard appeal to Americans in general to support the war in every way possible and to remember that any sacrifices they might make were minimal by comparison with those required of the young men who would be doing the fighting. Similar statements appeared in every warring country and urged the general public to subscribe to war bonds and to accept without complaint the inconveniences, shortages, and difficulties the war inflicted on them. Interestingly, the author sought to protect American soldiers from the temptations of alcohol and, though this was not implicitly stated, prostitution and its consequences of venereal disease, an indication of the puritanical moral standards many Americans expected of their armies and sought to impose on enlistees.

The second piece was more provocative and controversial. Drafted by the almost hyperbolically prowar ex-President Theodore Roosevelt and signed by the German Jewish leader Oscar S. Straus “and many other persons of foreign descent,” Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish alike, some foreign-born, others old-stock Americans, it exemplified the fierce 100 percent Americanism characteristic of World War I, which equated any doubts over the war with a total absence of loyalty to the United States. This statement called upon all Americans to support the war wholeheartedly, (2299) condemning not just hyphenated Americans of Irish and German descent who declined to do so but also pacifists, the Socialist Party, and the Industrial Workers of the World, who were presented as “the champions of Germany.” Immigrants of every complexion were instructed to demonstrate that they had “renounced completely and without reserve, all allegiance to the lands from which they or their forefathers came.” Unashamedly endorsing private vigilante action, the statement openly urged Americans that, where government action was impossible, as private citizens they should nonetheless “arouse an effective and indignant public opinion against the enemies of our country.”

Interestingly, the statement drew on the image of the United States as a “crucible” or “melting pot” in which all national differences would be fused into one American nationality, a metaphor popularized by the Jewish playwright Israel Zangwill in his 1908 play on immigrants to the United States, *The Melting Pot*, and taken up enthusiastically by numerous ethnic groups. In the version favored by this statement’s signatories, however, the United States

was a crucible in which new immigrants would renounce old loyalties and model themselves as closely as possible upon existing old-stock Americans. In particular, since the United States “must . . . have but one language,” they were to renounce the use of their native tongues. Given the eminence of many of those endorsing this statement, it was published in New York and aimed particularly at that city’s sizable German, Jewish, Russian, and leftist population. Predictably, it was circulated by one of the unofficial prowar groups, the Vigilantes Special Service. Supposedly an appeal for national unity, in reality this statement consciously promoted the deliberate persecution and harassment of all who refused to conform to the conservative anti-German and prowar norms of its signatories.

Further Reading

Chafee, Zechariah, Jr. *Free Speech in the United States*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1941.

Farwell, Byron. *Over There: The United States in the Great War 1917–1918*. New York: Norton, 1999.

Higham, John. *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860–1925*. 2nd ed. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1988.

Kennedy, David M. *Over Here: The First World War and American Society*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1980.

Murray, Robert. *Red Scare: A Study in National Hysteria, 1919–1920*. New York: McGraw Hill, 1955.

Preston, William, Jr. *Aliens and Dissenters: Federal Suppression of Radicals, 1903–1933*. 2nd ed. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994.

Roberts, Priscilla. “Willard Straight, the First World War and ‘Internationalism of All Sorts’: The Inconsistencies of an American Liberal Interventionist.” *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 44(4) (December 1998): 493–512.

Schaffer, Ronald. *America in the Great War: The Rise of the War Welfare State*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.

Vaughn, Steven. *Holding Fast the Inner Lines: Democracy, Nationalism, and the Committee on Public Information*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980.

Zieger, Robert H. *America's Great War: World War I and the American Experience*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000.

MLA

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "31. Superpatriotism and 100 Percent Americanism on the U.S. Home Front." *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*, ABC-CLIO, 2005, pp. . *ABC-CLIO eBook Collection*, legacy.abc-clio.com/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2201.

Chicago Manual of Style

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "31. Superpatriotism and 100 Percent Americanism on the U.S. Home Front." In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005. <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2201>.

APA

Roberts, P. M., S. C. Tucker (2005). 31. Superpatriotism and 100 Percent Americanism on the U.S. Home Front. In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia* (pp.). Retrieved from <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2201>

Essay 32. Wartime Demands for Greater Democracy

World War I and the Acceleration of Democracy

Across the various belligerent nations of World War I, universal manhood suffrage was by no means always the norm. It existed in the United States and France, and also in Germany at the level of the rather ineffective nationwide federal Reichstag, but not at that of individual German provinces and states. In Great Britain the franchise was still restricted by residential and property qualifications, though over the previous eighty years these had been steadily reduced. Not only was the Russian franchise extremely limited, but the Duma or assembly it elected had few genuine powers. In no country, moreover, did women possess the vote in national elections, though they could sometimes exercise it at the local or state level. In almost every belligerent nation, the waging of total war encouraged demands for greater democracy, often presented as effectively representing an appropriate reward for popular support for the conflict. Across the various nations involved, a broad sense existed that in return for fighting or working to capacity, the mass of the people deserved to enjoy greater political participation once the war had ended. In particular, World War I dealt a deathblow to absolute monarchy. In those states that (2300) eventually lost the war—Russia, Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Ottoman Turkey, all four autocratic monarchies—defeat brought the overthrow not just of the government in power but of the entire existing political structure and its replacement by supposedly more representative and democratic arrangements. Even where these subsequently collapsed or were destroyed, this brought not the restoration of the former monarchical order but the imposition of authoritarian or totalitarian rule of some kind, fascist or communist.

Especially in conjunction with domestic privations, reverses in war often generated demands for political change. So, too, did the sheer length of the conflict, the absence of any prospect of a decisive outcome, and the increasing hardships war gradually imposed upon the general population of virtually every belligerent state. Government reactions varied, with some making genuine concessions and others temporary ones, to be rescinded at the first opportunity.

In summer 1915 Russia experienced a major political crisis, the product of military setbacks that many blamed on weaknesses in Russian industrial production. In August 1914 the national emergency impelled members of the Duma, the Russian assembly, to rally in support of the tsar's governments. Even then, several of the liberal political factions expressed the belief that major political, social, and economic reforms were badly needed and should be

carried out as expeditiously as possible. The political truce was short-lived, and within a year military reverses and inefficiencies in the production and distribution of munitions and other vital supplies triggered demands for change. In summer 1915 Russian businessmen, liberals, and would-be reformers in the Duma seized on the well-publicized munitions difficulties to establish a War Industries Committee that included representatives from the Duma and private business as well as the various government ministries, an organization they hoped would prove the spearhead for further erosion of the tsarist regime's powers. To add to the bureaucratic confusion, several other public-private supplementary organizations to improve the administration of the war effort were established. In September 1915 representatives of all reformist Russian political parties, with the exception of the far left, joined in a declaration calling for a major reorganization of the Russian government on liberal, democratic lines. The Council of Ministers debated their demands at length before choosing to adjourn both the Duma and the State Council, even though both these organizations had only recently been called into special session to deal with the national emergency. Tsar Nicholas II, meanwhile, took personal command of Russian armies at the front, leaving supervision of the government to his wife, Alexandra Fyodorovna, a woman whose autocratic and antidemocratic instincts surpassed even his own. Any further military setbacks were liable to reflect personally on the tsar himself, as occurred in late summer 1916 when General Aleksey Brusilov's initially highly successful offensive against Austro-Hungarian forces in Galicia was checked when German units came to their ally's rescue. Political unrest intensified, and although the Duma was recalled, in February 1917 its members responded to working-class riots in St. Petersburg by ignoring the tsar's order to dissolve the Duma and instead establishing a provisional government, which received the tsar's abdication on 15 February 1917.

By spring 1917 demands that Kaiser Wilhelm II replace the graduated voting system in Prussia, the kingdom of his own Hohenzollern dynasty, with universal manhood suffrage had become close to irresistible. Internally, in spring 1917 serious domestic food and commodity shortages, which became increasingly severe as the war progressed, provoked a wave of labor unrest in spring 1917. The Auxiliary Service Law, passed in December 1916, imposed the requirement to work in a war-related industry, whether manufacturing, agriculture, or the government, on all men between ages 17 and 60 who were not eligible for military service. Though not forced to do so, women were encouraged to take employment in war-related enterprises, for which they received extra ration allocations. These measures were intended to facilitate the Hindenburg Program, a campaign to boost German industrial production

dramatically announced by the War Ministry in August 1916, that it was hoped would enable Germany to mount a great effort to win a decisive victory in 1917. The increases in production were modest, though official government propaganda inflated them, and the undertaking also absorbed most of Germany's depleted raw material stocks and further exhausted the labor force. In these circumstances, the German government sought to conciliate the general (2301) populace, acquiescing in demands for democratic political reforms and promising additional social welfare measures once the war had ended. In a decree he issued at Easter that year, addressed to Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg, the kaiser promised universal manhood suffrage to all Germans. Three months later, speaking in his capacity as king of Prussia, Wilhelm II issued a further decree insisting on the introduction of equal suffrage for the selection of the Prussian legislature. In 1918, however, that body rejected legislation to this effect, and only after Wilhelm's abdication was the Easter Decree effectively implemented.

In February 1918 the British government passed legislation that conceded equal manhood suffrage and also gave the vote in national elections to women over the age of 30, so long as they or their husbands possessed the right to vote in local government elections, a qualification that meant they must either own a dwelling or pay rent on one. The effect was to increase the electorate from 7.7 million to 21.4 million. It is easy to trace connections between the demands war had imposed on the British public and the genesis of this legislation. It was the product of recommendations by a parliamentary Speaker's Conference established in late 1916, shortly after the end of the enormously costly Somme campaign, that had nonetheless failed to bring decisive victory. It became necessary to motivate the British people for at least another year of war, maybe more. The year 1917 was costly but inconclusive in terms of battles on the Western Front, ending in near disaster for the Allies as Russia collapsed and its new Bolshevik government sought peace at almost any price from the Central Powers, while in October 1917 the Italians suffered a crushing defeat at Caporetto. When the legislation was finally passed, the Allies were bracing for a major German offensive in the West, designed to crush Britain and France before U.S. troops could arrive in large numbers at the Western Front. The British Parliament finally passed the Representation of the People Act on the same day that the catchment of the Military Service Act was extended substantially, making many more men liable for conscription. Certain special provisions also revealed the impact of the war. Although 21 was the normal male voting age, soldiers on active service aged 19 and 20 received the franchise. The local government qualification was also waived for women aged 30 or more who had joined the auxiliary services. Conscientious objectors, by

contrast, were banned from voting in national or local elections for a period of five years, an illustration of the degree to which the vote was perceived as a just reward for loyal wartime service.

Once passed, the Representation of the People Act reconfigured the landscape of British politics. Four out of ten British men, most of them from the less affluent classes, had previously been unable to vote. It was no coincidence that in the general election held in late 1918, the Labour Party gained 63 seats and 2.25 million votes, as opposed to 42 seats and 500,000 votes in 1910. The Liberals, by contrast, who had been the government in power in 1914, split between the coalition Liberals led by Prime Minister David Lloyd George, who were absorbed into a broader Conservative-dominated national government that won the election, and the “free” Liberals led by former Prime Minister Herbert Asquith, who won only 28 seats and slightly more than 1 million votes in 1918. A mere five years later, in May 1923, Labour won 4.25 million votes and 191 parliamentary seats and the following January took office as the first British Labour government, albeit a minority and short-lived one.

The downward expansion of the electorate to include all working-class men meant that after the war such domestic issues as unemployment and social welfare tended to rank higher than defense and imperial questions, while greater pressure existed for redistributive taxation policies and egalitarian reforms. The campaign to expand female suffrage until women obtained parity with their male counterparts also continued and ultimately proved successful. Overall, the war caused a permanent and irrevocable democratization of British electoral politics, bringing the universal manhood suffrage that, since at least the Chartist movement of the 1830s and 1840s, had been a major goal of reformers and dissenters. In several other European belligerents, by contrast, notably Germany, Italy, Russia, and the successor states to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the pressure of circumstances, the social and economic dislocations resulting from the war, and ideological opposition meant that the greater democracy and egalitarianism generated by World War I often proved transitory.

(2302)

Declaration of the Russian Progressive Bloc, 7 September 1915

The undersigned representatives of factions and groups of the State Council and State Duma, actuated by the conviction that only a strong, firm and active authority can lead the fatherland to victory, and that such an authority can only be that which rests upon popular confidence and is capable of organizing the

active cooperation of all citizens, have arrived at the unanimous conclusion that the most important and essential object of creating such an authority cannot be attained without the fulfillment of the following conditions:

1. The formation of a united Government, composed of individuals who enjoy the confidence of the country, and who have agreed with the legislative institutions upon the execution, at the earliest date, of a definite program.

2 Decisive change in the methods of administration employed thus far, which have been based upon a distrust of public self-help, in particular:

1. (a) Strict observance of the principles of legality in the administration.
- (b) Abolition of the dual authority of civil and military powers in questions having no direct bearing upon the conduct of military operations.
- (c) Renewal of the local administrators.
- (d) A sensible and consistent policy directed towards the maintenance of internal peace and the removal of cause of dissension between nationalities and classes.

For the realization of such a policy the following measures must be adopted, by means of administration, as well as legislation:

1. By means of Imperial clemency, a discontinuation of cases started on charges of purely political and religious crimes, not aggravated by crimes of a generally felonious character; the release from punishment and the restoration of rights, including the right of participation in the elections to the State Duma, Zemstvo [local provincial and district councils], and municipal institutions, etc., of persons condemned for such crimes; and the amelioration of the condition of others condemned for political and religious crimes, with the exception of spies and traitors.

2. The return of those exiled by administrative order, in cases of a political and religious character.

3. Absolute and definite cessation of persecution on religious grounds, under any pretext whatsoever, and revocation of circulars issued in restriction and distortion of the sense of the Ukaz of 17 April [30 April], 1905.

4. Solution of the Russo-Polish problem, *viz.*: abolition of restrictions upon the rights of Poles throughout Russia; the prompt drafting and presentation to the

legislative institutions of a bill for the autonomy of the Kingdom of Poland, and the simultaneous revision of the laws concerning Polish land ownership.

5. Entry upon the path of abolition of restrictions upon the rights of the Jews, in particular, further steps towards the abolition of the Pale of Settlement, facilitation of admission to educational establishments and removal of admission to the choice of professions. Restoration of the Jewish press.

6. A policy of conciliation in the question of Finland, in particular, changes in the composition of the Administration and Senate; cessation of persecution against officials.

7. Restoration of the Little Russian press; immediate revision of cases of inhabitants of Galicia kept in confinement or exiled; and the release of those wrongfully subjected to persecution.

8. Restoration of activity of trade unions, and cessation of persecution of workers' representatives in the sick-benefit organizations, on suspicion of membership in an unlegalized party. Restoration of the labor press.

9. Agreement between the government and the legislative institutions regarding the early introduction of:

1. a. All bills immediately concerned with the national defense, the supply of the army, welfare of the wounded, care of the refugees, and other problems directly related to the war.
- b. The following legislative program aiming at the organization of the country for cooperation towards victory and maintenance of (2303) internal peace:
 1. Equalization of peasants' rights with those of other classes.
 2. Establishment of *volost* [township] zemstvos [councils].
 3. Change of zemstvo statutes of 1890.
 4. Change of municipal statutes of 1892.
 5. Establishment of zemstvo institutions in the border regions, such as Siberia, Archangel Province, Don Territory, The Caucasus, etc.
 6. A bill concerning the cooperative societies.
 7. A bill concerning rest for commercial employees.
 8. Improvement of the material condition of the post and telegraph employees.
 9. Confirmation of temperance for all time.
 10. Concerning zemstvo and municipal congresses and unions.
 11. Statutes concerning revisions.

12. Introduction of Courts of the Peace in those provinces where their establishment was held back by financial considerations.
13. Inauguration of legislative measures that may be indispensable to the administrative execution of the above outlined program of action.

For the progressive group of Nationalists, COUNT V. BOBRINSKI

For the faction of the Center, V. LVOV

For the faction of Zemstvo-Octobrists, I. DMITRIUKOV

For the group of the Union of October 17th, S. SHIDLOVSKI

For the faction of Progressists I. EFREMOV

For the faction of Popular Freedom, P. MILIUKOV

Source

Frank Alfred Golder, *Documents of Russian History, 1914–1917* (New York: Century, 1927), 134–136.

Easter Decree of the Emperor and King [Wilhelm II], to the Reichschancellor and President of the State Ministry Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg, Issued from German Military General Headquarters, 7 April 1917

Never before have the German people proved so unshakable as in this war. The realization that the Fatherland was facing a time of grave emergency exerted a wonderful reconciliatory influence. Notwithstanding all the sacrifices of blood on the foreign field and severe privations at home, the will to risk the utmost for the final victorious struggle has remained unshakable.

National and social spirit have worked together in full mutual understanding, and have given us lasting strength. Everybody feels that which has been built up during long years of peace, amid many internal difficulties, is worth defending.

The achievements of the whole nation in times of war and in times of stress stand before my eyes in glorious array. The experiences of this struggle for our national existence inaugurate with seriously solemnity a new epoch. As

Chancellor of the German Reich, responsible to us and First Minister of our Government in Prussia, it was incumbent upon you to help to fulfill the demands of this age at the right time and with the proper measures. On various occasions you have explained to us in what the aspects of our state life must be improved in order to render possible the free and active co-operation of all the people of our nation. The principles which you have advanced on these occasions have been approved by us, as you know. In doing this I am convinced that I am following the lead of our grandfather, the founder of the Reich, who performed his duties as monarch in an ideal way; as King of Prussia by improving the military organization, and as German Emperor by inaugurating social reform; and who made it possible for the German people to withstand this dreadful time with unanimous stern perseverance.

To preserve the military power as a true army of and for the people, to further the social improvement of all classes of the people, has been our aim from the (2304) very beginning of our reign. Anxious as we are to serve the commonwealth, without disturbing that unity between the people and the monarchy, we have decided to put into effect the improvement of our political, economic, and social life at home, as far as the conditions of war permit.

There are still millions of fellow-countrymen on the field of battle. The settlement of differences behind the front, which are unavoidable by a definite change of the Constitution, must be postponed in the highest interest of the Fatherland until the time of our soldiers' return has come and until they can help by word and deed to further the progress of the new age.

For the reason that immediately after the victorious completion of the war, which I confidently hope to be no longer far off, everything that is necessary and adequate in this respect may be done, I desire that all preparations be finished without delay.

We have at heart, especially, the change of the Prussian Landtag and the release of our whole political life at home from this problem. We now charge you to submit to us definite proposals of the State Ministry that on our soldiers' return this work, which is fundamental for the improvement of Prussia's internal structure, can be carried out quickly by legislative measures. After the great achievements of the whole people in this terrible war, there is in our opinion no more room for the three-class franchise in Prussia. The bill, furthermore, ought to provide for direct and secret election of the representatives.

No King of Prussia will undervalue the merits of the Herrenhaus and its lasting importance for the state. But the Herrenhaus can better meet the demands of the

coming age, by taking into its midst, to a larger and more uniform degree than before, leading men of the various circles and professions of the people who are distinguished by the respect of their fellow-citizens.

We only follow the traditions of great ancestors when we show in a loyal, brave, clever, and highly-developed people the confidence which they deserve in re-establishing important parts of our steadfast and storm-proof state.

I charge you to publish this decree at once.

Wilhelm I.R.

Decree of Wilhelm II, Sent to Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg, President of the State Ministry, 11 July 1917

Upon the report of our State Ministry rendered in consequence of our decree of April 7, I hereby decree, in pursuance thereof, that the draft bill concerning an amendment of the suffrage for the Abgeordnetenhaus, which shall be submitted to the Landtag of the [Prussian] monarchy for decision, shall be drawn up on the basis of equal suffrage. The bill is to be submitted, in any case, as early as possible, so that these next elections may be held according to the new suffrage right.

I charge you to take the necessary measures for this purpose.

Great Headquarters, 11 July 1917 Wilhelm R.

Source

Ralph Haswell Lutz, ed., *Fall of the German Empire, 1914–1918*, 2 vols. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1932), 2:423–425.

Great Britain, The Representation of the People Act, 1918

1.-(1) A man shall be entitled to be registered as a parliamentary elector for a constituency (other than a university constituency) if he is of full age [21 years or above] and not subject to any legal incapacity and—

(a) has the requisite residence qualification; or

(b) has the requisite business premises qualification.

(2) A man, in order to have the requisite residence qualification or business premises qualification for a constituency—

(a) must on the last day of the qualifying period be residing in premises in the constituency, or occupying business premises in the constituency, as the case may be; and

(b) must during the whole of the qualifying period have resided in premises, or occupied business premises, as the case may be, in the constituency, or in another constituency within the same parliamentary borough or parliamentary county, or within a parliamentary borough or parliamentary county contiguous to that borough or county, or (2305) separated from that borough or county by water, not exceeding at the nearest point six miles in breadth, measures in the case of tidal water from low-water mark.

For the purposes of this subsection the administrative county of London shall be treated as a parliamentary borough.

(3) The expression “business premises” in this section means land or other premises of the yearly value of not less than ten pounds occupied for the purpose of the business, profession, or trade of the person to be registered. . . .

4.-(1) A woman shall be entitled to be registered as a parliamentary elector for a constituency (other than a university constituency) if she—

(a) has attained the age of thirty years; and

(b) is not subject to any legal incapacity; and

(c) is entitled to be registered as a local government elector in respect of the occupation in that constituency of land or premises (not being a dwelling-house) of a yearly value of not less than five pounds or of a dwelling-house, or is the wife of a husband entitled to be so registered.

(2) A woman shall be entitled to be registered as a parliamentary elector for a university constituency if she has attained the age of thirty years and either would be entitled to be so registered if she were a man, or has been admitted to and passed the final examination, and kept under the conditions required of women by the university the period of residence, necessary for a man to obtain a degree at any university forming, or forming part of, a university constituency which did not at the time the examination was passed admit women to degrees.

(3) A woman shall be entitled to be registered as a local government elector for any local government electoral area—

- (a) where she would be entitled to be so registered if she were a man; and
- (b) where she is the wife of a man who is entitled to be so registered in respect of premises in which they both reside, and she has attained the age of thirty years and is not subject to any legal incapacity.

For the purpose of this provision a naval or military voter who is registered in respect of a residence qualification which he would have had but for his service, shall be deemed to be resident in accordance with the qualification.

Source

Hugh Fraser, *The Representation of the People Acts, 1918 to 1921*, 2nd ed. (London: Sweet and Maxwell, 1922), 1–3, 52–53.

About The Documents

Each of the documents included here is an official manifesto, proclamation, or legislative act of some kind. The assorted liberal political parties of the Russian Duma were publicly enumerating those reform measures they believed to be essential if Russia were to achieve victory in the war, policies they also thought vital to Russia's political modernization and for which the weak Duma had already campaigned unavailingly for more than a decade. Their proclamation was intended to generate popular support for their program, which included the formation of a government of national unity; restoration of the rule of law; the release of political prisoners and exiles; the removal of religious disabilities and the cessation of religious persecution; the grant of local autonomy to various separatist regions of Russia, including Poland and Finland; freedom of the press; trade union rights; and the early introduction of a systematic legislative program to streamline and upgrade mobilization for national defense and implement reforms. Possessing no legal authority to implement such a program, the Duma had little alternative but to appeal to public opinion. Since the tsar, with whom supreme power still rested, was profoundly unsympathetic to these demands, at least in the short term this strategy proved ineffective. The Duma's proclamation served primarily as an index of its dissatisfaction one year into the war. It also provided a dramatic demonstration of the serious breakdown of the early political consensus in support of the tsar's wartime policies.

The kaiser's decrees supposedly ordered the introduction of a more democratic franchise in Prussia but in practice proved ineffective, one indication of the growing irrelevance of the supposedly autocratic (2306) German monarch. They stand only as an indication of what he hoped—or at least thought it necessary—to accomplish. The British Representation of the People Act, by contrast, was the finished product of a lengthy process of negotiation, bargaining, and compromise. In terms of the greater democratization of British politics, its impact was permanent and profound.

Further Reading

Chickering, Roger. *Imperial Germany and the Great War, 1914–1918*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Herwig, Holger H. *The First World War: Germany and Austria-Hungary, 1914–1918*. New York: Arnold, 1997.

Lincoln, W. Bruce. *Passage through Armageddon: The Russians in War and Revolution, 1914–1918*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987.

Lynch, Michael. *Reaction and Revolutions: Russia, 1881–1924*. 2nd ed. New York: Hodder and Stoughton, 2000.

Marwick, Arthur. *The Deluge: British Society and the First World War*. London: Macmillan, 1965.

———. *War and Social Change in the Twentieth Century: A Comparative Study of Britain, France, Germany, Russia, and the United States*. New York: St. Martin's, 1974.

Moyer, Lawrence. *Victory Must Be Ours: Germany in the Great War, 1914–1918*. New York: Hippocrene, 1995.

Welch, David. *Germany, Propaganda, and Total War, 1914–1918: The Sins of Omission*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2000.

Wilson, Trevor. *The Myriad Faces of War*. Cambridge: Polity, 1986.

Winter, J. M. *The Great War and the British People*. 2nd ed. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

MLA

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "32. Wartime Demands for Greater Democracy." *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*, ABC-CLIO, 2005, pp. . *ABC-CLIO eBook Collection*, legacy.abc-clio.com/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2205.

Chicago Manual of Style

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "32. Wartime Demands for Greater Democracy." In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005. <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2205>.

APA

Roberts, P. M., S. C. Tucker (2005). 32. Wartime Demands for Greater Democracy. In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia* (pp.). Retrieved from <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2205>

Essay 33. Demands for Postwar Social Justice

Labor and World War I

Although in every state a few socialists declined to support the war in any way, in each belligerent country the bulk of organized labor rallied strongly behind the government and sought to facilitate efforts to prosecute the war. Wartime industrial mobilization made enormous demands upon the labor force, as every state sought to maximize industrial output and production, even as millions of men were withdrawn into the armed forces. The war generally enhanced the position of labor, as government-sponsored demands for high production in the interests of the war effort enabled labor to win improved wages, working conditions, and welfare benefits. Large-scale industrial unrest could jeopardize the war effort, and in most cases government preferred conciliation rather than confrontation when dealing with organized labor. In all the major belligerent nations, labor also became more assertive in demanding greater political influence. In those countries where universal manhood suffrage did not yet exist, wartime labor representatives demanded that it become the basis of politics. In Britain, France, Italy, and the United States labor went further, expecting government consultation on matters of importance to its members. These issues came to include not just those directly related to the prosecution of the war, industrial mobilization, taxation policies, social welfare, and the like, but—given their potential crucial relationship to the war's duration—such questions as war aims and postwar reconstruction. In Germany and Austria-Hungary, labor representatives expressed similar ambitions, but the military men who increasingly dominated policy making largely ignored labor views on war aims, peace, and reconstruction.

Belligerent states usually established formal mechanisms to promote collaboration between governments, responsible for giving contracts for war orders, and the industrialists and workers who were responsible for filling them. In Britain, the 1915 Munitions of War Act permitted the government to take over plants and industries considered vital to defense. The Ministry of Munitions, whose first head was the energetic David Lloyd George, a former radical Liberal, had the power to arbitrate grievances between workers and employers and impose settlements and also became the locus for consultation between the government and labor. Extensive wartime social legislation protected the rights of soldiers and their families. In France the prominent socialist Albert Thomas became minister of munitions in 1915, a position he held for two stressful years. In summer 1915 the French state assumed the power to release skilled men in the armed services to industry and to direct to

which plants they should be assigned. Such mobilized workers could not strike since this would mean their return to the front, a policy that soon led the government to assume responsibility for setting wage rates and working conditions. Declining real wages meant that France experienced increasing numbers of strikes in 1916 and 1917, and in January 1917 the (2307) Ministry of Munitions assumed powers of compulsory arbitration in all war-related management-labor disputes. Settlements generally increased wages in line with the cost of living. The German Auxiliary Service Law, which passed in December 1916 and gave the government powers to direct all men not eligible for military service to work in war-related industries, manufacturing, agriculture or the government service, also established “conciliation committees” to mediate labor-management disputes in all plants employing fifty or more workers, awarded labor unions a seat in the new War Office, and established a special committee of fifteen Reichstag deputies to oversee the law’s operations.

U.S. intervention led to the creation of similar mechanisms in the United States. The most significant labor organization was the American Federation of Labor (AFL), headed by Samuel Gompers, an accommodationist leader who viewed the war as an excellent opportunity to win for American workers not just higher wages and better working conditions but also recognition as an important political grouping entitled to input into government decisions on issues related to its members’ interests. Gompers implicitly made AFL support for the war effort contingent on the acceptance of these conditions. High inflation soon provoked a wave of strikes over wages and working conditions in war plants. In April 1918 the Wilson administration established the National War Labor Board (NWLB) and the War Labor Policies Board (WLPB) to supervise wartime labor policies and resolve grievances. Representatives of business, labor, government, and consumers staffed the two organizations, seeking to agree on, implement, and enforce fair labor policies in war-related industries and to arbitrate industrial disputes in order to facilitate wartime production. Gompers, a prominent member of the NWLB, relaxed union closed-shop rules and prevented labor wage demands from skyrocketing in exchange for good working conditions and benefits and wage levels that took into account the rising cost of living.

More broadly, labor sought recognition as an important political element entitled to official consultation on issues of concern to its members, which were increasingly defined as going beyond the simple welfare of the working class. Well before World War I, most socialists subscribed to a broad agenda of political democracy, social justice, reform, and regeneration and international

cooperation and peace, and during the conflict the majority retained their faith in these objectives and hoped they would ultimately be implemented.

War gave a particularly substantial boost to the British Labour Party, which was still small and weak in 1914. Although the party split over the war, the majority of its members supported the war effort. In return, in May 1915 a member of the Labour Party held government office for the first time, when Liberal Prime Minister Herbert Asquith invited the respected trade unionist Arthur Henderson to become president of the Board of Education. In practice, Henderson served as the government's main labor advisor, assisting Minister of Munitions David Lloyd George's efforts to win labor's consent to suspend restrictive union practices. His inclusion demonstrated the government's growing desire to conciliate the masses, whose continued support for the war as soldiers and workers was essential to victory. So, too, did the Lloyd George cabinet's decision in 1917 to sponsor legislation that would introduce universal manhood suffrage in Britain, 40 percent of whose male population were still denied the vote in 1910, a reform that would almost inevitably increase Labour Party electoral support.

Labor's demands were also increasingly expansive. When the Lloyd George coalition came to power in December 1916, it promised British labor official representation at the peace conference that would end the war. In fall 1917 Henderson resigned from the government, after his colleagues forbade him to attend a socialist conference in neutral Stockholm whose organizers hoped to persuade the various governments to accept a compromise peace. Many British labor representatives considered Henderson's endorsement of this enterprise unrealistic, but few welcomed his resignation, which many considered the result of insensitivity on the part of his cabinet colleagues. In December the Labour Party warned the British government that its continued endorsement of the war and the government's ever-tightening conscription policies depended upon the presentation of a clear public statement of acceptable and justifiable British war aims. In the "Memorandum on War Aims" drafted in collaboration with the Trades Union Congress (TUC), the Labour Party demanded a program to ensure that "there should be henceforth on earth no more war." The program included not just the creation of an international (2308) organization for that purpose but also the establishment of democratic political systems in all countries, open diplomacy, the abandonment of imperialism, disarmament, and government ownership of the munitions industry. In response, in early January 1918 Lloyd George addressed the Trades Union Congress (TUC). While his position was less advanced than the "Memorandum on War Aims," he carefully stated that the Allies had no desire to destroy Germany, Austria-Hungary, or

Turkey or to dictate their postwar form of government and that the Allies were merely fighting a war of self-defense.

British labor was not alone in seeking input into the peace settlement. In October 1918 Allied labor leaders, including Gompers of the AFL, attended an Inter-Allied Labor Conference held in London in September 1918, a meeting that served at least in part as a riposte to the earlier Stockholm Conference. Gompers endorsed the liberal war aims set out in President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points address and also put forward a list of more specifically labor-related demands, including direct official working-class representation on every national delegation attending the peace conference; the summoning of a World Labor Conference, to meet simultaneously with the peace conference; and the inclusion in the peace treaty of guarantees of basic labor rights, including freedom of speech, association, and assembly, the eight-hour day, the prohibition of child labor, the right to trial by jury, the outlawry of slavery and involuntary servitude, and legal and practical recognition of the principle "that the labor of a human being is not a commodity or article of commerce." The labor leaders assembled at the conference eventually produced final resolutions favoring an even more ambitious agenda, calling upon the forthcoming peace conference to create not just an international organization to maintain peace but an associated body to defend labor rights around the world. This proposal was largely responsible for the inclusion in the League of Nations covenant of provisions for an International Labor Organization, a respected body that eventually survived its parent League of Nations and in the early twenty-first century is still a thriving institution.

Source

Quotation regarding "Memorandum on War Aims" in George W. Egerton, *Great Britain and the Creation of the League of Nations: Strategy, Politics, and International Organization, 1914–1919* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 56; Gompers's war-related demands quoted in Samuel Gompers, *American Labor and the War* (New York: George H. Doran, 1919), 377.

Felix Frankfurter to U.S. of Labor William Bauchop Wilson, 15 October 1918

I beg to hand you herewith the final form of the report of the Conference of National Labor Adjustment Agencies, convened at your request to formulate a plan for harmony of action and the principles which guide such action by the labor adjusting agencies of the Government. This report has the approval of all

who have been represented in our deliberations with two exceptions, one, the Railroad Administration has reserved a dissent of that provision of the report which provides for semi-annual revision of wages in accordance with changes in the cost of living. . . .

Enclosure: Felix Frankfurter, Report of the Conference Committee of National Labor Adjustment Agencies, 11 October 1918

The following recommendations are submitted to serve as a basis for a National Labor Policy to be announced by the President of the United States.

I. Harmony of Action by Labor Adjusting Agencies

1. A Conference of National Labor Adjustment Agencies, composed of two representatives of each Federal Labor Adjusting agency, should be established to meet at regular intervals for the purpose of promoting unified action and stability in reference to matters under their jurisdiction. Effective methods shall be established by each agency for conference with such other agencies as may be directly concerned by a proposed award, and in no event shall a decision effecting a change in standard rates or working conditions therefore fixed by an authorized governmental agency be deemed to be concluded, nor shall such award be promulgated until the Conference is first consulted as to its effect upon the industrial situation of the entire country.

2. It is recommended that appropriate steps be directed to be taken to secure whatever modification (2309) of existing agreements creating labor adjustment agencies is necessary to enforce the national labor policy that may be declared by the President.

3. Any complaint as to the application or operation of the principles and standards herein proclaimed shall be referred to the National War Labor Board for adjudication, in so far as its jurisdiction applies. And nothing herein is intended to repeal or amend the provisions of the Presidential Proclamation of April 8th, 1918, establishing the National War Labor Board, and fixing its jurisdiction, its general procedure and the principles upon which its action and decisions should be based.

II. Standards of Wages and Working Conditions

The following industrial standards should govern the various adjusting agencies for the purpose of securing maximum efficiency during the war, regularity of work on the part of the employe, continuity of employment on the part of the

employer, and to secure stability for industry. All the provisions should be interpreted with these great ends in view.

1. *Differentials.*

The principle of wage differentials relating to emergency war construction, shipyards, loading and unloading of ships, general manufacturing and railroad shops should for the present be recognized because:

1. a. The transitory character of war construction and emergency shipbuilding has resulted in the establishment of rates of compensation in such occupations higher than are maintained in organizations which are part of the permanent industrial life of the Nation.
- b. The supreme necessity for ships makes it necessary to attract the additional workers required for their construction from non-war industries and from localities remote from shipbuilding centers. This involves serious dislocation in the lives of workers who engage in such work. The relatively severe conditions under which shipbuilding construction is at the present time carried on entitle the men to a payment of compensation at a rate somewhat in excess of that paid employes in similar occupations in other industries not subject to such conditions, and a sufficient number of men cannot otherwise be obtained.
- c. To determine whether or not existing wage differentials should be eliminated, and if so upon what basis, will require not only extensive investigation, but the closest co-operation of employers, employes and representatives of the Government departments affected thereby. The administrative machinery to conduct such investigation and bring about such cooperation has been established and is being perfected. Pending the operation of this machinery, any radical change in existing conditions would be arbitrary, would create confusion, and would seriously embarrass the agencies which are now working toward a solution of these problems, and thus handicap war production.

2. *Principles governing wage adjustments.*

1. a. The national policy calls for the maintenance of proper standards of living—such standards as are appropriate to American citizens devoting their energies to the successful prosecution of a righteous war. Changes in the cost of living, therefore, call for adjustments in wages. In making such adjustments due regard must be accorded to securing maximum war production and to the state of the national finances, but no alteration of

the national policy as to American standards should occur until the government has announced the necessity for the reduction of standards of all classes to meet the exigencies of the war. To permit the continuance of such standards we cannot too strongly urge that immediate and drastic steps be taken by all the government agencies equipped with power to prevent further increase in the cost of living.

b. The application of the broad principle of maintaining standards of living cannot be reduced to mathematical formula, but must follow the rules of reason and justice. In essence, reason and justice demand that this rule should apply in full force to those workers whose wages afford but a small margin over the amount necessary for the maintenance of their economic efficiency.

(2310)

c. Reason and justice further demand that the principle of adjusting wages to changes in the cost of living should apply only where a fair and equitable wage prevails. This principle should not operate to prevent workers whose wages were below a proper standard of living from securing an equitable adjustment.

d. In the interest of stability, revisions of wage scales based upon changes in the cost of living as herein provided should be made *oftener than* semi-annually. The semi-annual adjustment should be based upon a comparison of the cost of living for the current six months period with that of the corresponding period of the preceding year, and any change should apply to the succeeding six months.

3. *Standard Working Conditions*

1. a. Eight hours shall constitute a day's work on all work to which the eight-hour statutes of August 1, 1892, as amended and of June 19, 1912, apply and in all direct and sublet contracts for Government work. On all work to which the eight-hour statutes of August 1, 1892, as amended and of June 19, 1912, apply and in all direct and sublet contracts for Government work, except in continuous industries and continuous occupations, and except in the production or extraction of raw materials necessary for war work, four hours shall constitute a day's work on Saturdays for the months of June, July, and August. Where a short workday on Saturdays has been established in industries excepted above or for a greater number of months than those specified, the number of hours heretofore constituting a day's work on Saturdays should not be increased. Any time in excess of the hours specified above is to be

considered overtime.

b. In war time, on government work, overtime should be required or permitted only when the public necessity demands.

Compensation at higher rates for overtime is paid as a means of protecting workers against unduly long hours and of penalizing employers who require such hours. Under the extraordinary conditions created by the war, however, there has developed a great temptation to break down the standard work day and to work irregular hours and at undue rates in order to secure the extra compensation paid for overtime. This not only threatens all proper standards of work but has hindered war production and resulted in a serious drain on the finances of the nation. All government authorities are therefore charged to use every effort to put a stop to this abuse.

Compensation for overtime, as defined in paragraph a, for hourly workers shall be at one and one-half times the hourly rates and for piece workers at one and one-half times the average hourly piece work earnings for the total number of hours worked on piece work computed at the end of each pay period, except where compensation at a higher rate is now being paid; but in no case shall compensation at a rate in excess of double time be paid.

c. On all government war work and on all direct or sublet contracts for government war work, no work shall be performed on Sundays or holidays except such as is indispensable, and in such cases the rate of compensation for such work should be not more than double the regular rates, computed as provided for in the preceding paragraph. When work on Sundays and holidays is necessary, every precaution should be taken to prevent irregular attendance on week days for the sake of the extra compensation on Sundays and holidays.

d. The Federal Government recognizes for the purpose of extra compensation the following federal holidays: New Years Day, Washington's Birthday, Decoration Day (Memorial Day), Fourth of July, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas Day. On state and national election day, employees enjoying the voting privilege shall be allowed not to exceed half a day without loss of pay, in order to exercise their right of franchise.

e. For night shifts in war industries, except in continuous industries and continuous occupations, extra compensation, not exceeding ten per cent, should be added to the total earnings at day shift rates.

(2311)

f. The payment of bonuses, or any extra compensation or gift, which, in the judgment of the proper government authorities have the effect of interfering with the established standards of compensation and other working conditions or which tend to promote an unnecessary shifting of employment, should be prohibited.

III. Enforcement of Standards

1. Should any employer or worker refuse to abide by the award of an appropriate labor adjustment agency, the government will utilize all the power at its disposal, including the withdrawal of privileges, to secure compliance with such award.
2. Strict measures should be taken by the War Industries Board and all governmental agencies to prevent interference by war or non-war industries with the application of the standards herein established.

Source

Arthur S. Link, ed., *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, Vol. 51, *September 14–November 8, 1918* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985), 363–367.

Platform of the British Labour Party in the General Elections, December 1918

Under the new constitution of the Labour Party it is the duty of the National Executive in conjunction with the Labour Party members of Parliament to define before any general election the particular issues which should be made the party programme. Following is the text of the resolution passed by an emergency conference November 14, 1918, summarising the reconstruction policy of the party as embodied in the revised edition of the pamphlet “Labour and the Social Order”:

International

Now that peace is at hand, the Labour Party feels justified in putting forward its demand that the promise made when its members joined the last Coalition Government in December, 1916, that Labour should have representation at the official Peace Congress, should be redeemed. It reaffirms the declaration of the Inter-Allied Labour and Socialist Conferences of February and September, 1918, that because of their response in defence of the principles of freedom the peoples have earned the right to wipe out all vestiges of the old idea that the

Government belongs to or constitutes “a governing class.” In determining issues that will vitally affect the lives and welfare of millions of wage-earners, justice requires that they should have direct representation in the Conferences authorised to make such decisions.

In common with the other Labour and Socialist organisations in the Allied countries, Labour also declared in favour of a World Labour Congress at the conclusion of hostilities with a view to the foundations of an effective League of Nations being laid upon a genuine democratic basis, and also in view of the need for an international agreement for the enforcement in all countries of uniform legislation on factory conditions, maximum working hours, the prevention of sweating and unhealthy trades, and similar industrial reforms.

The Executive Committee, therefore, recommends that the Emergency Conference should adopt the following resolution:—

“That this Special Emergency Committee of the Labour reaffirms the demand of the Inter-Allied Conferences of February and September, 1918—

“(1) That, in the official delegations from each of the belligerent countries which formulate the Peace Treaty, the workers should have direct official representation.

“(2) That a World Labour Congress should be held at the same time and place as the Peace Conference that will formulate the Peace Treaty closing the war.

“(3) That this Conference demands that the Government should afford facilities for the fulfilment of the above proposals.”

National Reconstruction

The Labour Party protests against any patching up of the old economic order. It declines to go back to the conditions of penury and starvation which were all that society used to allow to millions of workers. It stands for such a systematic reconstruction of industrial and social relations as will give to the workers by hand or by brain the full fruits of their labour.

The Labour Party demands the wide measures of reform that are described in “Labour and the New Social Order,” which include:—

(2312)

1. A just and generous provision for the discharged soldiers and sailors, apart from either charity or the Poor Law, alike in respect of pensions, medical and surgical treatment, reinstatement in civil employment at trade union rates of wages, and complete security against involuntary unemployment.
2. Full provision for the civil war workers to be discharged on the conclusion of the war, and others whom the dislocation of industry will throw out of work, including adequate arrangements for placing in new situations as soon as possible and maintenance during involuntary unemployment.
3. The complete fulfillment of the nation's pledges to the trade unionists that they should be unconditionally reinstated in respect of the trade union conditions and workshop customs abrogated in the public interest; or else that the Government should submit for their acceptance measures calculated to achieve the same ends.
4. The complete restoration of freedom of speech, publication, travel, residence, and choice of occupation, and the abolition of all compulsory military service.
5. The completion of political democracy by adult suffrage, equal rights of voting for both sexes, and the abolition of any Second Chamber presuming to limit or control the supremacy of the popularly elected House of Commons.
6. The immediate application to Ireland of the fullest possible measure of Home Rule.
7. Provision for the greatly increased efficiency of the Legislature by the devolution of English, Scottish, and Welsh business to separate local legislatures united in a Federal Parliament.
8. The retention by the State of the railways and canals, the expropriation of the shareholders on equitable terms, and the organisation under public control, of a national system of transport worked for exclusively public objects.
9. The retention by the State of the coal and iron mines, the expropriation of the shareholders on equitable terms, and the organisation by the National Government and the local authorities of the supply of coal as a public service.
10. The provision and management by the Government itself, in conjunction with the local authorities, of the proposed gigantic super-power stations by

which electricity can be provided at the lowest possible cost, without toll to the capitalist companies, for both industrial and domestic purposes.

11. The effective maintenance of the standard of life for the whole nation by the suitable amendment and extension of the Factories, Mines, Trade Boards, and similar Acts.

12. The revision of the rates, age for eligibility, and conditions of old-age pensions, so as to make the statutory pension an absolute right of every person of pensionable age.

13. The abolition of the Poor Law and the merging of its present services in those already rendered by the directly elected local authorities to the children, the sick and infirm (including maternity and infancy), the mentally defective, the aged, and the able-bodied unemployed, stimulated, aided, and controlled by an effective Ministry of Health, whilst suitable measures for the prevention of unemployment, and the securing of situations for the unemployed are taken by a Ministry of Employment.

14. The extension of the powers of county, borough, district, and parish councils, alike in respect of the acquisition of land, the reform of the system of assessment and rating, the obtaining of additional grants-in-aid, and freedom to undertake all the services desired by their constituents, together with the immediate resumption of local elections with proportional representation.

15. The prompt carrying through of a comprehensive national measure of housing, the local authorities being everywhere required with grants-in-aid sufficient to prevent any charge on the rates, to make good the whole of the existing shortage in well-planned, well-built, commodious, and healthy homes for the entire population.

16. The reorganisation of agriculture and rural life by the resumption by the State of its ownership of the land, and its use as State farms, small holdings, and allotments, or cooperative enterprises, in such a way as to secure the greatest possible production, not of game or of rent, but of the people's food, together with standard wages for all the workers employed, adequate security for the farmer's enterprise, healthy dwelling for all the (2313) country population, and the development of village life and civilisation.

17. A national system of education, free and effectively open to all persons, irrespective of their means, from the nursery school to the university; based on the principle of extending to persons of all ages, without distinction of class or

wealth and without any taint of militarism, genuine opportunities for the most effective education on a broad and liberal basis, and the provision for teachers of all kinds and grades of salaries, pensions, training, and opportunities of advancement commensurate with the high social importance of their calling.

18. The nationalization of life assurance, with equitable compensation to the shareholders and complete provision for all persons now employed, in order both to place beyond doubt the security of the existing policies and to supersede the present costly and objectionable system of industrial life assurance by a universal provision of funeral benefit, free from the weekly house-to-house collection of the people's pence.

19. The protection of the public against the "money trust" now rapidly being formed through the banking amalgamations, by means of the development of the Post Office Savings Bank into a universal national banking system, carried on without capitalist control, and the nationalization, with equitable compensation to the shareholders, of the banking companies to be absorbed.

20. The most strenuous resistance to any attempt to saddle the cost of the war and the National Debt upon the consumers by any system of taxation of food or commodities of popular consumption, or by Customs or Excise Duties on anything but luxuries, or by any special taxation of cooperative societies or of wages. The Labour Party would have the nation pay its way by adjusting taxation strictly according to the ability to bear it. This requires the raising of the exemption limit, a much steeper graduation and increase of the super-tax, the taking of unearned increment by the taxation of land values, the doubling or trebling of the death duties, and the "conscription of wealth." This means the substitution for a large part of the existing income-tax of a carefully graduated capital tax, exempting possessions under £1,000 and taxing very lightly those under £5,000.

Other Resolutions

This Conference is of opinion that in the new Parliament following the coming General Election the Labour Party should be free to promote its reconstruction policies in the most effective manner that the Parliamentary situation will permit. It meantime declares that a General Election [be] held for the purpose of choosing a Parliament to carry on the business of the country after the war terminates the conditions under which the party entered the Coalition, and it determines that the party shall resume its independence and withdraw its members from the Government at the close of the present Parliament.

That in the official delegations from each of the belligerent countries which formulate the Peace Treaty the workers should have direct official representation;

That a World Labour Congress should be held at the same time and place as the Peace Conference that will formulate the Peace Treaty closing the war.

Source

Paul U. Kellogg and Arthur Gleason, *British Labor and the War: Reconstructors for a New World* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1919), 413–417.

About The Documents

The first of these documents is a memorandum drafted by Felix Frankfurter, the Harvard law professor who headed the U.S. War Labor Policies Board, an agency whose mandate was “to coordinate the wages and hours set by other governmental adjustment boards.” Representatives of the country’s assorted agencies concerned with labor conditions had met earlier to draft a “National Labor Policy” for the president, and Frankfurter was passing this on to Secretary of Labor William B. Wilson. Its recommendations were fairly straightforward and predictable: fair wage levels, adjusted where necessary to take account of increases in the cost of living; the eight-hour day; extra compensation for overtime, Sunday, evening, and holiday work; and the strict enforcement of these standards by the NWLB. In the interests of efficient production, overtime was to be kept to a minimum. Workers in industries where demand had temporarily skyrocketed and was at that time urgent, but where (2314) production could be expected to decline sharply in the future, should receive extra-high compensation in view of the transient nature of their work. Formal and technical in nature, this report sought to codify the government’s basic principles on labor standards and treatment in war-related industries that were filling government orders. It remained circumspectly silent as to whether such standards would remain operative once the war had ended, an objective that labor representatives undoubtedly cherished but a prospect that was anathema to many industrialists and also to those who favored free market principles during peacetime.

The British Labour Party’s 1918 platform was its official statement of the program on which its parliamentary candidates ran for office in the general election held in December that year. The Labour Party had decided to withdraw from the wartime coalition and fight the election on an independent platform.

The 1918 election represented the first occasion on which all British men were able to vote, and Labour's platform sought to appeal to this new electorate, millions of whom were working-class men who had fought in the war. Whereas in 1910 Labour only contested a small number of carefully selected constituencies, in 1918 the party intended to field more than 500 candidates. The experience of war, during which British trade union membership increased from 4 million to 6.5 million, apparently helped to increase labor self-confidence and independence.

On the international front, the Labour Party repeated its demand for formal labor representation on every official delegation attending the impending peace conference, reaffirming declarations by the earlier Inter-Allied Socialist Conferences that "because of their response in defence of the principles of freedom the peoples have earned the right to wipe out all vestiges of the old idea that the Government belongs to or constitutes 'a governing class.' In determining issues that will vitally affect the lives and welfare of millions of wage-earners, justice requires that they should have direct representation in the Conferences authorized to make such decisions." The platform also reiterated the demand for the creation not just of a league of nations to maintain peace but also for an international labor body to defend labor rights throughout the world.

At home, the Labour Party endorsed a broad program of political, social, and economic reforms. Some of these were directly related to the war: generous pensions and medical benefits for returning soldiers and sailors and their reinstatement in the jobs they had left, together with adequate compensation for those workers who lost employment thereby; the reinstatement of all trade union rights and conditions; the restoration of free speech and the removal of all coercive wartime government powers, including conscription. Others were more long term: the extension of the franchise to all, men and women alike; the abolition of the House of Lords; Home Rule for Ireland, and devolution for England, Scotland, and Wales; nationalization of the transportation, coal, iron, and power industries; legislation to regulate conditions in factories and mines; the provision of pensions; suitable health care or facilities for the young, the ill and unfit, and the elderly; provisions for the unemployed; the extension of the powers of local councils; a major housing program; the dedication of land to productive agriculture rather than aristocratic leisure pursuits; the provision of free national education at all levels; the creation of a national assurance system; and the reduction through heavy taxation of large incomes and fierce capital levies of the massive national debt with which the war had saddled the British government.

Most of these proposals represented long-term goals of the labor movement. They also built on the wide range of existing social welfare programs, some of which, allowances for soldiers' families, for example, were initially introduced during the war as a means of inducing men to join the armed forces. The Labour Party emerged from the war in a state of great enthusiasm, hoping to construct the brave new world or "New Jerusalem" that British socialists had for decades envisaged. Much of the Labour platform was the work of the intellectual Fabian socialist Beatrice Webb (1858–1943), who with her husband Sidney (1859–1947) had for many years been one of the most determined advocates and publicists of such reforms. In 1912 the couple deserted the Liberals for the Independent Labour Party and during the war moved into the Labour Party proper, an odyssey that was an index of the latter's growing credibility. Although Labour only won 63 seats and 2.25 million votes, and despite the fact that Labour's most prominent leaders lost their seats in 1918, this was a considerable improvement on its 42 seats and 500,000 votes in 1910. By May (2315) 1923 Labour votes had doubled, winning the party 191 seats, and in 1924 Labour felt sufficiently strong to form a short-lived minority government. By 1929, when the second Labour government took office, Labour was clearly the second party in a two-party system, its main rival the Conservatives, leaving the once-mighty Liberals, who had won sweeping electoral victories in 1906 and 1910, permanently relegated to insignificant third-party status. World War I therefore contributed to a massive and lasting reconfiguration of the British political landscape.

Source

Quotation regarding mandate of War Labor Policies Board in Valerie Jean Conner, *The National War Labor Board: Stability, Social Justice, and the Voluntary State in World War I* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983), 32.

Further Reading

Adelman, Paul. *The Rise of the Labour Party, 1880–1945*. 3rd ed. London: Longman, 1996.

Conner, Valerie Jean. *The National War Labor Board: Stability, Social Justice, and the Voluntary State in World War I*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983.

Grubbs, Frank L., Jr. *Samuel Gompers and the Great War: Protecting Labor's Standards*. Wake Forest, NC: Meridional, 1982.

———. *The Struggle for Labor Loyalty: Gompers, the A.F. of L., and the Pacifists, 1917–1920*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1968.

Larson, Simeon. *Labor and Foreign Policy: Gompers, the AFL, and the First World War, 1914–1918*. Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1975.

McKibbin, Ross. *The Evolution of the Labour Party, 1910–1924*. Oxford, UK: Clarendon, 1983.

McKillen, Elizabeth. *Chicago Labor and the Quest for a Democratic Foreign Policy, 1914–1924*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995.

Schaffer, Ronald. *America in the Great War: The Rise of the War Welfare State*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.

Thorpe, Andrew. *A History of the British Labour Party*. 2nd ed. New York: Palgrave, 2001.

MLA

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "33. Demands for Postwar Social Justice." *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*, ABC-CLIO, 2005, pp. . *ABC-CLIO eBook Collection*, legacy.abc-clio.com/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2211.

Chicago Manual of Style

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "33. Demands for Postwar Social Justice." In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005. <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2211>.

APA

Roberts, P. M., S. C. Tucker (2005). 33. Demands for Postwar Social Justice. In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia* (pp.). Retrieved from <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2211>

Essay 34. African Americans and the Great War

African Americans in World War I

As soldiers and workers, African Americans took part in the Great War, which offered them new opportunities. Some civil rights activists, such as W. E. B. Du Bois, urged blacks to regard war service as a chance to prove their patriotism and loyalty to their country, which would help them to gain equal rights in the future, urging that while the war lasted his community should “forget our special grievances and close ranks shoulder to shoulder with our white fellow citizens in ‘fighting for democracy.’” Others, such as the editor of the black newspaper the *St. Louis Argus*, argued that American blacks should refuse to fight for democracy overseas until their grievances at home had been addressed and they enjoyed democracy at home. The majority of black leaders and most African Americans chose the first course, in part because official conscription policies left them little alternative.

Although 400,000 blacks served in the U.S. armed forces, about 13 percent of the total men inducted, and 150,000 African-American soldiers went overseas to France, they normally faced severe discrimination. In the U.S. Army, black soldiers were rigidly segregated from whites in separate battalions, regiments, and divisions, and though these appointed some black officers, opportunities for promotion were limited and many of these units had white officers. During the entire war, of 200,000 officers who were commissioned, 639 were African American. Training facilities in the United States were normally inflexibly segregated, especially in the South, and on occasion black troops rioted to protest their treatment. The most serious such episode occurred in Houston, Texas, in August 1917, when black troops from the 24th Infantry marched on the city after local police beat an African-American soldier to death. Guns were fired on both sides, and 5 policemen and 4 black soldiers were killed. The army hastily convened courts-martial, which imposed death sentences on 28 black soldiers, 18 of whom were eventually hanged, and life imprisonment on an additional 53.

Combat service, although dangerous, was always regarded as the touchstone of an elite military unit. Two black divisions, the 92nd and 93rd, were raised for this purpose. The 93rd performed excellently, and in practice the 92nd compiled a creditable record though systematic denigration on the part of its white officers won it a reputation for cowardice and inefficiency. Inadequate performance by black troops was invariably highlighted and criticized more severely than similar failings on the part of white soldiers. To many (2316)

Americans, however, the prospect of African Americans in fighting roles was deeply disturbing. The great majority of black troops in the American Expeditionary Force were assigned to support functions in labor, stevedore, transport, engineering, and pioneer units, where they were restricted to such tasks as digging trenches and other fortifications; unloading ships; constructing roads, camps, and other facilities; and collecting and burying the dead. The U.S. Navy adopted even more exclusive policies toward blacks, accepting them only as stewards, waiters, and mess boys, while the U.S. Marines rejected them entirely. Such discrimination undercut the claims of the United States to represent and be fighting for democracy, a weakness that German propaganda aimed at black troops was swift to exploit.

Domestically, after April 1917 full-scale U.S. industrial mobilization drew large numbers of African Americans out of southern rural poverty and into urban manufacturing jobs in both the North and South, the beginning of the black urban migration that became one of the most significant demographic trends in the twentieth-century United States. Several hundred thousand blacks responded to wartime economic opportunity and moved to such major northern and southern cities as Chicago, Detroit, St. Louis, Philadelphia, New York, and Houston. Southern states greeted this migration with alarm, attempting to stem the outflow of cheap labor from themselves, and lynchings increased dramatically from thirty-eight in 1917 to fifty-eight in 1918 and more than seventy the following year. When African Americans did make their way to the cities, their reception was by no means always harmonious. Rapid industrial expansion placed heavy pressure on housing, for which blacks competed with whites, and industrialists sometimes used black labor to decrease white wage levels or as strikebreakers, generating fierce racial antagonisms. White-dominated unions often declined to admit blacks as members, and African Americans were largely confined to the most dangerous, unpleasant, and worst-paid jobs, their average wages substantially lower than those of whites doing the same work. Violent clashes were common, and in July 1917 a major race riot took place in East St. Louis, Illinois, leaving nine whites and thirty-nine blacks dead. The Wilson administration, seeking to preserve the Democratic Party's base of white Southern support, refused to take action to protect black civil rights, though in 1918 the president did speak out condemning lynchings. As black migration continued, permanently swelling the African-American population of major U.S. cities, for thirteen days in late July and early August 1919 another major race riot erupted in Chicago, the Midwest's largest city, in which fifteen whites and twenty-three blacks died, hundreds were injured, and thousands of homes and businesses burnt to the ground. This was the beginning of a wave of such disturbances that summer, with riots in Knoxville,

Tennessee; Omaha, Nebraska; Washington, D.C.; and numerous other cities whose black population had expanded due to the war.

Although hundreds of thousands of American blacks served in the U.S. military and comparable numbers moved from rural poverty to urban industry, overall their condition was still dire. In both the North and the South, African Americans were denied equality of treatment, and in the southern states, where the majority still resided, they were the targets not just of legal segregation but also of systematic violence designed to enforce their political, social, and economic inferiority. Despite Wilson's stirring rhetoric on democracy, the experience of war did little to improve the social and economic status of American blacks, nor did it remedy their grievances on civil rights. Among black leaders the war did perhaps help to generate a new spirit of assertiveness and determination, which would come to fruition during the 1930s and 1940s and provide much of the impetus for the subsequent civil rights movement.

Source

W. E. B. Du Bois quoted in D. Clayton James and Anne Sharp Wells, *America and the Great War, 1914–1920* (Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, 1998), 68.

“Status of Negro Problem at Newport News (Confidential)”: Report by Unidentified Representative of the United States Commission on Training Camp Activities of the Army and Navy Departments, September 1918

While the situation at Newport News has greatly improved, there is still great danger that trouble may arise before the war is closed. Unfortunately the true (2317) attitude of the negro remains unseen. He must not be judged so much by what he says publicly, as by what he is thinking and doing in secret. This tendency towards secrecy is growing. The negroes are not telling the white man all the truth about what they think of present conditions, and what they expect when the war is over.

To appreciate the present situation and to guess what the future will bring, it is necessary to know some of the things he is thinking, and why he is thinking thus:

(a) They are very uneasy about the future. All are looking for a coming democracy in which the negroes will occupy a high position. This talk may be heard in street cars, on street corners and almost any place where two or three of them get together. The details of this democracy they do not discuss. It is

enough for them that they are coming to their own. They grow uneasy when the thought occurs to them, that coming kingdoms do not always appear.

(b) They demand a better chance, industrially, socially and politically; they complain bitterly of a white man's oppression. They feel they have been discriminated against long enough. They say further that no sacrifice is too great to win a freedom, which was not gained by the Civil War. Here again is no attempt to state clearly what they want. As an illustration of this feeling, here are the exact words of a negro, with almost national reputation: "I come to the problem, with no race prejudice. My best friends in this world are white men. I have spent my life in trying to bring about a more friendly relation between the whites and the blacks. The negroes are not free to-day and have never been. I do not want them to have that for which they are not prepared, but I do want them to have a chance as human beings. If this war does not bring this chance, there is no hope, and I, for one, will feel that another course is necessary."

(c) There is a mistrust of the government. They feel that certain things could be accomplished if the government would take a definite stand. Too many of them look upon the government as unfriendly, and seeking to do them harm, rather than look after their interests. For instance some of the women here will not engage in war service because they say it is a trick of the government's to get them into oversea service. Many of the mothers would not let their girls participate in our program for the same reason. They believe that as soon as they learn to do the work here, they will be made to work over there. They speak often of the strong arm of the government.

(d) There is a widespread feeling, that negro troops are discriminated against and badly treated. They point to the attitude of some white officers, and regard that as typical. They love to linger on isolated cases. Locally, this condition is improved, because some of them have learned that white men are subject to the same treatment and that after all bad treatment comes from individuals and not the government.

(e) There is a growing dissatisfaction that so many negroes are among the stevedores and Labor Units. They believe that there is a deliberate attempt to put the hard and nasty side of army life on the negro. I am told this feeling is nation-wide.

(f) They want the mob-spirit put down. They point to the fact that lynching and brutal treatment of negroes has been increased, since we entered the war.

Apparently our President's recent utterance on the mob-spirit is doing good. Many local people have expressed great satisfaction.

(g) The most discouraging thing to me here is the fact that many ministers are preaching, and prominent men sent here are lecturing that the war cannot be won without the negroes. Time and again have they said in my hearing that the United States was failing, and had to call upon the negroes to win the war. When such utterances are made, whether in church or out, prolonged applause follows. With these men this is not idle talk. They believe it is actually so. This fact accounts for much of their arrogance and furnishes a reason for demanding great things when the conflict is over.

Source

Arthur S. Link, ed., *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, Vol. 51, *September 14–November 8, 1918* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985), 136–138.

(2318)

African-American Troops in World War I: Brig.-Gen. Malvern-Hill Barnum to Col. Allen J. Greer, 19 April 1919

You ask me for my views on the policy that our Country should follow with reference to the colored man as a soldier and as an officer. I shall give you these based on experience not merely in this war, but in the Spanish American War, and also on my observation of the development of the colored man and his possibilities in the future.

The colored men of our Country are thoroughly loyal and patriotic and as a rule are perfectly willing to serve in the army. With ten million of them in the country, it would be a very short sighted policy not to regard them as a very great military asset and to develop and use them to the greatest possible advantage of the Country. To develop and use them means that they must be given every opportunity to render their maximum service.

The policy that should be adopted with reference to the military services to be required from the colored men should be subject to change according as the colored man becomes qualified for higher service. For example, the policy adopted during this war was very different from that followed during the civil war, and it is safe to say that in fifty years more a further marked advance will be seen in the capacity of the colored men as soldiers. This advance will be

great or small according to the policy that is adopted looking to the development of their military capacity.

The percentage of illiteracy among colored men is much greater than among the whites, and to this extent the colored man should furnish a greater proportion of those troops intended for line of communication work. However, combatant units should be organized in the infantry, cavalry and artillery, and, I believe, that they should be officered by colored officers to the extent to which competent men can be found.

The colored race in our Country is making great advances in education and in commercial and professional channels. It would not be in accordance with the policy of our Country to close to the colored man the door of opportunity to become officers, and to rise as high as their merits will permit.

There was no doubt but that in organizing colored units for this war, officered by colored men, those responsible for the training and handling of these units had before them a difficult problem. It was a problem of sociology and psychology as well as one of war. In training colored men to become soldiers and officers there was a longer road to travel than was the case in training white men, inasmuch as there was greater ignorance to overcome and less capacity for overcoming it. I am speaking in general terms and not of individuals. This was true not only of the theoretical training in the cantonments and training areas, but also in battle training and in actual combat.

The greatest difficulty to be overcome was the natural lack of aggressiveness on the part of the colored man. It could not for a moment be expected that a race which had for two hundred years, or more, been kept in a subordinate position would suddenly manifest aggressiveness such as was required in the desperate fighting which occurred during the last year or two of this war.

Some may say that colored men are not competent to become officers of the Army. This statement is entirely too sweeping, for there is no doubt but that we had many colored officers who were thoroughly competent; the fact that we had a good many incompetent ones should not be allowed to give rise to the feeling that all were incompetent.

During this war I feel certain that there was infinitely greater ruthlessness in throwing out white officers who were incompetent than there was in getting rid of colored ones who had not come up to the required standard. The 92nd Division should have gotten rid of quite a number of its officers, and, in most cases they were recommended to go before boards. They should have been

replaced by colored officers who were competent, provided such could be found, and if such could not be found, then the replacement should have been made by white officers. I know that much effort was made to do this, but in many cases these efforts did not succeed. Had there been more of this replacement it would have had a marked stimulating effect on those that remained.

I think that in the foregoing expression of views I have covered your questions. However, I will review my remarks to the extent of making my answers to your questions more specific, as follows:

(2319)

QUESTION: (a) The fitness of the colored man as a combat soldier.

ANSWER: Many are thoroughly competent to become combat soldiers, but not in the same proportion as among white men, and, therefore, a greater proportion should be assigned to line of communications duties.

QUESTION: (b) For what particular service is he best suited, considering one or more of these classifications: Infantry, Cavalry, Artillery, Engineers, Pioneer, Labor Troops, etc.

ANSWER: The competent men should be organized into regiments of infantry, cavalry and artillery. Those not competent for these units should be organized into pioneer and labor troops.

QUESTION: (c) Please give a candid expression of opinion concerning the colored officer, his capacity, qualifications and results obtained with him, so far as you can, with your recommendations as to whether or not they should be used.

ANSWER: Colored men having the necessary qualifications should be given commissions. The limitation might be placed on their first appointment to that of First or Second Lieutenant, advancement being made to the grade of Captain or higher only on demonstrated ability.

QUESTION: (d) The question of race feeling must be considered from the practical and social standpoint, instead of a theoretical one.

ANSWER: The race question should not enter into this discussion except that the white race should help the colored race in every way possible, *to become*

better citizens. This does not include any social mixing. [Italics indicate author's handwritten additions to typewritten letter.]

Source

Archives, United States Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, reprinted in Martin Marix Evans, ed., *American Voices of World War I: Primary Source Documents, 1917–1920* (Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2001), 197–198.

Excerpt from Addie Hunton and Kathryn M. Johnson, *Two Colored Women with the A.E.F.* (1920)

Press and pulpit, organizations and individuals were beseeching and demanding in 1918 that the Red Cross add some of our well-trained and experienced nurses to their “overseas” contingent, but no favorable response could be obtained. Meantime, the Paris Headquarters of the Young Men’s Christian Association cabled as follows: “Send six fine colored women at once!” This call diverted from the Red Cross issue that had been uppermost in all minds.

Six women! A small number to be sure, but the requirements for eligibility were not so easy to meet and one must not have a close relative in the army. Many questions were asked. “Was there a real need for women over there?” “Could they stand the test?” “Would they not be subjected to real danger?” “Were not gruesome stories being told relative to terrible outrages perpetrated on women who had gone?” To these questions and to others there seemed to be but on[e] reply. It was that if hundreds of other women had answered the call to serve the armies of the Allies, surely among the thousands of colored troops already in France and other thousands who would soon follow there would be some place of service for six colored women. A few leaders were far-visioned enough to see the wisdom of colored women going overseas. Mr. Fred R. Moore, Editor of the *New York Age*, worked untiringly to help secure the required number, while W. E. B. Du Bois, Maj. R. R. Moton, and Mr. Emmett Scott strongly endorsed the sending over of colored women.

Almost immediately Mrs. James L. Curtis and Mrs. William A. Hunton were invited to go to France. These were the days when sailing dates were kept secret and orders for departures came at the last moment. When the first call to sail came, Mrs. Hunton could not easily be released from the war work she had undertaken for the Young Women’s Christian Association. But the following week, Mrs. Curtis, keenly anxious for the adventure, was permitted to go alone.

Meanwhile, Miss Kathryn Johnson had been called from Chicago and three weeks later sailed with Mrs. Hunton.

For all the period of the war and the dreary winter that followed it, there were just these three colored women with the American Expeditionary Forces in France. Time and time again they were lifted up by rumors that other canteen workers were on the way. Whenever they saw women arriving fresh from America, they would at once inquire if there were any colored women in their party. Always the rumors proved (2320) false and the answer negative. Two hundred thousand colored soldiers and three colored women in France! So it was for many months. But finally the dream of help was realized when in the spring of 1919 sixteen canteen workers reached France. Only sixteen, to be sure, but to the three who had waited and served so long alone, they seemed a mighty host!

What a wonderful spirit these sixteen women brought with them! They had been impatiently waiting, some of them for many months, to answer the call. They knew how their soldiers needed their presence in France so they arrived eagerly ready for that last lap of Y service, the importance and significance of which can hardly be overestimated. The Armies of the Allies had won the war, but there was a moral conflict for the war-weary men hardly less subtle and deadly than the conflict just ended. It required a program of compelling interest to hold the soldiers against the reaction of war's excitement and ghastly experiences, and the new thirst for home and friends. Therefore the coming at that time of the sixteen canteen workers for our soldiers was wonderfully opportune.

But just what of the canteen service for all the months that had preceded their coming? How had just three of us managed to be mothers, sisters and friends to thousands of men?

The first colored woman who reached France had been sent to Saint Sulpice in the great Bordeaux area, and though she was quickly returned to Paris, the few days she had spent in the camp made a bright spot for the men there in that veritable wilderness of hardships. That she made ice cream and other "goodies" for them, and best of all, let them open their hearts to her, was never forgotten by the men of that camp. Reaching Paris, we found her with a group of men secretaries ordered home. It was then for the first time that we questioned the wisdom of our adventure. Surely we had not given up home, friends and work for such an experience! Would blind prejudice follow us even to France where men were dying by the thousands for the principles of truth and justice? There had been no slackening of the impulse to serve, when as part of a mighty

procession, we crossed the periled deep; no lessening of our enthusiasm for war work as we looked for the first time upon war's dark picture. But somehow this incident, with its revelation of the fact that prejudice could follow us for three thousand miles across the Atlantic to the very heart of the world's sorrow, tremendously shocked us in those first days. But it was a challenge to a heroic sacrifice, and we realized the significance of the challenge more deeply as the months receded. . . .

Over the canteen at Brest meant hut activity from early morning till midnight. It was part of what came to be known as the "Battle of Brest," which Miss Watson, the Regional Secretary, declared "Ofttimes more terrible than that of 'No Man's Land'" because less open. Every minute almost meant keeping men free from the despair of long waiting and hope deferred. Eight regiments of Pioneer Infantries, three labor battalions, many groups of casuals [men not attached to any specific unit] and several depot companies were among those whom we bade *bon voyage* during our days at Pontanezen. Here, as at St. Nazaire, the huts were crowded and the canteen lines unending. Men made "seconds," as an additional helping was called, but rarely unless they were fortunate to slip into other men's places. Those were busy but happy days at Brest! The men were not strange, for we had met them in the Leave Area or along the devastated highways. We closed our work there so happy that nothing could take away the joy of it.

Over the canteen in France we learned to know our own men as we had not known them before, and this knowledge makes large our faith in them. Because they talked first and talked last of their women back home, usually with a glory upon their faces, we learned to know that colored men loved their own women as they could love no other women in all the world. Their attitude of deep respect, often bordering on worship, toward the colored women who went to France to serve them only deepened this impression. The least man in camp assumed the right to protect his women, and never, by word or deed, did they put to shame the high calling of these women. But they were intensely human and their longing for their women showed itself in a hundred different ways. One night a Red Cross parade on Fifth Avenue, New York City, was being passed on the screen. When a group of colored women were shown marching, the men went wild. They did not want that particular scene to pass and many approached and fondled the screen with the remark, "Just look at them!" Mrs. Curtis, in whose hut this occurred, tells how it brought tears to her eyes.

(2321)

One man came to us saying, “Lady, do you want to get rich over in France!” We gave an affirmative reply and questioned how. He said, “Just get a tent and go in there and charge five cents a peep. These men would be glad of even a peep at you.” Another man stood near the canteen one day, but not in line. He stood so quietly and so long that we finally asked if we could serve him. He simply gave a negative shake of the head. After several minutes we said, “Surely you desire something,” only to be met by another shake of the head. The third time we inquired he said quietly, “Lady, I just want to look at you, if you charge anything for it I’ll pay you—it takes me back home.” Hundreds of incidents gave evidence of the love of these men for their women. Sometimes they shed tears at the first sight of a colored woman in France.

We learned somewhat of their matchless power of endurance and of their grim determination to be steady and strong to the end in spite of all odds. We came to know, too, that what was often taken for ignorance, was a deep and far-thinking silence. They were sympathetic and generous, often willing to risk the supreme sacrifice for a “buddie.” . . .

We learned to know that there was being developed in France a racial consciousness and racial strength that could not have been gained in half a century of normal living in America. Over the canteen in France we learned to know that our young manhood was the natural and rightful guardian of our struggling race. Learning all this and more, we also learned to love our men better than ever before.

Source

Addie Hunton and Kathryn M. Johnson, *Two Colored Women with the A.E.F.* (Brooklyn: Brooklyn Eagle, 1920), 141–157; reprint, New York: G. K. Hall, 1997.

Addie Waites Hunton (1866–1943) and Kathryn Magnolia Johnson (1878–1955)

Addie Waites Hunton and Kathryn Magnolia Johnson were both prominent African-American activists. Hunton was born in Norfolk, Virginia, but educated in Boston and at the Spencerian College of Commerce, Philadelphia, after which she worked as a teacher and educational administrator. In 1893 she married William Alphaeus Hunton, a Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) executive, and moved to Atlanta, Georgia, where she had a family, wrote numerous articles on African-American problems, and was active in the National Association of Colored Women’s Clubs. In 1906 brutal race riots led

the Huntons to leave Atlanta and move to Brooklyn, New York, where they settled permanently. William Hunton died there ten years later, and his widow, though initially devastated, became increasingly involved with the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) and the YMCA. In response to pleas from the increasing numbers of black troops in France for "colored" women to staff their inadequate recreation facilities, a task few if any white women were willing to undertake, in spring 1918 she and Johnson went out to France, followed shortly after by another black woman and in early 1919 by an additional sixteen. The two remained in France for fifteen months, working in various YMCA canteens.

Her overseas experiences apparently sensitized Hunton to the international aspects of racism. After the war Hunton was a delegate to several conferences of the revived Pan-African Congress, founded in 1899 but inactive for two decades until revived by the intellectual ferment generated by Woodrow Wilson's support for national self-determination and anticolonialism, the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, and the emergence of a radical Communist and anti-imperialist government in Russia. At the 1919, 1921, 1923, and 1927 conferences of the Pan-African Congress, Africans from around the world and from the continent itself met to discuss such issues as colonialism, slavery, racism, and economic justice. Hunton, who sometimes spoke on the importance of utilizing women's energies for international reconstruction, served on the congress's executive committee, helping to raise substantial sums to fund the 1927 conference held in New York City, and drafted promotional materials highlighting the importance of "bringing together widely separated groups of men and women of Negro blood and their friends to consult on the present conditions and the future of the black race and to achieve mutual understanding and acquaintanceship." She also served as president of the International Council of Women of the Darker Races of the World, and in 1926 she visited Haiti as a member of a delegation dispatched there by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom to investigate the impact of its occupation by the U.S. Marines.

(2322)

Hunton subsequently prepared one chapter, "Racial Relations," of the group's joint report. Hunton's family carried on her activist tradition. Her daughter, Eunice Hunton Carter, later became the first black woman assistant district attorney in New York City. During the 1950s her son William was jailed for refusing to cooperate with Senator Joseph McCarthy's investigations of "un-American activities."

Johnson was born into a largely black Ohio community, studied at Wilberforce College, Ohio, and then taught in schools in Ohio, Indiana, North Carolina, and Arkansas. In 1910 she became an early field worker for the recently founded National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, helping to organize chapters of the organization in the southern and western states. She was dismissed from the organization in 1916, possibly due to her blunt manner and uncompromising and outspoken belief that its leadership should be exclusively black. After serving in France, Johnson worked for the Washington-based Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, and on its behalf she traveled around the United States publicizing an impressive canon of classic writings by African-American authors. Until her death in 1955, she wrote, lectured, and campaigned for social justice and civil rights for African Americans.

Source

Addie Hunton and Kathryn M. Johnson, *Two Colored Women with the A.E.F.* (New York: G. K. Hall, 1997), xxii.

About The Documents

The first two of these documents are official reports on African Americans, written by white men, civilians or officers, who had extensive contacts with black troops in training in the United States and in the American Expeditionary Force overseas. The third is a memoir, written shortly after their return, by two prominent black activist women who traveled to France under YMCA auspices to set up and run recreation facilities for African-American troops.

On 27 September 1918 Raymond B. Fosdick, a social worker and Princeton graduate who served as chairman of the U.S. Commission on Training Camp Activities of the Army and Navy Departments, an organization created to boost morale among military personnel, sent Woodrow Wilson a report one of his staff had submitted on the situation in the naval base of Newport News, Virginia, where the racial situation had threatened to become explosive. The unnamed writer was clearly by no means entirely sympathetic to the demands of the “negro” and particularly to the growing belief of African Americans that without their aid, the United States would be unable to win the war, which he thought encouraged their “arrogance” and their hopes that “great things” would be done for American blacks once the war was over. Fears that such prospects would fail to materialize might, he thought, generate further unrest. He accurately depicted black resentment of decades of continuing industrial, social, and political discrimination and oppression; their mistrust of the

government; their sense that “negro troops are discriminated against and badly treated”; dissatisfaction with the relegation of black soldiers to service functions; and the growth in “lynching and brutal treatment of negroes” since the United States entered the war. The author was nonetheless clearly somewhat ambivalent over black demands for greater equality, and decidedly uneasy over what he perceived as the secretiveness of African-American soldiers in concealing their true hopes for the postwar world from “the white man,” and in “looking for a coming democracy in which the Negroes will occupy a high position.” Such ambivalent attitudes were very common among white Americans, who were forced to contemplate growing black assertiveness.

Unlike many such documents, which were often politely acknowledged and filed away with no further action taken, this report actually produced some discernible effect. The president, who had earlier responded with public condemnation of lynchings when faced with complaints from black leaders that white violence against African Americans called into question the democratic rhetoric he was using to promote the war, subsequently urged Fosdick to take measures to address the situation. Fosdick forthwith launched a propaganda campaign of lectures by prominent white and African-American speakers designed to emphasize the government’s commitment to the welfare of black troops and to the elimination of lynching.

During World War I, the United States raised two divisions of African-American troops, the 92nd and 93rd Divisions, manned by black soldiers but in many cases commanded by white officers, both of which saw combat service. Although the 93rd Division fought excellently, (2323) mostly under French command, the 92nd had a poor reputation, in part because many of its white officers systematically denigrated its performance. Colonel Charles C. Ballou, temporary major general and former commander of the 92nd Division, treated the unit contemptuously, nicknaming it the “Rapist Division” and refusing to allow photographers to attend a ceremony where several of his men received Distinguished Service Crosses. The division was poorly equipped and trained and experienced frequent changes of command, while its engineering battalions were deployed as manual laborers when they should have been in training. During the fall 1918 Meuse-Argonne offensive, the division’s 368th Regiment lost its way in confusing conditions and retreated, an episode that won it a reputation for cowardice and brought the cashiering of several black officers, whereas the white 35th Division, which fell back in similar circumstances, was exonerated of military shortcomings.

In spring 1919 Colonel Allen J. Greer, chief of staff of the 92nd Division, wrote to some of its white officers seeking their opinion of the performance and

potential of the black troops under their command. Brigadier General Malvern-Hill Barnum, who had commanded the 183rd Infantry Brigade of the 92nd Division, sent perhaps the most interesting reply, revealing some of the same ambivalent attitudes displayed by the author of the previous report. Even though he deplored any “social mixing” between blacks and whites, Malvern-Hill Barnum was far more comfortable than most white military officers with the prospect of African-American officers, suggesting that while some had proved incompetent, others had not. He did believe that since American blacks had “for two hundred years, or more, been kept in a subordinate position,” they lacked the “aggressiveness” and initiative of whites, so that fewer were suitable for combat service, and that in general black soldiers required lengthier training, partly due to the greater prevalence among them of illiteracy. In Malvern-Hill Barnum’s opinion, however, these were handicaps that favorable government and military policies designed to develop the potential of African Americans could remedy without too much difficulty. Where possible, he believed, black officers should command black troops.

Although somewhat condescending to African Americans, Malvern-Hill Barnum’s attitudes, with their faith in the possibility of practical improvement according to American ideals, were a model of enlightenment when set beside those that most of his colleagues exhibited. The British editor of a book on the experiences of U.S. soldiers in World War I, based on the World War I survey of veterans conducted by the U.S. Army Military History Institute during the 1970s and 1980s, confessed that he found the responses of white officers on the performance of black troops collected in 1919—and only declassified in the 1980s—“quite upsetting, sometimes close to revolting, and I debated the wisdom of including” this material as an appendix. The U.S. Army officer caste was drawn disproportionately from the fiercely racist southern states, and many among it clearly found deeply disturbing the possibility of the existence of black officers, even when these were restricted to commanding African-American troops. “Colored” troops were generally considered handicapped by the absence of “moral training at home as a child,” lacking in initiative, and fit, at best, to become reasonable noncommissioned officers. Black troops would, argued Ballou and his subordinates, have little faith in officers of their own race and only respected white authority. Wartime decisions to commission “negro officers” had proved “erroneous,” in part because only high school education, rather than the college attendance required of whites, was required of black candidates. With proper leadership, small numbers of black troops would be found suitable for combat service, but most should be confined to service and support roles.

One or two of Ballou's fellow officers differed from him in thinking segregation undesirable. Colonel V. A. Caldwell, former commander of the colored 25th Infantry Regiment of the Regular Army, believed that segregation was undesirable in that it promoted a sense of separation and inferiority and compromised military and national unity. In his view, "every white regiment should have either a Company or Battalion of colored troops, and . . . there should be no colored regiments or higher units." This was, however, a minority view. Another officer thought it desirable that "colored units" should only serve with each other, with black artillery supporting black infantry and both assisted by black service units. The former colonel of the 351st Field Artillery believed that although careful selection and training might produce good black soldiers, "The (2324) Negro is not the equal of the white man and cannot be expected to be as good a soldier as the latter." He also found it "not reassuring" that "service as combatant troops" was encouraging blacks to "demand, that equality, including social equality, be granted." Several other senior white officers, while praising the performance of black troops under good—that is, white—leadership, had a poor opinion of the performance of African-American officers, one going so far as to suggest that those in France valued their new status too highly to risk death by being too aggressive in combat situations, adding that they were unreliable in disciplinary matters and at courts martial, since: "A colored officer, even the very best [underlining in original], has no conception of the sanctity of his oath."

Although Malvern-Hill Barnum's relatively liberal views on the potential of black troops were far from popular with senior U.S. white army officers, he apparently chaired an army committee that in spring 1920 produced a report on the subject of the most productive use of African-American military recruits. The committee expressed some disquiet with the prevailing attitude of white officers as expressed in most of these responses, citing contrary evidence on black intellectual attainments based on contemporary scientific research, as popularized in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, together with newspaper reports on how the war had encouraged black ambitions for social equality and various prominent African-American journals and other publications. The report argued that in wartime it would prove politically impossible either to ignore the military potential of "colored men," to confine them to menial and support tasks, or indeed to use them as "Shock Troops," designed to frighten the enemy by carrying the brunt of any opening offensive. "Negro combatant troops" should, the committee recommended, "be used just as their commanders decide. They will know their troops, how best to use them." About one-tenth of colored draftees would, the report suggested, be suitable for frontline combat service, while others reasonably well qualified should be organized into pioneer

regiments and the worst recruits should be assigned to service and labor units. Black and white officers should be trained together, not separately as had been the case during World War I, so that political considerations would not cause relatively weak African-American officer candidates to receive easier treatment or assessment. Those black officers who measured up should be assigned to command black troops, while “only those whites who have confidence in the negro soldier” should be sent to command African Americans. Promotion should be equally open to black and white officers who proved themselves competent, efficient, and courageous. Malvern-Hill Barnum’s report further suggested that black units of average, rather than specially selected, men might well require additional officers to compensate for their inherent deficiencies. It also concluded, however, that the U.S. Army’s regular black regiments, filled with carefully selected men of above-average physique and intelligence, when “led by white officers of experience . . . have never failed to give a good account of themselves.”

However condescending—or as he would have argued, realistic—his tone and attitude are to modern ears, unlike many of his contemporaries Malvern-Hill Barnum was willing to recognize the fact that at least a minority of black troops and officers could perform excellently in combat situations, to give them the chance to do so, and to award those who demonstrated high abilities due recognition. It seems, however, that the U.S. Army paid little heed to his conclusions. In May 1942, several months after the United States entered World War II, the army utilized these various individual officer reports on African-American troops in World War I in a report titled *The Colored Soldier in the U.S. Army*. Relying heavily on Ballou’s highly unfavorable assessment of the abilities of black enlisted men and officers and on the detrimental recollections of other wartime senior officers, it concluded that “responsible officers” thought poorly of the performance of African-American troops. It is difficult not to conclude that almost a quarter century after World War I had ended, uncomplimentary assessments of the abilities of black troops were far more likely to win credence than the more balanced verdicts of Malvern-Hill Barnum and his committee.

Hunton and Johnson, two formidable and forthright women who were determined not just to tell the story of their fifteen months in France but also to expose the institutional and personal discrimination to which the U.S. Army had exposed African-American troops in France, took an entirely different approach.

(2325)

Their account appeared in print the year after they returned from France, published in Brooklyn, New York, apparently by a black press and reprinted almost eighty years later as part of the rediscovery of African-American women writers and black U.S. history and heritage that took place in the late twentieth century. Effectively a report on their time in France and the treatment of African-American soldiers there, the book had an immediacy and freshness, as well as a burning anger, that reflected the speed with which it was produced. Each woman had experience with writing, though this was the first book either had published, and each indicated those chapters for which she had been personally responsible. The extract given here was written by Hunton, though Johnson obviously shared her perspective.

Although their achievements in ministering to the needs of black troops were impressive and were one reason that nine months after their arrival the U.S. Army called for more black women YMCA workers in France, the overriding purpose of Hunton and Johnson's book was not merely to chronicle the experience and attainments of two indomitable, strong-minded, and energetic women under often difficult circumstances. Instead, they sought to celebrate the accomplishments of the African-American component of the American Expeditionary Forces and to demonstrate just how unfairly the U.S. government, military, and people had treated these troops. The shortage of recreation facilities and YMCA personnel to serve them and the discrimination and rejection black soldiers often encountered at whites-only canteens and rest centers were only two aspects of a far broader attitude that Hunton and Johnson indignantly condemned. Ironically, they were particularly scathing toward Ballou, whom they accused of catering to "southern prejudice" within the U.S. Army not only by disparaging the men of his division but also by ordering them to respect segregated white norms when they were in training at Camp Funston, Kansas, and refrain from exercising their legal right to enter predominantly white theaters, restaurants, and other public places. Hunton and Johnson praised the combat performance of those black troops who were permitted to see fighting service and strongly criticized American military authorities for attempting to keep the numbers of such troops low and for relegating as many African Americans as possible to labor and support roles. They also strongly criticized the U.S. Army for seeking to restrict the numbers of black officers and in particular for forcibly retiring its most senior African-American officer, Colonel Charles Young, in order to avoid promoting him to brigadier general.

Hunton and Johnson were highly respectable churchwomen and social workers, and while in France they felt that they were under an onus to conduct themselves in a manner that reflected well on the entire African-American

community, of whom they considered themselves representatives. This impeccable reputation in turn gave them the prestige and authority to criticize the treatment of black soldiers in France on the grounds that it both contravened stated American ideals of democracy and was also against all Christian teachings. They presented black soldiers, not as feckless, irresponsible, undisciplined, and the products of inadequate homes, but as decent, Christian, family-loving, hard-working, homesick men who showed great respect toward these respectable, comfortably middle-aged African-American women who had come so far to provide wholesome recreation for them. Although resenting the confinement of most black troops to support and labor capacities, Hunton and Johnson praised their excellent performance of these tasks. They pointed to the disproportionately high enrollments of blacks in the southern states in particular, where white-run draft boards were often far more draconian in conscripting young African Americans, especially tenants of farms that might thereby revert to their landlords and any black men considered to be insufficiently submissive or deferential to white authority. While admitting that illiteracy was high among blacks, Hunton and Johnson showcased the eagerness of many to learn to read once given the opportunity. The women may never have personally encountered any discreditable behavior on the part of black troops; one suspects, however, that they deliberately chose to ignore any episodes of drunkenness, brawling, rioting, theft, insubordination, or consorting with prostitutes that may have occurred among African Americans, since this would not have accorded with the portrait of “their” men they wished to give the general public. In a sense, therefore, their book might be considered African-American propaganda promoting the cause of equal rights.

(2326)

Throughout, Hunton and Johnson invoked the twin ideals of Christianity and American democracy on the grounds that the U.S. government’s treatment of black soldiers contravened these fundamental pillars of the country to which they belonged. The final episode in the book that featured black troops was a vignette of African-American labor battalions several months after the war, collecting up the American bodies still left on the battlefield, preparing them for burial in a military cemetery, and finally each carrying a cross to be placed on a grave, an image that deliberately brought to mind Jesus Christ carrying his cross to crucifixion at Calvary. The implication was that the humiliations and injustices inflicted on African Americans paralleled those of Christ. By extension, while they should not fail to demand equal treatment, in doing so they should not resort to violence but let their own sufferings bear witness for

them. The book ended by stating that its authors “believe[d] that consistent adherence to the teachings of the Prince of Peace, is the rock upon which the colored people of America must build the superstructure of their civilization for all their future.” This should, however, be “accompanied by righteous and indignant protest against injustice.” By applying “the principles of Christianity . . . to every-day life,” they would ensure that ultimately “the ancient doctrine of the Brotherhood of Man will finally become the chief cornerstone of our Democracy.” At the time it was written, the memoir of these two devout but indomitable women probably had little impact beyond the African-American community. One can, however, discern in it an assertiveness, forthrightness, and determination to continue working for black equality in the United States that provides insights into the development of a generation of almost forgotten African-American leaders who laid the foundations for the civil rights movement of the post–World War II era.

Source

Quotations from the World War I survey of veterans conducted by the U.S. Army Military History Institute during the 1970s and 1980s Addie Hunton and Kathryn M. Johnson, in Martin Marix Evans, ed., *American Voices of World War I: Primary Source Documents, 1917–1920* (Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2001), 67, 253; quotations from *Two Colored Women with the A.E.F.* (Brooklyn: Brooklyn Eagle, 1920; reprint, New York: G. K. Hall, 1997), 197, 199, 201, 203, 205, 207, 211, and 212.

Further Reading

Barbeau, Arthur E., and Henri Florette. *The Unknown Soldiers: African-American Troops in World War I*. New York: Da Capo, 1996.

Cooper, Michael L. *Hell Fighters: African Americans in World War I*. New York: Penguin, 1997.

Ellis, Mark. *Race, War and Surveillance: African Americans and the United States Government during World War I*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001.

Farwell, Byron. *Over There: The United States in the Great War, 1917–1918*. New York: Norton, 1999.

Harris, Bill. *The Hellfighters of Harlem: African-American Soldiers Who Fought for the Right to Fight for Their Country*. New York: Carroll and Graf, 2002.

Hine, Darlene Clark, ed. *Black Women in America: An Historic Encyclopedia*. 2 vols. Brooklyn: Carlson, 1993.

Kennedy, David M. *Over Here: The First World War and American Society*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1980.

Kornweibel, Theodore, Jr. *Investigate Everything: Federal Efforts to Compel Black Loyalty during World War I*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002.

Schaffer, Ronald. *America in the Great War: The Rise of the War Welfare State*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.

Zieger, Robert H. *America's Great War: World War I and the American Experience*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000.

MLA

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "34. African Americans and the Great War." *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*, ABC-CLIO, 2005, pp. . *ABC-CLIO eBook Collection*, legacy.abc-clio.com/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2216.

Chicago Manual of Style

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "34. African Americans and the Great War." In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005. <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2216>.

APA

Roberts, P. M., S. C. Tucker (2005). 34. African Americans and the Great War. In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia* (pp.). Retrieved from <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2216>

Essay 35. Women and War

Women in World War I

With millions of men in the armed forces and with industry and agriculture required to work at full capacity to support the war effort, in all belligerent nations the effective utilization of the entire available labor force became a matter of national interest. Governments encouraged women to support the war effort by taking on jobs normally filled by men, thereby freeing male workers to join the armies. Not until late in the war could women in most countries join the military even in adjunct roles, and extremely few took part in combat, though one British woman became a sergeant major in the Serbian military, and a few enterprising Russian women succeeded in enlisting and fighting. In Britain, some served in the armed forces, though almost always in support capacities, in the auxiliary women's military, naval, and air units established in 1917 and 1918. Many women became nurses, some as unpaid volunteers, as with the British Volunteer Aid Detachment, others as professionals, often working in (2327) conditions of genuine and sometimes great danger near the front. The socially exclusive British First Aid Nursing Yeomanry (FANY), originally mounted and mobile-trained nurses, gradually metamorphosed into a transport unit, driving ambulances but also providing chauffeurs for the motorized vehicles that were increasingly significant in the military and associated support services. After two world wars, they eventually became the Women's Transport Corps (WTC). In the United States, more than 21,000 women, at least half of whom went overseas, served in the Army Nurse Corps (ANC), and an additional 6,000 served with the American Expeditionary Force in a wide variety of clerical and service support capacities, though they were denied formal military status or benefits and treated as civilian contract employees.

While some women, especially those from the upper and middle classes, had not previously had jobs, well before 1914 substantial numbers of women were in employment: 38 percent in France, around 28 percent in Britain, and numbers similar to the British in the United States, Austria-Hungary, Russia, and Germany. Although some held clerical and even elite professional positions, for the most part female employment was concentrated in poorly paid menial jobs in domestic service, agriculture, and the lowest levels of industry. Although in every country appreciable numbers of women joined the workforce at least temporarily, 1.2 million by 1917 in Germany, for example, one major impact of World War I was a reconfiguration of women's employment.

Increasingly, middle-class employers complained bitterly about the shortage of servants, as women abandoned service as maids, laundrymaids, and seamstresses for industry, the land, clerical work, or transport.

Female labor proved particularly valuable in the rapidly expanded munitions industries, where conditions were often dangerous and far from well paid, but they also took on a wide range of other responsibilities. In France women were particularly prominent in the chemical, wood, and transport manufacturing industries, where they constituted only 5 percent of the workforce in 1914 but 25 percent in 1918. In every country, women were particularly well represented in transportation, as drivers, conductors, guards, cleaners, baggage handlers, and porters, performing maintenance and repairs, and in clerical and sales jobs, while governments everywhere called upon them to take over teaching positions formerly held by men. Substantial numbers of women, especially those with children, did piecework at home, turning out shoes, uniforms, gas masks, and other military equipment. As barriers to their advancement temporarily lowered, women professionals, doctors, lawyers, and architects, for example, came into their own during the war. With husbands and sons absent at the front, women were often forced to run farms and small businesses themselves, though such efforts did not always register in the formal employment figures. Nor did those of the many women who also filled wartime volunteer positions with such organizations as the Red Cross or the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA). In the United States, for example, more than 8 million women undertook some kind of volunteer work for the Red Cross alone.

The advances women made during World War I should not be exaggerated. For the most part their employment was considered a temporary expedient, and employers and the authorities expected that once the war was over, they would revert to traditional prewar roles. Those who took industrial berths suffered serious discrimination, their take-home pay generally half or less that of men doing comparable jobs, and in industry women were usually confined to the least pleasant unskilled tasks. Although few performed industrial labor, in factories many women did work that was dirty, dangerous, and unpleasant, their compensation poor and their living conditions frequently also abysmal. Even where, as in the United States, women supposedly received equal pay for equal work, with the collusion of employers, labor representatives, and government officials such regulations were routinely flouted, and perhaps only 10 percent of American women enjoyed such parity. Antagonistic trade unions often refused to accept women as members, dragged their feet in taking on any responsibility to protect them, and insisted that women be restricted to poorly

paid unskilled work and that when male employees were demobilized women would have to relinquish their wartime jobs to the returnees. While most nations quickly established official bodies to consider men's wartime labor conditions, unions and government authorities alike only reluctantly established similar organizations to protect women, leaving them (2328) underfunded and frequently ignoring any recommendations such committees made.

When World War I ended, women were often forced out of their wartime jobs, though in transportation, sales, and clerical work their representation remained permanently higher than in 1914. Numerous women—400,000 of 1.5 million in Britain, for example—also declined to return to domestic service, and, especially given the redistributive impact of wartime and postwar taxation, neither aristocratic nor middle-class households could afford the extensive complements of servants common before the war. In the United States, the Woman's Bureau established during the war remained a permanent institution in the Department of Labor, pushing quietly during the interwar years for greater protections for women workers and contributing to New Deal policies during the 1930s. Middle-class volunteers often resumed comfortable private lifestyles with few regrets once the war ended, but for many the memories of their war service remained a high point of activity and excitement in their lives. World War I set a precedent for the extensive employment of women in jobs once considered male preserves and, to that extent, acted as a catalyst for future change.

In several countries women's wartime contributions also helped to win them the long-coveted goal of feminist activists, the vote. Canadian women led the way, winning the vote in 1917, followed by those of occupied Belgium and Luxembourg as well as the neutral Netherlands in 1919. In 1918 Russia gave women the vote, though future developments in that country made this right rather a dead letter. In Germany, the November 1918 revolution that overthrew the kaiser enfranchised women who had rather enviously congratulated their British counterparts on finally attaining the right to vote the previous spring. In Britain and the United States, where women had over several decades mounted formidable and increasingly popular suffrage campaigns, the vital assistance that women's organizations and women as individuals provided to their countries' war efforts helped them to argue that their patriotism in a time of national need entitled them to the vote. In February 1918 the British Parliament finally passed legislation giving the vote to all women over age 30, a less generous franchise than that for men, for whom the voting age was 21, but an action that, however circumscribed, decisively conceded the basic principle that women should have the ballot. In the United States, the Nineteenth Amendment

giving women the vote, supported by the Wilson administration in 1918 and eventually ratified in 1920, likewise represented the culmination of almost a century's hard-fought campaigns.

Women Munitions Workers in Britain: Olive May Taylor, Recollections of a Munitions Factory Explosion, 1917

Still hating the restrictions and abuse from my employers I volunteered for "munitions" as it was called, and at the end of 1916 I was sent to a factory near Morecambe Bay. . . . We were billeted in sea-side boarding houses, but the landladies who took us in wanted us out before holiday makers came in. We slept five in a room and never got enough to eat. On all night shift (seven to seven) we had a few slices of bread & margarine for our main meal which we ate between eleven & twelve. We had to pay the landladies twenty-five shillings out of the twenty-seven we received, and there were no facilities for laundry. We had to walk three miles each way to the factory, which was a filling factory packed with explosives.

Many railway lines traversed the area which was three miles across and nine miles in circumference. Shells of all sizes came in to be filled, many of them nine inches across 9.2s. The filling was a boring and laborious task. A large amount of powder stood by each shell, and this had to be rammed into the shell using a piece of wood & wooden hammer. Often it seemed impossible to ram in any more powder but with the mallet and stem another small hole had to be made into the powder & more inserted. This was called stemming. Many girls fainted in the T.N.T. room but I was not affected, so was often exposed to that deadly poison. . . .

On the evening of October 1st 1917 a rocket was seen to leave the middle of the works & go over the sea. . . . At eleven p.m. just as we went to the canteen for our dinner a fire alarm sounded & we saw flames. We never expected the fire to spread, as each building was separated from the next by a long corridor with water sprinklers. Actually we girls hoped it would last for a while as we would not have to resume work until it was safe. However, the fire did spread rapidly [and] soon (2329) huge explosions shook everything. There was quite a lot of panic as the twelve foot high gates remained closed. The police on the gates were never permitted to open them until soldiers surrounded the factory & the line to the camp had been cut. The rush for the gates had the weaker people on the ground, yet others still climbed over them to try & climb the gates while the police tried to hold them back. A few girls were working to dislodge the girls on the ground and carry them to the canteen. I had no hopes

of escaping that holocaust, but somehow I was not scared. We were shut in the wing with those explosions for several hours. The buildings had strong walls & weak roofs so the roofs would go up rather than the walls. Truck loads of benzine & dangerous chemicals were exploding, too, and several people threw themselves into a river which ran at the back of the works. We never knew how many died. At the end of the week with that huge place still smouldering we were paid off and given a railway ticket for home from the Labour Exchange.

Source

Recollections of Olive May Taylor, Imperial War Museum, London, reprinted in Joyce Marlow, ed., *The Virago Book of Women and the Great War* (London: Virago, 1998), 251–252.

German Women Take Over Men's Jobs

A Sixteen-Year-Old Handywoman

When the war broke out my father had a repairs, glazing and house painting business in Ostbevern, Westphalia. My older brother, who had helped him, was called up immediately; our journeymen were also soon conscripted, and before the year was over my second brother was also sent to the front.

In February 1915 my father died suddenly and my mother and I were left alone. What would happen now? Again and again our old customers came and asked my mother if there was anyone who could carry out the repairs they needed, for all the other craftsmen in the town had long since gone. We needed money too. I began to wonder whether I could continue the business. As a child I had always adored watching in the workshop and was blissfully happy when I was allowed to mix the paint or help fix a pane of glass with putty, or when I was given a paintbrush. I had also helped my father more and more during the last year of his life. But my mother said it would be impossible. Then one day a gardener's wife, who was also continuing her husband's business alone, came to us, wringing her hands and complaining that she couldn't find anyone to glaze her broken hothouse roof. Half-jokingly she asked me if I could do it. I decided on the spot: "Yes, of course I can do that," I said. The woman had faith in me and so I received my first commission. I fell from the roof while I was doing the work, but didn't suffer any injuries and soon the new panes were sitting firmly and cleanly in the frame. Of course, the news soon spread around the town and I received more and more orders. Wearing my brother's blue work clothes, which my mother had altered to fit me, I cycled in all weathers, a pannier on my back. Often it took hours to get to my place of work. I fixed

windows, painted door and window frames, whitewashed ceilings and stables. If a coffin had to be painted or a corpse laid out I had to pitch in. That was quite difficult for a sixteen-year-old girl.

Mrs. Jakob Schmitz, “Train Driver”

I volunteered for train duty. First I was employed for two years as a tram driver and then, when I had passed my exam, assigned to work on the suburban train. The first time I stood next to the locomotive driver on the locomotive of a heavy train, comprised of four four-axled carriages, to learn how to work the controls, it seemed almost impossible that a woman's hands would ever be able to tame this monster of iron and steel, and the idea that I would now be responsible for a passenger-filled train like this one, each carriage of which could carry 80 to 100 people, took my breath away. But we were very brave and very willing, and with careful training it was accomplished.

Our duties varied considerably, but they always demanded the greatest responsibility, particularly on my Cologne to B. Gladbach line, which at that time was mainly single-track. As train drivers we were responsible for the whole train, in particular for the blocks, for stopping punctually at crossings and for delays; time could be made up only at the cost of operational safety. If we had forgotten just one thing, or not paid attention to what seemed like a minor detail, it would have meant destruction and death, not only for ourselves, but also for the passengers entrusted to our care.

(2330)

Our duties became particularly difficult when a recently qualified, but still nervous driver was assigned to our locomotive. We had to monitor her every movement on her first few trips. The weather was another matter altogether. In fog or rain the tracks became slippery and it was not easy to halt, quickly if necessary, a train full of passengers, when the weight of the train exercised a strong counterforce on the brakes.

Most of us female train workers had several children whom we had to look after when our working day was over without domestic help of any kind. So when we got home, exhausted, we had to start work again until late into the night—and our husbands at the front had to get their letters and parcels too. We often worked 16-hour shifts or longer, but I never heard any of the women complain. And even if air-raids forced us to go down to the cellar once or twice a night, the next morning we were always on the workers' train on our way to the station at 4.25 on the dot.

Source

Extracts from Charlotte von Hadeln, *Deutsche Frauen Deutschen Treue, 1914–1933: Ein Ehrenbuch der Deutschen Frau* [German Women Keep Faith With Germany, 1914–1933: An Honor Book of the German Woman], (Berlin: Kolk, 1935), reprinted in Joyce Marlow, ed., *The Virago Book of Women and the Great War* (London: Virago, 1998), 128–129, 178–179.

Women in the United States: Ida Clyde Clarke, “Women in Industry,” 1918

It is evident to the least observant that Labor’s share in winning the war is second in importance only to that of the military arm of the Government. It is also evident that grave dangers will attend the shifting of women into men’s places and the readjustment that must be brought about by the withdrawal of millions of men from American industry. It is undoubtedly in the industrial and economic field that the war will mark the most far-reaching transformation in the condition of women. Even in times of peace women were working in two hundred and ninety-five trades and occupations out of the three hundred and three listed in the census, and we can well imagine what further development of woman’s work and woman’s power is to be brought about in the near future. Of the millions of industrial workers in America more than 2,000,000 are women, and no sooner had war been declared in Europe than the equilibrium of industrial affairs touching women began to be upset in this country. The real problem, however, began to be acute after the first draft and various agencies have been at work to remedy, in so far as they could, the situation.

The most important phase of the question of women in industry is that concerning standards, and very early in the war the National Women’s Trade Union League of America, in annual session at Kansas City, Missouri, adopted certain standards of industry for government contracts. The report of the Committee on Woman’s Work in War Time adopted by the delegates to this convention said:

For the first time in our history, trade union women representing their respective trades have been called by the Government into active service in order to meet intelligently the difficulties and complications which will arise in the industrial field as the result of our entrance into the war. It is therefore incumbent upon us to consider the best way of protecting the great mass of women workers from the exploitation that may follow.

Trade union women are serving on committees appointed by the Council of National Defense and on state and city defense Committees, thereby in an official capacity representing the interests of the women workers and voicing for the first time the needs of this most exploited group in the country.

We therefore recommend to the proper government committees the following outline of standards to be established for government contracts, and the following recommendations to protect working women in the necessary industrial adjustments that are now in process of development.

Standards of Industry for Government Contracts

1. Adult labor.
2. Wages.
 - a. The highest prevailing rate of wages in the industry which the contract affects.
 - b. Equal pay for equal work.
 - c. Those trades where there is no wage standard whatsoever shall be placed in the hands of an adjustment committee.
 - d. That all wages be adjusted from time to time to meet the increased cost of living—by this committee—and (2331) that other wage questions be submitted to it.
3. The eight-hour day.
4. One day rest in seven.
5. Prohibition of night work for women.
6. Standards of sanitation and fire protection.
7. Protection against over-fatigue and industrial diseases.
8. Prohibition of tenement house labor.
9. Exemption from the call into industry of women having small children needing their care.

10. Exemption from the call into industry of women two months before and after child birth.

Regarding the shifting of women into men's places the report continues: In the adjustment that must follow the call into service of men, women will inevitably take their places. There will be grave danger that they will be paid less wages than men. We therefore recommend:

First—that the Government shall require in its contract equal pay for equal work.

Second—that technical and trade training be opened to women in all schools and colleges on equal terms with men.

Third—that in the establishment of local committees of mediation and conciliation of industrial disputes trade union women as well as men be appointed.

Employment Agencies and Transportation

It is of the utmost importance at this time that the federal, state and city employment agencies shall be perfected and that a Woman's Department in each of these agencies shall be created. The closest cooperation should exist between these agencies in order that there be the speediest adjustment in the labor market and that women shall find opportunities for work easily without unnecessary delay between jobs.

We urge the Government through the Department of Labor not to send women into any industry unless there be guaranteed the standards of labor set forth in this report. Where women are sent away from their own localities proper housing should be assured them and transportation and wages for the days spent in travel should be furnished.

In order to carry out these provisions so that women workers shall be protected and shall not lose their faith in the integrity of the Government, a Transportation Committee should be established connected with the Government Agencies. The duty of this Committee shall be to direct the workers to decent housing accommodations and to see that the places of employment to which they have been assigned are open on their arrival and conform to the above standards. (Such agencies as the Young Women's Christian Association and the Travelers Aid under a Government Committee could be effectively used for this purpose.)

Cooperation with the Secretary of Labor

The Committee expresses its confidence in the Secretary of Labor who is in charge of this work and recommends that the National Women's Trade Union League offer him our united support and cooperation in order that we may be of service in helping him meet the difficult problems in connection with the work.

To assist him to establish these industrial standards and make them obligatory upon these employers accepting Government Contracts whether through the Department of Labor or through the Department of War, the Committee recommends the adoption of the following resolution:

(Resolution No. 32, introduced by the Chicago Delegation:)

Federal Inspection

WHEREAS, We know that our Government wishes to give its war contracts to those employers maintaining the highest industrial standards, and

WHEREAS, As workers we find that some of these contracts have been given to known exploiters of women and children, and

WHEREAS, The Department of Labor at Washington has no power to make inspections of industrial plants, and the Government therefore is in no position to control such employers, although a corresponding power of control is vested in the Children's Bureau, and the Public Health Service, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the delegates to the National Women's Trade Union League in Sixth Biennial Convention assembled, ask Congress to enact such (2332) legislation as will give full power to the Department of Labor to make inspection of all industrial plants handling Government Contracts, and be it further

RESOLVED, That because of the great increase of women workers, women as well as men inspectors be employed.

While the Committee heartily endorses Resolution No. 14 introduced by Delegate Mary Anderson of Chicago, a member of the Boot and Shoe Workers' Union, we further recommend that this suggestion be adopted for all Government Contracts which affect those industries in which trade organization exist.

Government Shoe Contracts

WHEREAS, The policy pursued by the War Department in letting orders for army shoes has been and is to place such contracts with non-union shoe manufacturers whose employees do not receive sufficient compensation for their labor, and

WHEREAS, The United States Government has inaugurated a policy in the placing of army shoe contracts to which we must enter an emphatic protest and which is in contrast to the Allied Governments who have placed their order with union firms, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That we, the delegates to the Sixth Biennial Convention of the National Women's Trade Union League, respectfully request the Army and Navy Department to place all future Government orders with union shoe manufacturers, where self-government prevails in the workshop which is a necessary development of our free institutions and where the Government will be guaranteed no interruption on this work so that orders will be promptly filled.

The Committee further recommends the adoption of Resolution No. 17 introduced by the Resolutions Committee which is as follows:

Women's Work in War and National Labor Standards

WHEREAS, It has been conclusively proved that long hours and the breakdown of legal standards for the protection of working women and children mean a breakdown in health and an increase in industrial accidents, and

WHEREAS, There is danger that in the present excitement the public may lose sight of the importance of maintaining the educational and labor standards which have grown up in these states and which are an essential bulwark of democracy, and

WHEREAS, England's experience under like circumstance has proved on the one hand that increasing the hours of labor actually lessens the output, and, on the other, that the crippling of the schools was accompanied by an increase of thirty-four per cent. in child delinquency, while the small money saving made in this way in two years was only enough to support the armies for FIFTEEN HOURS therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the National Women's Trade Union League in convention assembled protests emphatically against any attempt to lower educational standards or to weaken the laws safeguarding the workers, especially women and children, and that we do all within our power to maintain and help establish as well as guard every other law enacted for the protection of women and children in industry; that we secure equal pay for equal work where women are forced into the positions left vacant by men, and be it further

RESOLVED, That while there is no law protecting mothers with young children from entering industry that we make every possible effort to prevent mothers with young children from being called into industry except as a last resort.

The Committee further recommends the adoption of Resolution No. 18 introduced by the Resolutions Committee urging international standards in industry which is as follows:

WHEREAS, The right to live through work is not to be denied and

WHEREAS, The efforts of individual nations to raise the standard of life for their own workers are perpetually hindered through the international trade competition (2333) of countries with lower standards, it has now become necessary to meet this situation through international agreement and

WHEREAS, During the war the working class has in every nation contributed its all; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That we, the delegates to the Sixth Biennial Convention of the National Women's Trade Union League urge that there be included in the treaty of peace to be signed at the conclusion of war, labor clauses, to take effect within a definite time, prescribing standards covering conditions of work, the hours of work, and the wages paid, so that the workers may be insured such elementary rights as the eight-hour day, one day of rest in seven, no child labor, the abolition of night work for women, a living wage in proportion to the cost of living in each country, and equal pay for equal work.

The Committee recommends to the National Women's Trade Union League in order to meet effectively the problems that will arise that the National Executive Board work in conjunction with our members on the various Committees of the Council of National Defense and other authorized bodies to obtain the best results possible for the women workers in the country.

We recommend that a Committee be appointed to call upon the President of the United States, Secretary of War, Secretary of Labor and the appropriate committees of the Council for National Defense and lay before them the recommendations here outlined.

Finally, the Committee appeals to all working women to maintain their hard-won standards of hours, wages and conditions through these times that try men's souls and that in the words of the president of the National Women's Trade Union League, "Let us never forget that organization is the heart of it all. In ordinary time industrial freedom is the most important freedom, as industrial democracy is the most important democracy in an industrial age. Now that democracy is declared on all sides to be worth dying for, surely it is worth living by. Industrial freedom requires the trade-agreement workshop, and the trade-agreement workshop requires the organization of the workers. Just as the individual nation cannot alone protect its liberty and life in this world war, so the individual worker cannot alone protect her liberty and life in the industrial struggle."

This report was signed by the Committee on Woman's Work in War Time, which consists of the following:

Mary Dreier, New York, Chairman; Agnes Nestor, First Vice-President, International Glove Workers' Union of America, Chicago; Mary Anderson, International Executive Board Member of the Boot and Shoe Workers' Union, Chicago; Melinda Scott, Vice-President, United Hat Trimmers of New York; Emma Steghagen, Boot and Shoe Workers' Union, Chicago; Elisabeth Christman, Sec'y-Treas., International Glove Workers' Union of America, Chicago; Elizabeth Maloney, Fourth Vice-President, Hotel and Restaurant Employees' International Alliance, Chicago; Olive Sullivan, Office Employees' Association, Chicago; Rose Schneidermann, Cloth Hat and Cap Makers' Union, New York; Hilda Svenson, Bookkeepers, Stenographers and Accountants' Association, New York; Nellie Lithgow, Hosiery Workers' Union Philadelphia, Pa.; Julia O'Connor, Telephone Operators Union, Boston, Mass.; Katherine Lindsay, Office Employees' Association, Baltimore, Md.; Alice Scott, Hat Trimmers Union of Newark, N. J.; Angelina Berte, United Garment Workers' Union, St. Louis, Mo.; Clare Armstrong, Young Women's Christian Association, Topeka, Kan.; Louisa Mittelstadt, Beer Bottlers' Union, Kansas City, Mo.; Rhoda McCulloch, National Young Women's Christian Association, New York; Mabel Gillespie, Stenographers' Union, Boston; Emma Pischel, Meat, Food and Sanitary Science Inspector, Chicago; Dora Lipschitz, Waist, Silk Suit and Dressmakers' Union, Philadelphia, Pa.; Mary Haney, United Garment Workers' Union, Chicago; Fannia Cohn, Vice-

president of the National Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, New York; Mrs. Walter McNabb Miller, National American Woman Suffrage Association, New York; Mme. Geubel de la Ruelle, Department of Labor, Paris, France,

This resolution was unanimously adopted by the Delegates to the Sixth Biennial Convention of the National Women's Trade Union League of America, June 9, 1917.

At the conclusion of the Convention which adopted this report a special committee went to Washington and presented it in person to President Wilson, the Secretary of War and the Secretary of Labor. . . .

(2334)

In England the problem not only of maintaining standards already achieved, but of elevating and improving the conditions of women workers during the war, was met by the influence of men's trade unions. In this country also the protection of the standards of labor will depend upon the effectiveness of the labor unions; but in this country the women's trade unions will play as conspicuous a part as the men's unions. The National Women's Trade Union League of America was organized in 1903, with a view to uniting the women workers of the country, whether or not they are already in unions, and those women outside the ranks of labor who sympathize with the labor movement. The League has state branches in various parts of the country and constantly seeks to improve the conditions of working women.

Although closely affiliated with the American Federation of Labor, the League is an independent association. Its platform urges the organization of all workers into trade unions, equal pay for equal work, the eight-hour day, the minimum wage scale, full citizenship for women, and all the principles embodied in the economic program of the American Federation of Labor.

The Women's International Union Labor League was organized in 1899 for the purpose of improving labor conditions, and has concentrated its efforts almost entirely on encouraging the use of goods bearing the union label. The direct influence of this organization on the maintenance of high industrial standards during the war may not be especially significant, but the encouragement it has already given to women to join the various trades unions cannot fail to have a favorable effect.

It is the duty of every American woman interested in the maintenance of standards for women in industry to uphold the principles set forth by such

organizations, for it is largely through their efforts that industrial legislation has been secured in the United States, that wages have risen, that hours of labor have decreased, and that general conditions have improved within the last quarter of a century. It should be a matter of pride to American women everywhere that these groups of women have been shouldering their industrial burdens with a growing intelligence and effectiveness. The war will be a strenuous test of the strength of their unions.

In no instance has the Government failed to recognize the importance of the problems concerning women in industry. The Committee on Labor, of which Mr. Samuel Gompers is chairman, forms one of the seven divisions of the work of the Advisory Commission of the Council of National Defense. Through this Committee every effort is being made to avoid the unfortunate industrial experiences of England in the first months of war. The chairman and many workers on the sub-committees are giving their time and abilities freely as a patriotic service to the Government. The Committee on Labor, including its national committees and sub-committees, has a membership of about five hundred. There are eight national committees and chairmen, one of which is the Committee on Women in Industry. . . .

There are sub-committees as follows: Location of Workers and Conditions of Labor; General Living Conditions of Transported Workers and Local Transportation Facilities; Industrial Standards (a) hours of labor, (b) weekly day of rest, (c) night work, (d) rest periods, (e) protection from overfatigue and industrial diseases, (f) sanitation, (g) wages, (h) prohibition of tenement house trades; Women doing Work customarily done by Men, (a) suitability of the work, (b) wages; Alien Women in Industry; Colored Women.

The function of this committee is to concern itself with the standards, hours, wages and conditions of women in industry. State committees of this committee have been organized in twenty-four states.

Source

Excerpt from Ida Clyde Clarke, *American Women and the World War* (New York: Appleton & Company, 1918), chap. 10, reproduced on The World War I Document Archive,

<http://www.lib.byu.edu/~rdh/wwi/comment/Clarke/Clarke10.htm>.

About The Documents

This group of documents includes both personal reminiscences by British and German women and an official U.S. report by a leading woman trade unionist.

In the course of the war, several hundred thousand British women went to work in munitions factories. In a war that made far heavier use of technology, especially artillery, than any in the past, ensuring a continuous and lavish supply of armaments was as important as providing soldiers. The account of Olive May Taylor (1898–1988) is a memoir collected by the Imperial War Museum in London as part of its program to gather the (2335) World War I recollections of relatively ordinary men and women. Taylor, an intelligent young Lincolnshire girl from a poor family, had been in service since leaving school at the age of 14. Her story illustrated how, even though the conditions were often hard, the war could open new horizons for women. She first found employment in a munitions factory and then joined the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps. After the war she worked in London, not marrying until the 1930s, when she had two sons. Taylor's first husband deserted her, and she later remarried and moved back to Lincolnshire. A natural author, in her later years she wrote extensively, publishing a memoir of her early rural life. She "also collected and performed Victorian and Edwardian monologues." Taylor's subsequent career suggests that despite her rather disadvantaged background, she was exceptionally articulate. Like most memoirs written many years after the events they recall, her recollections highlight the routine of life, the cold, bad food, poor working conditions, and particularly exciting events, especially the explosion in the munitions factory. They convey quite vividly the actual experience of being a young female munitions worker of the time, the hardships experienced but also a certain sense of camaraderie among the young women. One cannot help feeling that if these conditions were superior to domestic service, the life of a prewar British maid must in many cases have been remarkably unappetizing.

Germany expected its women to show at least as much alacrity as those of Britain or France in assuming jobs men had performed before the war. Indeed, they perhaps came under even greater governmental pressure to do so, with extra food and other necessities provided for them in a war in which commodities of all kinds were in increasingly short supply. In the 1930s, the aristocratic Charlotte von Hadeln (1884–1959) gathered together a collection of women's reminiscences to demonstrate how German women had shown themselves true patriots and kept faith with their country from 1914 to 1933. The title of her collection was taken from a patriotic German song, written in

1841, that eventually became the national anthem of the Federal Republic of Germany. The two accounts included here are selected from many other short, written memoirs, most of which tell similar stories of female resolve under often difficult circumstances. Collected fifteen years after the war as part of a broader anthology, like Taylor's reminiscences they are vivid, giving a general picture of the experience with a special focus on one or two particular highlights. Von Hadeln's motives in collecting and publishing these narratives remain unclear. She was apparently a housewife, a "fierce monarchist," and in her capacity as an officer of the well-connected women's organization the Bund Königin Louise an associate of the former Hohenzollern Crown Princess Cecilie. One can only speculate that in the mid-1930s, a time when under Chancellor Adolf Hitler National Socialist ideology sought to relegate German women to the spheres of *Kinder, Kirche, Kuche* (children, church, and kitchen), von Hadeln may have registered a quiet protest by seeking to vindicate the wartime and postwar honor, loyalty, and achievements of German women.

The third document is a semiofficial report on American women in the war, compiled in 1918 by Ida Clyde Clarke, a female trade union activist and professional writer, with the cooperation of the Woman's Committee of the Council on National Defense (CND) and the Committee on Public Information (CPI). The CND was established in mid-1916, as the threat of war loomed closer, as an umbrella organization to coordinate U.S. defensive preparations, including industrial and agricultural mobilization. Its Women's Committee was supposed to mobilize the energies of women in particular and also to investigate and supervise the conditions of women in the workforce and volunteer organizations. Clarke produced a lengthy tome of thirty-seven chapters describing women's war work of every kind throughout the United States.

This excerpt is taken from a chapter in which Clarke highlighted the role of women trade unionists, including a lengthy report from a congress of the National Women's Trade Union League adopted in mid-1917 that sought to ban child labor; demanded "equal pay [with men] for equal work," an eight-hour day, and one rest day in seven; sought to impose sanitary and fire regulations; and provide "protection against over-fatigue and industrial diseases." Women should receive the same access as men to "technical and trade training." Resolutions passed at this congress also demanded that the secretary of labor assume the necessary powers to inspect industrial plants to ensure that these conditions were observed and that (2336) government contracts be withheld from any plant or any nonunionized firm where this was not the case. Looking to the future, the congress also passed a resolution

demanding that such labor rights should be included in the peace treaty and applied to workers in all nations signatory to the treaty. Interestingly, the delegates sought certain protections for women, including a prohibition on night work, and the exemption from any forced “call into industry” of married women with small children needing care.

In the United States, women trade unionists clearly perceived the war as offering an excellent opportunity to improve women’s employment status and workplace rights. They went so far as to argue that the fight for democracy abroad required industrial democracy at home. Clarke’s book portrayed in rather roseate terms their prospects of achieving this, stressing the degree to which activist women were cooperating with the government and with such labor organizations as the American Federation of Labor, rather than the limitations of such collaboration, and the degree to which in practice the Wilson administration and male trade unionists ignored women’s demands. Clarke’s account nonetheless highlighted a growing resolution, determination, and cooperative spirit among the often formidable female labor activists in the United States, which from the late nineteenth century onward impelled them to increasing prominence in state and national politics and made them ever more assertive in fighting for women’s labor rights.

Source

Quotation regarding Olive May Taylor from Joyce Marlow, ed., *The Virago Book of Women and the Great War* (London: Virago, 1998), 416.

Further Reading

Braybon, Gail. *Women Workers in the First World War*. New York: Routledge, 1989.

Brown, Carrie. *Rosie’s Mom: Forgotten Women Workers of the First World War*. Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press, 2002.

Culleton, Claire A. *Working Class Culture, Women, and Britain, 1914–1921*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000.

Daniel, Ute, et al. *The War from Within: German Working-Class Women in the First World War*. Trans. Margaret Ries. New York: Berg, 1997.

Darrow, Margaret H. *French Women and the First World War: War Stories of the Home Front*. New York: Berg, 2000.

Grayzel, Susan R. *Women's Identities at War: War, Gender, Motherhood, and Politics in Britain and France during the First World War*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999.

Kennedy, Kathleen. *Disloyal Mothers and Scurrilous Citizens: Women and Subversion during World War I*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999.

Thom, Deborah. *Nice Girls and Rude Girls: Women Workers In World War I*. New York: I. B. Tauris, 1998.

Woollacott, Angela. *On Her Their Lives Depend: Munitions Workers in the Great War*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994.

Zeiger, Susan. *In Uncle Sam's Service: Women with the American Expeditionary Force, 1917–1919*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999.

(2337)

MLA

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "35. Women and War." *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*, ABC-CLIO, 2005, pp. . *ABC-CLIO eBook Collection*, legacy.abc-clio.com/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2223.

Chicago Manual of Style

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "35. Women and War." In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005. <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2223>.

APA

Roberts, P. M., S. C. Tucker (2005). 35. Women and War. In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia* (pp.). Retrieved from <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2223>

SECTION FIVE

WAR STIMULATES CHANGE AND THE BREAK-UP OF THE OLD INTERNATIONAL ORDER

Section Five: War Stimulates Change and the Break-Up of the Old International Order

- [36. A Socialist Opposes World War I](#) pp. 530-543
- [37. World War I and Japanese Ambitions](#) pp. 544-552
- [38. Nationalist Forces Threaten the Austro-Hungarian Empire](#) pp. 553-566
- [39. The Middle East during World War I: Britain Encourages Anti-Ottoman Muslim Independence Movements and Zionism](#) pp. 567-581
- [40. The Weakening of British Imperial Rule](#) pp. 582-594
- [41. Strains upon the British Empire](#) pp. 595-605
- [42. The Murder of Rasputin, 29–30 December 1916](#) pp. 606-620

Essay 36. A Socialist Opposes World War I

Radical European Socialism in World War I

World War I quickly split the entire transnational socialist movement that had developed in the second half of the nineteenth century. Socialists purportedly placed the interests of the international working class, or proletariat, above narrow national interests. In practice, socialist parties were organized on national lines, following the existing divisions of political power. The Second Socialist International, created in 1889 and dominated by the German Social Democratic Party, sought to encourage cooperation among all socialists for common goals, including greater egalitarianism and improved living and working conditions for the proletariat in every nation. Many of its members optimistically subscribed (2338) to prevailing theories of progress, arguing that economic development and interdependence had made war impossible and that the socialist millennium would be attained through a process of peaceful change. Some, notably the Russian Bolshevik leader Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, anticipated that imperialism would ultimately cause irreconcilable conflicts between capitalist states, which would result in war and the collapse of the existing system, bringing the triumph of socialism through revolution. This was, however, a minority viewpoint. In the early twentieth century most of the different national socialist parties and leaders rejected suggestions that in the future socialists might be able to prevent war by calling a general strike of the entire working class in each potentially belligerent country. Instead, they affirmed that while socialists should not endorse national aggression on the part of their own states, in the event a country faced external aggression leading to war, its socialists should support their national government. A conference of the Second Socialist International held at Stuttgart in 1907 to discuss socialist policies in the event of international war could only reach agreement on a vague resolution submitted by August Bebel, leader of the German socialists, that both workers and socialists holding parliamentary office should use the most efficacious means available to them to prevent the outbreak of any war; if these efforts proved unsuccessful, they should work to end the war as quickly as possible. Three more radical figures, the German Rosa Luxemburg and the Russian Bolshevik leaders Lenin and L. Martov (pseudonym for Yuly Osipovich Tsederbaum), sought to add a rider that should there be a war, socialists should use any opportunities it might offer to accelerate the end of class rule.

Until 1914 such speculations were confined to the realm of theory, but the outbreak of a major European war suddenly made the question vital, pressing, and immediate for socialists and the left in most major Western countries. With few exceptions, the great majority of the left chose not only to endorse the war efforts of their individual states, Austria-Hungary, Germany, Great Britain, France, or Russia but did so enthusiastically, caught up in the widespread popular fervor for war that characterized the conflict's early days. For many socialists, especially the German Social Democrats, the war represented an almost heaven-sent opportunity to demonstrate unequivocally their loyalty to their own country and win acceptance within the broader polity. In each country, however, there existed maverick socialists, liberals, or labor leaders who resisted the popular consensus and dissented from the rationale for war. J. Ramsay MacDonald, for example, resigned as leader of the British Labour Party rather than support the war, affiliating himself with the Independent Labour Party headed by the former miner Keir Hardie, as did the like-minded Philip Snowden. Individual French and Belgian Socialists split with their parties over the war, but throughout the conflict the great majority of French Socialists continued to vote for patriotic resolutions and support their beleaguered country.

The Russian Socialist movement was divided into three factions: the Trudoviks or Labor Group, led by Aleksandr Kerensky, and two factions of the Social Revolutionary Party, the radical Bolsheviks and moderate Mensheviks. None of these voted for war credits in the Russian Duma on 8 August 1914, but all were prepared to accept the necessity to defend Russia against German attack, albeit with the qualification that their doing so was conditional on the institution of major domestic reforms within Russia itself during and after the war. Some Russian socialists also argued that if Russia defeated Germany, they would be able to implement revolutionary change not just in Russia but also in Germany, whereas a German victory would allow the forces of reaction to triumph in both states. From exile in Switzerland the Bolshevik leader Lenin dissented, calling for the immediate transformation of the war, in Russia and elsewhere, from a conflict between capitalist states into a civil war, in which the proletariat in each country would cease to fight its foreign counterparts and instead rise up against its own national ruling elites, converting the war into a struggle for proletarian control of each state.

On 10 September 1914 four prominent German Social Democrats—Luxemburg, Karl Liebknecht, Clara Zetkin, and Franz Mehring—met in neutral Switzerland and issued a statement disagreeing with their own party's official line on the war, on the grounds that it represented a fratricidal conflict among

the international working class, which would weaken the proletariat while strengthening the forces of capitalism, imperialism, and reaction. The four proceeded (2339) to found a journal, *Die Internationale*, publishing one issue in April 1915, whereupon the official German censors promptly seized all copies of the publication, banned its circulation, and closed the staff office. From late 1914 onward growing numbers of uneasy Social Democrats gradually began to vote against war credits, establishing a separate faction in the Reichstag in March 1916. In 1917 a substantial minority of the Social Democratic Party, including the eminent elders Karl Kautsky and Eduard Bernstein, established a breakaway offshoot, the Independent Social Democratic Party, that supported the negotiation of a liberal peace settlement without annexations or indemnities, a pronounced break from the German military's determination to obtain major territorial gains in both the East and West, together with heavy indemnities.

In September 1915 antiwar European members of the Second International met at Zimmerwald in Switzerland to devise a common platform on the war. Italian Socialists took the initiative in calling this meeting, though by the time it was held their country had jettisoned its early neutrality to join the Allies. Those attending included antiwar socialists from France, Germany, Italy, Russia, and Poland and also representatives from neutral countries, including Romania, Bulgaria, Sweden, Norway, Holland, and Switzerland. The conference split into "centrist" and "leftist" factions, the former advocating reform and moderate opposition to the war, focusing upon the formulation of liberal war aims and the speedy opening of peace negotiations. By contrast the "Zimmerwald Left," a minority dominated by Russian radicals such as Lenin and Leon Trotsky, welcomed the war inasmuch as they hoped it would precipitate revolutionary change. The latter submitted resolutions condemning both the war and those socialists ("social chauvinists") who had supported it and calling for violent struggle in opposition to it. The majority rejected these demands, but Trotsky helped to draft the manifesto ultimately issued by the conference, which blamed the war on capitalism and imperialism; denounced those socialists who had voted for war credits and joined bourgeois governments; called for a liberal peace without annexations or indemnities, based on the self-determination of nations; and urged workers to campaign aggressively for these objectives and also to fight for their own rights, which they should not be forced to renounce in the interests of prosecuting the war more efficiently. While remaining within the Second International, the Zimmerwald Left set themselves up as an autonomous group, electing an executive body consisting of three Russian Bolshevik exiles, Lenin, Karl Radek, and Grigory Zinoviev. This group quickly became the rallying point for left-wing radical Social Democrats, and by 1917

their activities had fragmented the Second International into almost irreconcilable moderate, gradualist constitutionalists and radical revolutionaries.

Rosa Luxemburg, *The Junius Pamphlet*, Written April 1915, Published in Zurich, February 1916, and Illegally Distributed in Germany

The scene has changed fundamentally. The six weeks' march to Paris [envisaged in the Schlieffen Plan, the original German war strategy] has grown into a world drama. Mass slaughter has become the tiresome and monotonous business of the day and the end is no closer. Bourgeois statecraft is held fast in its own vise. The spirits summoned up can no longer be exorcised.

Gone is the euphoria. Gone the patriotic noise in the streets, the chase after the gold-colored automobile, one false telegram after another, the wells poisoned by cholera, the Russian students heaving bombs over every railway bridge in Berlin, the French airplanes over Nuremberg, the spy hunting public running amok in the streets, the swaying crowds in the coffee shops with ear-deafening patriotic songs surging ever higher, whole city neighborhoods transformed into mobs ready to denounce, to mistreat women, to shout hurrah and to induce delirium in themselves by means of wild rumors. Gone, too, is the atmosphere of ritual murder, the Kishinev [pogrom] air where the crossing guard is the only remaining representative of human dignity.

The spectacle is over. German scholars, those “stumbling lemurs,” have been whistled off the stage long ago. The trains full of reservists are no longer accompanied by virgins fainting from pure jubilation. They no longer greet the people from the windows of the train with joyous smiles. Carrying their packs, they quietly trot along the streets where the public goes about its daily business with aggrieved visages.

In the prosaic atmosphere of pale day there sounds a different chorus—the hoarse cries of the vulture and (2340) the hyenas of the battlefield. Ten thousand tarpaulins guaranteed up to regulations! A hundred thousand kilos of bacon, cocoa powder, coffee-substitute—c.o.d., immediate delivery! Hand grenades, lathes, cartridge pouches, marriage bureaus for widows of the fallen, leather belts, jobbers for war orders—serious offers only! The cannon fodder loaded onto trains in August and September is moldering in the killing fields of Belgium, the Vosges, and Masurian Lakes where the profits are springing up like weeds. It's a question of getting the harvest into the barn quickly. Across the ocean stretch thousands of greedy hands to snatch it up.

Business thrives in the ruins. Cities become piles of ruins; villages become cemeteries; countries, deserts; populations are beggared; churches, horse stalls. International law, treaties and alliances, the most sacred words and the highest authority have been torn in shreds. Every sovereign “by the grace of God” is called a rogue and lying scoundrel by his cousin on the other side. Every diplomat is a cunning rascal to his colleagues in the other party. Every government sees every other as dooming its own people and worthy only of universal contempt. There are food riots in Venice, in Lisbon, Moscow, Singapore. There is plague in Russia, and misery and despair everywhere.

Violated, dishonored, wading in blood, dripping filth—there stands bourgeois society. This is it [in reality]. Not all spic and span and moral, with pretense to culture, philosophy, ethics, order, peace, and the rule of law—but the ravening beast, the witches’ sabbath of anarchy, a plague to culture and humanity. Thus it reveals itself in its true, its naked form.

In the midst of this witches’ sabbath a catastrophe of world-historical proportions has happened: International Social Democracy has capitulated. To deceive ourselves about it, to cover it up, would be the most foolish, the most fatal thing the proletariat could do. . . . The fall of the socialist proletariat in the present world war is unprecedented. It is a misfortune for humanity. But socialism will be lost only if the international proletariat fails to measure the depth of this fall, if it refuses to learn from it.

The last forty-five year period in the development of the modern labor movement now stands in doubt. What we are experiencing in this critique is a closing of accounts for what will soon be half a century of work at our posts. The grave of the Paris Commune ended the first phase of the European labor movement as well as the First International. Since then there began a new phase. In place of spontaneous revolutions, risings, and barricades, after which the proletariat each time fell back into passivity, there began the systematic daily struggle, the exploitation of bourgeois parliamentarianism, mass organizations, the marriage of the economic with the political struggle, and that of socialist ideals with stubborn defense of immediate daily interests. For the first time the polestar of strict scientific teachings lit the way for the proletariat and for its emancipation. Instead of sects, schools, utopias, and isolated experiments in various countries, there arose a uniform, international theoretical basis which bound countries together like the strands of a rope. Marxist knowledge gave the working class of the entire world a compass by which it can make sense of the welter of daily events and by which it can always plot the right course to take to the fixed and final goal.

She who bore, championed, and protected this new method was German Social Democracy. . . . German Social Democracy was considered the purest embodiment of Marxist socialism. She had laid claim to a special place in the Second International—its instructress and leader. . . .

. . . Especially in the questions of the struggle against militarism and war, German Social Democracy always took the lead. “For us Germans that is unacceptable” regularly sufficed to decide the orientation of the Second International, which blindly bestowed its confidence upon the admired leadership of the mighty German Social Democracy: the pride of every socialist and the terror of the ruling classes everywhere.

And what did we in Germany experience when the great historical test came? The most precipitous fall, the most violent collapse. Nowhere has the organization of the proletariat been yoked so completely to the service of imperialism. Nowhere is the state of siege borne so docilely. Nowhere is the press so hobbled, public opinion so stifled, the economic and political class struggle of the working class so totally surrendered as in Germany. . . .

One thing is certain. The world war is a turning point. It is foolish and mad to imagine that we need only survive the war, like a rabbit waiting out the storm under a bush, in order to fall happily back into the old (2341) routine once it is over. The world war has altered the conditions of our struggle and, most of all, it has changed us. Not that the basic law of capitalist development, the life-and-death war between capital and labor, will experience any amelioration. But now, in the midst of the war, the masks are falling and the old familiar visages smirk at us. The tempo of development has received a mighty jolt from the eruption of the volcano of imperialism. The violence of the conflicts in the bosom of society, the enormosity of the tasks that tower up before the socialist proletariat—these make everything that has transpired in the history of the workers’ movement seem a pleasant idyll.

Historically, this war was ordained to thrust forward the cause of the proletariat. . . . It was ordained to drive the German proletariat to the pinnacle of the nation and thereby begin to organize the international and universal conflict between capital and labor for political power within the state. . . .

. . . The future of civilization and humanity depends on whether or not the proletariat resolves manfully to throw its revolutionary broadsword into the scales. In this war imperialism has won. Its bloody sword of genocide has brutally tilted the scale toward the abyss of misery. The only compensation for all the misery and all the shame would be if we learn from the war how the

proletariat can seize mastery of its own destiny and escape the role of the lackey to the ruling classes. . . .

In spite of the military dictatorship and censorship of the press, in spite of the abdication of the Social Democrats, in spite of the fratricidal war, the class struggle rises with elemental force from out of the *Burgfrieden* [German political truce]; and the international solidarity of labor from out of the bloody mists of the battlefield. Not in the weak and artificial attempts to galvanize the old International, not in pledges renewed here and there to stand together again after the war. No! Now in and from the war the fact emerges with a wholly new power and energy that the proletarians of all lands have one and the same interests. The war itself dispels the illusion it has created.

Victory or defeat? Thus sounds the slogan of the ruling militarism in all the warring countries, and, like an echo, the Social Democratic leaders have taken it up. Supposedly, victory or defeat on the battlefield should be for the proletarians of Germany, France, England, or Russia exactly the same as for the ruling classes of these countries. As soon as the cannons thunder, every proletarian should be interested in the victory of his own country and, therefore, in the defeat of the other countries. Let us see what such a victory can bring to the proletariat.

According to the official version, adopted uncritically by the Social Democratic leaders, German victory holds the prospect of unlimited economic growth, while defeat means economic ruin. This conception rests upon the pattern of the war of 1870. . . .

But today matters are quite different in the belligerent states. Today war does not function as a dynamic method of procuring for rising young capitalism the preconditions of its “national” development. War has this character only in the isolated and fragmentary case of Serbia. Reduced to its historically objective essence, today’s world war is entirely a competitive struggle amongst fully mature capitalisms for world domination, for the exploitation of the remaining zones of the world not yet capitalistic. That is why this war is totally different in character and effects. The high degree of economic development in the capitalist world is expressed in the extraordinarily advanced technology, that is, in the destructive power of the weaponry which approaches the same level in all the warring nations. The international organization of the murder industry is reflected now in the military balance, the scales of which always right themselves after partial decisions and momentary changes; a general decision is always and again pushed into the future. The indecisiveness of military results leads to ever new reserves from the population masses of warring and hitherto

neutral nations being sent into fire. The war finds abundant material to feed imperialist appetites and contradictions, creates its own supplies of these, and spreads like wildfire. But the mightier the masses and the more numerous the nations dragged into the war on all sides, the more drawn out its existence will be.

Considered all together, and before any decision regarding military victory or defeat has been taken, the effect of the war will be unlike any phenomenon of earlier wars in the modern age: the economic ruin of all belligerents and to an increasing degree that of the formally neutral as well. Every additional month of the war affirms and extends this result and postpones the (2342) expected fruits of military success for decades. In the last analysis, neither victory nor defeat can change any of this. On the contrary, it makes a purely military decision extremely unlikely and leads one to conclude the greater probability that the war will end finally with the most general and mutual exhaustion. . . .

Thus proletarian policy is locked in a dilemma when trying to decide on which side it ought to intervene, which side represents progress and democracy in this war. In these circumstances, and from the perspective of international politics as a whole, victory or defeat, in political as well as economic terms, comes down to a hopeless choice between two kinds of beatings for the European working classes. Therefore, it is nothing but fatal madness when the French socialists imagine that the military defeat of Germany will strike a blow at the head of militarism and imperialism and thereby pave the way for peaceful democracy in the world. Imperialism and its servant, militarism, will calculate their profits from every victory and every defeat in this war—except in one case: if the international proletariat intervenes in a revolutionary way and puts an end to such calculations. . . .

It is war as such, no matter how it ends militarily, that signifies the greatest defeat for Europe's proletariat. It is only the overcoming of war and the speediest possible enforcement of peace by the international militancy of the proletariat that can bring victory to the workers' cause. . . .

Proletarian policy knows no retreat; it can only struggle forward. It must always go beyond the existing and the newly created. In this sense alone, it is legitimate for the proletariat to confront both camps of imperialists in the world war with a policy of its own.

But this policy can not consist of social democratic parties holding international conferences where they individually or collectively compete to discover ingenious recipes with which bourgeois diplomats ought to make the peace and

ensure the further peaceful development of democracy. All demands for complete or partial “disarmament,” for the dismantling of secret diplomacy, for the partition of all multinational great states into small national ones, and so forth are part and parcel utopian as long as capitalist class domination holds the reins. [Capitalism] cannot, under its current imperialist course, dispense with present-day militarism, secret diplomacy, or the centralized multinational state. In fact, it would be more pertinent for the realization of these postulates to make just one simple “demand”: abolition of the capitalist class state. . . .

Imperialism and all its political brutality, the chain of incessant social catastrophes that it has let loose, is undoubtedly an historical necessity for the ruling classes of the contemporary capitalist world. Nothing would be more fatal for the proletariat than to delude itself into believing that it were possible after this war to rescue the idyllic and peaceful continuation of capitalism. However, the conclusion to be drawn by proletarian policy from the historical necessity of imperialism is that surrender to imperialism will mean living forever in its victorious shadow and eating from its leftovers. . . .

The expansionist imperialism of capitalism, the expression of its highest stage of development and its last phase of existence, produces the [following] economic tendencies: it transforms the entire world into the capitalist mode of production; all outmoded, pre-capitalist forms of production and society are swept away; it converts all the world’s riches and means of production into capital, the working masses of all zones into wage slaves. In Africa and Asia, from the northernmost shores to the tip of South America and the South Seas, the remnant of ancient primitive communist associations, feudal systems of domination, patriarchal peasant economies, traditional forms of craftsmanship are annihilated, crushed by capital; whole peoples are destroyed and ancient cultures flattened. All are supplanted by profit mongering in its most modern form.

This brutal victory parade of capital through the world, its way prepared by every means of violence, robbery, and infamy, has its light side. It creates the preconditions for its own final destruction. It put into place the capitalist system of world domination, the indispensable precondition for the socialist world revolution. . . . And in this sense imperialism ultimately works for us.

The world war is a turning point. For the first time, the ravaging beasts set loose upon all quarters of the globe by capitalist Europe have broken into Europe itself. . . . Only today has this “civilized world” become aware that the bite of the imperialist beast brings death, that its very breath is infamy. Only now has [the civilized world] recognized this, after the beast’s ripping talons

have clawed its own mother's lap, the bourgeois (2343) civilization of Europe itself. And even this knowledge is grappled with in the distorted form of bourgeois hypocrisy. Every people recognizes the infamy only in the national uniform of the enemy. . . .

None the less, the imperialist bestiality raging in Europe's fields has one effect about which the "civilized world" is not horrified and for which it has no breaking heart: that is the mass destruction of the European proletariat. Never before on this scale has a war exterminated whole strata of the population; not for a century have all the great and ancient cultural nations of Europe been attacked. Millions of human lives have been destroyed in the Vosges, the Ardennes, in Belgium, Poland, in the Carpathians, on the Save. Millions have been crippled. But of these millions, nine out of ten are working people from the city and the countryside.

It is our strength, our hope, that is mown down day after day like grass under the sickle. The best, most intelligent, most educated forces of international socialism, the bearers of the holiest traditions and the boldest heroes of the modern workers' movement, the vanguard of the entire world proletariat, the workers of England, France, Belgium, Germany, Russia—these are the ones now being hamstrung and led to the slaughter. These workers of the leading capitalist countries of Europe are exactly the ones who have the historical mission of carrying out the socialist transformation. Only from out of Europe, only from out of the oldest capitalist countries will the signal be given when the hour is ripe for the liberating social revolution. Only the English, French, Belgian, German, Russian, Italian workers together can lead the army of the exploited and enslaved of the five continents. When the time comes, only they can settle accounts with capitalism's work of global destruction, with its centuries of crime committed against primitive peoples.

But to push ahead to the victory of socialism we need a strong, activist, educated proletariat, and masses whose power lies in intellectual culture as well as numbers. These masses are being decimated by the world war. The flower of our mature and youthful strength, hundreds of thousands of whom were socialistically schooled in England, France, Belgium, Germany, and Russia, the product of decades of educational and agitational training, and other hundreds of thousands who could be won for socialism tomorrow, fall and molder on the miserable battlefields. The fruits of decades of sacrifice and the efforts of generations are destroyed in a few weeks. The key troops of the international proletariat are torn up by the roots. . . .

The world war today is demonstrably not only murder on a grand scale; it is also suicide of the working classes of Europe. The soldiers of socialism, the proletarians of England, France, Germany, Russia, and Belgium have for months been killing one another at the behest of capital. They are driving the cold steel of murder into each other's hearts. Locked in the embrace of death, they tumble into a common grave. . . .

The madness will cease and the bloody demons of hell will vanish only when workers in Germany and France, England and Russia finally awake from their stupor, extend to each other a brotherly hand, and drown out the bestial chorus of imperialist war-mongers and the shrill cry of capitalist hyenas with labor's old and mighty battle cry: "Proletarians of all lands, unite!"

Source

Marxists.Org Internet Archive,
<http://www.marxists.org/archive/luxembur/works/1915/04.htm>.

Rosa Luxemburg (1871–1919)

Rosa Luxemburg (1871–1919) was born into a middle-class Jewish family in Russian Poland. A radical revolutionary from the age of 16, she found inspiration in the writings of the exiled Polish poet and patriot Adam Mickiewicz. In 1889 she moved to Switzerland, in part because her political activities had attracted the hostile attention of the tsarist government, and also to study natural sciences, political economy, and law at the University of Zurich, where she completed her doctorate in 1899. A prolific writer and journalist whose output totaled almost 700 books, articles, and speeches before her death in 1919, Luxemburg quickly became prominent in the Social Democratic Party (SPD) of Poland and Lithuania. After her marriage to a German citizen in 1898, she also became one of the leaders of the left-wing German SPD. She participated in the 1905 revolution in Russian Poland, helping to draft the SPD program. In 1906 the tsarist authorities arrested and imprisoned her in Warsaw, eventually releasing her on health grounds, (2344) whereupon she returned to teach at the party school in Berlin. In her writings Luxemburg endeavored to prove that capitalism was ultimately doomed, because its own economic weaknesses would bring its collapse. Luxemburg's theoretical stance emphasized that the ultimate objective of socialism was to promote ever greater political and economic democracy so that the workers themselves would enjoy control of their own lives. This posture set her at odds with Lenin, since she disagreed with his emphasis on the central role of a small

revolutionary elite or vanguard in implementing and supervising political and social change.

The outbreak of World War I left Luxemburg so depressed that she contemplated suicide. An outspoken opponent of Germany's decision to enter World War I, in company with three other radical German Social Democrats who became the nucleus of what was known as the International Group, she fiercely assailed those who chose to back the war effort on the grounds that war would destroy thousands, even millions, of the proletariat. In 1915 the German government used its wartime powers to imprison Luxemburg for sedition, reactivating an earlier 1914 one-year sentence that had been suspended on grounds of her poor health. She spent most of the war in jail, during which time the outspoken writings she nonetheless managed to smuggle out won her an additional indictment for high treason. She was released in February 1916, coincidentally the same month that her famous *Junius* pamphlet, written the previous year, was published in Zurich, a document that won its author reincarceration in what was termed "protective custody" from July 1916 until the end of the war in November 1918, but nonetheless soon became the guiding statement of the International Group. In 1916 that organization was rechristened the Spartacus League, named for a Roman slave who led a rebellion of the oppressed. Eventually, the Spartacus League became the nucleus of the Communist Party of Germany, established on 1 January 1919. Luxemburg's criticism of the German war effort became ever sharper as the war went on, especially after the overthrow of the Russian Tsar Nicholas II, and she increasingly condemned German policies as imperialist rather than defensive. Luxemburg was released toward the end of the war. She reluctantly endorsed the Spartacist Uprising of January 1919 in Berlin, which attempted to overthrow the moderate Social Democratic government established in November 1918. On 15 January 1919 the Freikorps militia of returned German soldiers arrested her, together with Liebknecht, on the ground that they had been ringleaders of the rebellion. On the journey to prison both were shot and their bodies dumped in a canal, not to be found until May. The combination of their consistent opposition to the war and their tragic deaths gave both revolutionary leaders a lasting romantic image, making them into legendary and mythical figures who won near-canonical status as founders of the German Communist Party.

About The Document

The *Junius* pamphlet effectively constituted a manifesto of Luxemburg's beliefs on the war. Writing for popular consumption, its author hoped that it

would not only provide a brief and comprehensible analysis of the war as she saw it but also persuade the international working class to abandon their support for the war. Unlike some of her more theoretical works, the pamphlet was clearly and vividly written and easy to understand. Its theme was simple: that the war was the product of capitalism and imperialism and that by “docilely” accepting their role as soldiers in the war, the German and international proletariat was essentially contributing to its own political and physical suicide, as millions of working-class soldiers were killed or injured in combat. The opposing forces were, Luxemburg argued, so evenly balanced, and technology so destructive, that the war could be expected to continue almost indefinitely and would probably “end finally with the most general and mutual exhaustion.” Neither side would genuinely win, and victory would rest only with the forces of militarism and imperialism. International socialist conferences, she rather scathingly remarked, might well devise attractive plans for disarmament, open diplomacy, and the partition of large empires according to the principles of national self-determination, but all such endeavors would prove ineffective so long as capitalist interests, to whose survival militarism, secret diplomacy, and “the centralized multinational state” were essential, held the reins of power. She therefore called upon the proletariat of all countries to cease fighting each other and unite against the forces of capitalism and imperialism.

Far stronger in its analysis of the existing situation than on prescriptions for future action, which it left (2345) extremely vague, the *Junius* pamphlet nonetheless became a rallying point for the international left. One might note, however, that notwithstanding its fame and notoriety, this document signally failed to convince the soldiers and workers of all the warring nations to reject their support for the war effort in favor of collaborative campaigns to overthrow the existing political, social, and economic structures of their own countries.

Further Reading

Abraham, Richard. *Rosa Luxemburg: A Life for the International*. New York: Berg, 1989.

Bronner, Stephen Eric. *Rosa Luxemburg: A Revolutionary for our Times*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997.

Carsten, F. L. *War against War: British and German Radical Movements in the First World War*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982.

Ettinger, Elzbieta, ed. *Rosa Luxemburg: A Life*. Boston: Beacon, 1986.

Florence, Ronald. *Marx's Daughters: Eleanor Marx, Rosa Luxemburg, Angelica Balabanoff*. New York: Dial, 1975.

Haupt, Georges. *Socialism and the Great War: The Collapse of the Second International*. Oxford, UK: Clarendon, 1973.

Joll, James. *The Second International, 1889–1914*. Rev. ed. Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974.

Nation, R. Craig. *War on War: Lenin, the Zimmerwald Left, and the Origins of Communist Internationalism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1989.

Schorske, Carl E. *German Social Democracy, 1905–1917: The Development of the Great Schism*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955.

Shepardson, Donald E. *Rosa Luxemburg and the Noble Dream*. New York: Lang, 1996.

MLA

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "36. A Socialist Opposes World War I." *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*, ABC-CLIO, 2005, pp. . *ABC-CLIO eBook Collection*, legacy.abc-clio.com/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2230.

Chicago Manual of Style

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "36. A Socialist Opposes World War I." In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005. <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2230>.

APA

Roberts, P. M., S. C. Tucker (2005). 36. A Socialist Opposes World War I. In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia* (pp.). Retrieved from <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2230>

Essay 37. World War I and Japanese Ambitions

Japan and World War I

The First World War set in motion events that would lead, over the next six or seven decades, to the virtual dismantling of Western colonial empires in Asia, Africa, and parts of Latin America. In Asia, the preoccupation of Great Britain, Germany, and France with events in Europe permitted Japan, a quickly modernizing country that since the 1890s had sought to rival the Western powers in gaining hegemony over East Asia, something close to a free hand in pursuing this objective. Since 1902 Japan had been bound to Great Britain through the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, obliging each country to come to the aid of the other should it be the victim of aggression, to consult with each other as to the measures they should take if their respective interests in Asia were “in jeopardy” or “menaced” by other powers, and to hold regular military and naval talks. Since in technical terms it was Britain that had declared war on Germany on 4 August 1914, it was a moot point whether, strictly speaking, this treaty applied to World War I, leaving Japan the latitude to take whatever course it pleased. The British government initially would have preferred that Japan remain neutral, and as the crisis that led to war developed, on 1 August 1914 the British Foreign Office told Japanese representatives in London that it was unlikely to ask for Japanese aid. Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey believed that only a German attack on Britain’s Chinese colonial possessions of Hong Kong or Weihai, neither of which was thought likely to occur, would lead Britain to turn to Japan. On 4 August 1914 Japan formally affirmed its neutrality.

Within days the British government began to shift its position. Since 1895, when it won the island of Taiwan and special treaty rights from China, Japan had shown itself eager to expand its territorial position. After the 1904–1905 Russo-Japanese War Japan took over Russia’s special rights in China’s northeastern territory of Manchuria, an area where Japan subsequently sought to expand its influence through special economic and political concessions. In 1910 Japan formally annexed Korea as a colony. Japanese ambitions to dominate East Asia were by no means sated, and British officials preferred not to facilitate these. In the first days of August 1914 China, the Netherlands, and the United States, fearful that Japan might use the war to enhance its position as a Pacific power, all urged that the Pacific should remain a neutral area during the conflict. Other factors, however, impelled Britain to seek more active Japanese assistance. The German navy maintained a force of recently constructed modern warships in Pacific waters, a grouping that rivaled the

British China Squadron and had the potential to disrupt important British trade routes with Asia. Germany's East Asiatic Squadron of two armored cruisers and three light cruisers was based at the port of Qingdao in Shandong province, north China, which had (2346) been a German colony since 1898. Germany also possessed assorted Pacific island colonies: the Marianas, the Marshalls, the Carolines, New Guinea, and Samoa. The British Admiralty wished to blockade Qingdao and hunt out and destroy the German East Asiatic Squadron while simultaneously protecting merchant shipping routes in the Pacific, but its forces in the region were insufficient to perform all these missions, and wartime demands on the navy in European waters precluded the dispatch of additional vessels to Asia. When war began, the British Admiralty therefore pressed the Foreign Office to seek limited naval assistance from Japan in the Pacific. On 6 August Grey accordingly requested the Japanese government to deploy its fleet against German armed merchantmen, leaving the British to tackle German naval forces there.

Japanese Foreign Minister Katō Takaakira, the dominant personality within the government, viewed this as providing an ideal opportunity to expand the Japanese presence in China. Within thirty-six hours of the arrival of the British request, he prevailed upon the Japanese cabinet to support his position, a decision the Japanese army and navy ministers both endorsed, though some Japanese elder statesmen were dubious as to its wisdom and would have preferred their country to remain aloof from the war, while taking every opportunity unobtrusively to enhance Japan's position in East Asia. Katō told Grey that Japan would enter the war under the terms of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, a limited decision that did not commit it formally to the entente of Britain, France, and Russia, preserving maximum freedom of action for Japan and allowing it to remain disengaged from the war in Europe. He also announced that Japan intended to eliminate German influence from Chinese soil and capture its Qing-dao naval base. Grey, alarmed at what he perceived as a long-term threat to British interests in China, responded that he would prefer that Japan not enter the war on such terms, but with some cunning Katō responded that Japanese domestic fervor for war had become so great that if he withdrew now, the populace might well turn against Britain and demand that Japan assist Germany instead. Grey backed down, and on 15 August Japan delivered an ultimatum demanding that Germany withdraw its fleet from all Japanese and Chinese waters, effectively the entire western Pacific, and return Qingdao to China. Germany, despite submitting counterproposals to neutralize the entire Pacific, declined to accede to Japan's demands, and on 23 August Japan declared war on Germany.

Once war began, the Japanese fleet immediately mounted a blockade of Qingdao, and—ignoring protests from Chinese president Yüan Shih-k'ai—on 2 September landed troops on the Shandong Peninsula. Qingdao's German governor, Clemens Meyer-Waldeck, reinforced his small peacetime garrison with German troops and reservists stationed in nearby Beijing and Tianjin, gathering a total of 184 officers, 4,390 men, and 90 rather small land-based guns, most of which were rather short of shells. The Japanese forces eventually totaled 60,000, including one British and one Indian army battalion. The attackers were equipped with more than 100 heavy siege guns, well supplied with ammunition and augmented by the guns of the blockading Japanese fleet. Some desperate fighting took place during the ensuing siege that began in late September in which the Japanese demonstrated their mastery of new artillery tactics, targeting the German batteries and keeping up constant high-explosive attacks by day and shrapnel assaults by night so as to allow the defenders no opportunity to repair any damage inflicted upon their fortifications. Japanese air power was also used both for reconnaissance and bombing, the latter another military innovation with great significance for the future of warfare. By early November the German forces were running short of shells, and on 7 November 1914 Meyer-Waldeck requested an armistice. Over Chinese protests Japanese forces immediately occupied Qingdao and the Shandong Peninsula, stating that they would leave the final disposition of these territories to be decided once the war was over.

Besides taking Qingdao, in October 1914 Japanese naval forces seized the northern Pacific Mariana, Caroline, and Marshall islands from Germany, and by the end of the year the Japanese government had announced that it would seek their permanent retention once the war was over. Japan's leaders then moved to enhance its influence in northern Asia by other means. In January 1915 they submitted to the Chinese government their Twenty-One Demands, whereby Japan would take over all German rights in the Shandong Peninsula and other powers would have been excluded from the area, where Japan would enjoy special economic and political privileges, effectively giving (2347) it full control. Japan sought similar concessions in Manchuria and eastern Mongolia. China was also expected to refuse to lease any Chinese territory to other foreign powers and possibly to end those that currently existed. In addition, China was to engage Japanese political, financial, and military advisers, who might rather easily metamorphose into proconsuls. Britain and the United States prevailed on the Japanese to modify these terms slightly, leaving it optional whether China employed Japanese advisors. China, threatened with war by Japan, reluctantly accepted the revised demands in May 1915.

Japan, which also coveted territory and influence in what had been the tsarist empire, refused to send troops to fight in Europe. After the Bolshevik Revolution, by contrast, between 1918 and 1922 Japan eagerly deployed 70,000 troops in Siberia, their ostensible purpose to protect Allied supply dumps there and safeguard the Trans-Siberian Chinese eastern railway lines. Indeed, one purpose of Britain, France, and the United States in likewise sending troops of their own, albeit in smaller numbers, to Siberia was to attempt to restrain their Japanese allies, who remained there for two years after the other powers had withdrawn. At the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, Japan received League of Nations mandates to administer the Pacific islands it had seized from Germany and was also awarded the former German concessions in Shandong. The latter decision provoked such fierce protests within China that later that year Japan formally renounced these rights, though in practice the Shandong area still remained under Japanese influence. Overall, Japan profited substantially from World War I, enhancing its position in Asia at the expense of Germany and China while avoiding serious fighting. Over the next two decades, the gains of the war years were one factor that helped to embolden Japanese leaders to seek further expansion within Asia, their objective to replace the dominance of the Western powers with their own.

German Rear Admiral G. Schlieper Describes the Japanese Capture of Qingdao, 7 November 1914

“We guarantee performance of our duty—to the last!” A solemn heritage have these words become, these last words which the governor, naval Captain Meyer-Waldeck, just managed to have transmitted by telegraph to his Commander-in-Chief, from far-away Kiau-chau as a characteristic German pledge. Each one of us here in the Fatherland, clearly realizing that the message voiced much bitter tragedy, was grateful in his inmost soul to that brave man. Those of us, however, who had been permitted to witness that which out yonder had been undertaken and developed with enthusiasm and flaming love of country, will to-day, on the morning of November 8th, have felt especially sorrowful when they read these words: “Tsing-tau has fallen.”

The flags were yet waving in celebration of the German naval victory along the coast of Chili off Coronel—and already there comes in the quick succession of events the solemn tidings of the end of an heroic struggle, which was maintained on a rocky height against gigantic odds. We saw it coming—and yet our thoughts rebelled against the accomplished fact, our whole being revolted against so much baseness and deceit which a dual alliance, consisting of our white cousins and of wily yellow Asiatics, had instigated against German possessions. A sudden pang may flash through us when we view so

much German blood spilled, but at the same moment our hearts should beat in fervent gratitude for our heroes of Tsing-tau.

For seventeen years the German flag waved above yonder rocky post. When in the nineties [1890s] the awakening of the Asiatic East steadily progressed, when a slit-eyed island folk became always more desirous of mastering everything considered European, the time had come for Germany to get a foothold in order to be able to maintain her “place in the sun.” The commanders of our naval military forces had long had their orders for this reason to look around; and when the murder of two German missionaries in Shantung demanded energetic action, Admiral von Diedrichs, with the landing troops of the ships under his command, occupied the Chinese barracks on the northern cape of the bay of Kiau-chau. On the same day he raised the German flag in spite of the vehement protests of the Chinese general who was stationed there. On March 6, 1898, China agreed to a lease which should run for ninety-nine years, by which the bay of Kiau-chau, and a territory, in accordance with her wishes, was ceded to Germany.

Thereupon, by sending a division, consisting of ships and marines and detachments of sailor-artillery, care was taken that the new possession received augmented protection. After the barracks and dwellings (2348) had been first of all thoroughly cleansed for weeks—as a brother-officer wrote to me at the time—German Kultur could placidly make its entrance in Tsing-tau and the surrounding country. And this came to pass. With what love and care, with what pride and desire to create, the work was carried on in our far distant Kiau-chau, this pen is not capable of describing. But one could easily follow it up in the monographs and plans published annually by the Imperial naval office. It has been my privilege to visit many of our colonies and for a long time, but nowhere did I meet such a beneficent joy in creating as in Tsing-tau. Every one wished to accomplish great things, and to emulate the other workers. Everything was permeated with German thought and German soundness. There it was demonstrated to foreigners, to those who have now stolen it from us. The German can colonize, even if he has pursued it only in recent years.

Seventeen years under the German flag! How everything developed during that time! German hydraulic architecture and energy called into existence an extensive harbor. Lighthouses, casting their beams far and wide, were erected on points and steep ridges. One villa after another arose, not pretentious and obtrusive, no, rather tasteful and snug. Soon whistled the locomotive; the powerful step of our splendid marine artillery resounded on the well-cared-for new roads. Where once upon a time bleak rocks stood out prominently against the sky, the green of German afforesting soon covered the bare surfaces.

Everything was furthered—even the annual stream of guests, who, coming especially from Shanghai, disported themselves on the beach of Tsing-tau. The governors, Truppel and Jaeschke, shaped a territory which a Meyer-Waldeck with his faithful followers was to defend to the knife in the past months.

Yes, everything flourished in Kiau-chau; but for this very reason, desire, greed, always came nearer and wished to taste, no, not to taste, to possess the whole of it. The opportunity for highway robbery could not have been more favourable. The World War had been enkindled—so quickly help yourself, for Germania has her hands full at home. Therefore act quickly; for we'll never gain our object more easily, and our white colleague there under the Union Jack, who always acts as if he were so superior but who really fears us yellow folks out here, he is fighting on our side, wants to crush his cousin who is with us. So quickly send an ultimatum to Germany, an insolent one to be sure, what does that matter. "Near is my shirt, but nearer is my skin"; and our colleague, John Bull, he would so much like it.

A disdainful rejection was the answer of Germania—and then Meyer-Waldeck drew his sword! "War! War!" was reechoed in the region of Tsing-tau, "war against a fine pair of brothers! So let it be; we shall fight to the last drop of blood."

And how they did fight! Nothing came of the desire to present the fall of Tsing-tau as a birthday present to the Mikado [Japanese emperor] on October 31st, as the Japanese had planned. There was bitter fighting. The enemy often sustained bloody repulses. The warships, including the *Kaiserin Elizabeth*, of the Austro-Hungarian navy, valiantly assisted. The *Kaiserin Elizabeth* wanted at all events to fight with us, to conquer, or—to sink. Then on September 28th, Tsing-tau was completely cut off by land; the situation steadily became more serious. From far and near the compatriots had hastened there—they would not desert their dear Tsing-tau at such a critical time. On September 27th combined Japanese and English forces had advanced to the Litsun River. In the ensuing engagements they left one hundred and fifty dead and wounded on the place of combat.

On October 14th two German forts fell after a heavy bombardment on the part of the hostile warships. But the German guns answered smartly. A 20-centimeter projectile strikes the deck of the English man-of-war *Triumph* and causes heavy damage. In the meantime the German torpedo-boat *S-90* has destroyed the Japanese cruiser *Takashiho* in a bold attack. What does it matter that it had later on to sacrifice itself, as it would otherwise have fallen the prey of a large hostile superior force! It was able to save its crew.

The odds steadily increase, the glances toward the German eagle become more covetous, as the latter, bleeding from many wounds, stakes his all to keep what he has acquired, but which under his protection only too readily has stirred up the envy of others, even as this despicable trait of our opponents is the real reason for the World War.

A dreary, melancholy, gray November day without! Gone is the decoration of flags and the rejoicing of the day of Coronel! Everything in its time! To-day the throb of our hearts belongs to you heroes out yonder, our (2349) whole mood, our whole sentiment; for you have fought as German heroes have never been better able to do.

But we here at home, we will continually repeat it to our children: Do not forget November 7, 1914: do not forget to pay back those yellow Asiatics, who had learned so much from us, for the great wrong they have done to us, stirred up though they were by the petty English mercenary spirit! My pen refuses to go on! But one thing more I should like to attest to: Of a truth, ye heroes—ye dead, ye mortally wounded ones and ye survivors—ye did your duty to the last!

Source

Charles F. Horne and Warren F. Austin, eds., *Great Events of the Great War*, 7 vols. (Washington, DC: National Alumni, 1920), 2:412–415.

About The Document

The author of this account, which appeared in a German newspaper one day after the fall of Qingdao, was Paul Schlieper, an outraged German rear admiral who waited helplessly at naval headquarters in Berlin as Japanese troops overwhelmed the city's greatly outnumbered defenders. Schlieper, who had been besieged in Beijing during the 1900 Boxer Rebellion against foreign domination, had taken great pride in Qingdao. Its German founders had specifically intended it to be a modern colony, designed to surpass older European settlements in China such as Hong Kong or Shanghai and to show what German expertise, efficiency, and good management could accomplish. As Schlieper stated, "The German can colonize, even if he has pursued it only in recent years." Schlieper's article, written for public consumption, was undoubtedly in part a piece of propaganda that celebrated the courage of Qingdao's German defenders and sought to persuade the German general public how badly the Allies had treated Germany. That did not, however, necessarily make it a cynical attempt to manipulate public sentiment. The heartfelt fury and shock Schlieper expressed toward both Great Britain and

Japan were apparently genuine and deep, and he regarded the capture of Qingdao as almost a personal insult as well as a national humiliation. His bitter statement made it clear that what he, and presumably other like-minded Germans, found particularly appalling was that the “slit-eyed” Japanese, the “wily yellow Asiatics,” should dare to take advantage of Germany’s preoccupation with World War I to challenge European imperialism. Almost equally galling was the fact that they had done so with the acquiescence of the British, another white race. Schlieper’s statement encapsulated the profound racist resentment and incredulous shock that Germans as well as many other Westerners felt—that an Asiatic nation should not only dare to challenge European predominance but should do so successfully.

Further Reading

Beasley, William. *Japanese Imperialism, 1894–1945*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987.

Brooks, Barbara J. *Japan’s Imperial Diplomacy: Consuls, Treaty Ports, and War in China, 1895–1938*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000.

Burdick, Charles B. *The Japanese Siege of Tsingtau: World War I in Asia*. Hamden, CT: Archon, 1976.

Dickinson, Frederick R. *War and National Reinvention: Japan in the Great War, 1914–1919*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999.

Duus, Peter, ed. *The Cambridge History of Japan*, Vol. 6, *The Twentieth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

Duus, Peter, Ramon H. Myers, and Mark R. Peattie, eds. *The Japanese Informal Empire in China, 1895–1937*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989.

Hoyt, Edwin P. *The Fall of Tsingtao*. London: A. Barker, 1975.

Nish, Ian H. *Alliance in Decline: A Study in Anglo-Japanese Relations, 1908–23*. London: Athlone, 1972.

———. *Japanese Foreign Policy, 1869–1942: Kasumigaseki to Miyakezaka*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977.

Schlieper, Paul. *Klarschiff! Unsere Seehelden im Weltkrieg*. Leipzig: G. Fock, n.d.

Strachan, Hew. *The First World War, Vol. 1, To Arms*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

MLA

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "37. World War I and Japanese Ambitions." *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*, ABC-CLIO, 2005, pp. . *ABC-CLIO eBook Collection*, legacy.abc-clio.com/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2235.

Chicago Manual of Style

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "37. World War I and Japanese Ambitions." In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005. <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2235>.

APA

Roberts, P. M., S. C. Tucker (2005). 37. World War I and Japanese Ambitions. In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia* (pp.). Retrieved from <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2235>

Essay 38. Nationalist Forces Threaten the Austro-Hungarian Empire

Nationalism and Separatism in the Habsburg Empire

Rather ironically, the First World War, begun by the Austria-Hungarian Empire in an effort to demonstrate its determination to resist nationalist and separatist forces, ended in that empire's complete dissolution. In 1867 the Habsburg government negotiated the Ausgleich agreement with Hungary, whereby the Kingdom of (2350) Hungary and the Empire of Austria shared a dual monarchy, and Hungary had complete autonomy in domestic affairs and a common policy only in defense and foreign policy. Effectively, even though they only represented a minority of Habsburg subjects, the 40 percent of Hungary's population who were Magyars and the one-third of Austrians who were Germans were allowed to dominate the entire empire, 47 percent of whose population were Slavs by 1914. This arrangement, reached in order to alleviate Hungarian separatist aspirations, soon helped to provoke dissatisfaction and resentment among the assorted national groups represented in the Austro-Hungarian Empire who included Poles, Czechs, Slovaks, Romanians, Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Ukrainians, and several others. Many complained that the Hungarians discriminated against them more severely than did the Austrians. Some, such as the Poles and Czechs, sought independence and the reconstitution of a state that no longer existed. Others—South Slavs in Croatia, Bosnia, and Herzegovina and Romanians in Transylvania—sought union with an existing state, such as Serbia or Romania.

The onset of war served as the spark to this inflammable mix. Czechs, Serbs, and Croats were drafted into the Austro-Hungarian military forces, but their loyalties were often questionable and many deserted when opportunity offered. In the eighteenth century, Austria, Prussia, and Russia had partitioned the kingdom of Poland, dividing its provinces among themselves. Many thousands of Poles, often in quasi-independent Polish units, fought in both the Austro-Hungarian and Russian armies, and Russia and Germany each offered the Poles autonomy, though not full independence, in a revived Polish state. Czech and Serb nationalist leaders fled to the Allied countries, where they established organizations purporting to represent their peoples and engaged in propaganda intended to promote their cause. The Poles did likewise, setting up several competing committees in Paris, Warsaw, Kraków, and Petrograd. The Czechs increased their value to the Allies in late 1917, when they negotiated the release of deserters and prisoners of war in Russian hands to form the Czech Legion, whose members switched to the Allied side at a time when manpower was in

desperately short supply. Serb leaders sought to create a Greater Serbia, uniting all the South Slavs in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Romania coveted the Hungarian province of Transylvania, while Italy had designs on the Tyrol and Trieste. As the war dragged on and eventually defeat loomed, the Hungarians themselves found their union with Austria increasingly irksome and disadvantageous. Meanwhile, nationalist leaders of every stripe whom the Austro-Hungarian authorities suspected of disloyalty risked arrest and lengthy incarceration. Many fled into exile in the Allied countries.

For much of the war Allied leaders hedged their bets, making no definitive promises to the multitudinous claimants to portions of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Such circumspection was the more advisable because, in several cases—Italy and Serbia, for example—different national demands clashed with each other to an almost irreconcilable degree. Until spring 1918 the Allies also hoped to detach Austria-Hungary from Germany, an objective they were unlikely to attain if they promised definite independence to portions of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Sympathetic and well-connected British figures, notably the London *Times* journalist Wickham Steed and the London University historian R. W. Seton-Watson, both experts on the Balkans and the Austro-Hungarian Empire who had numerous friends and acquaintances throughout those areas, introduced émigré leaders to influential government officials, politicians, newspaper proprietors, and others who might assist their cause.

Not until early 1918 did the situation begin to move decisively in the various separatists' favor. For both sides in the war, 1917 proved long and wearing. In November 1917 a Bolshevik government headed by Vladimir Ilyich Lenin came to power in Russia, a radical Communist regime that proclaimed its opposition to capitalism and imperialism in all countries and appealed to the masses of workers and soldiers to rise up against their rulers and end the war. Lenin published the secret treaties whereby the Allies had promised Russia, Italy, and Romania assorted territorial benefits at the expense of the Central Powers as a reward for their own adherence to the entente. The Bolsheviks trumpeted their support for a liberal peace settlement, without territorial annexations or indemnities, and called on all sides to begin negotiations to this end. In February 1918 Lenin made a separate Russian peace settlement with the Central Powers, albeit one highly disadvantageous to his country and by no means the moderate terms for which he had hoped.

(2351)

The Allies sought both to hearten their own peoples for what they anticipated would be another harsh German assault and to counter the appeal of Bolshevism by announcing liberal war aims of their own that would energize the political left and center and revive their commitment to the war. In January 1918 both British Prime Minister David Lloyd George and U.S. President Woodrow Wilson made major speeches in which they proclaimed their support for a liberal peace settlement. Wilson was most specific, listing his Fourteen Points for which the Allies were fighting. These included open diplomacy, free trade, freedom of the seas, disarmament, the creation of a postwar international organization to maintain peace, and the self-determination of nations—in other words, the right of peoples, though not, it was tacitly understood, those of the Allied colonial empires to choose their own form of government, including whether they should be independent. Several of Wilson's points dealt with the future of portions of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, although, hoping against hope for the elusive separate peace with the Habsburgs, he and Lloyd George still hedged their bets and promised only autonomy, not full independence. Even so, the Fourteen Points speech served as a rallying call for all those who sought the breakup of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Within a few months, the Czechs, Poles, and Serbs all received definite Allied promises of postwar independence or, in the case of the Serbs, a massive enhancement of their existing territory. At the end of the war these promises were largely fulfilled, while Hungary split from Austria, insisting on a separate armistice agreement and peace treaty. Vienna, five years before the imposing capital of a glamorous though ramshackle empire of 51 million, was left with an impoverished rump state of 7 million Austrian inhabitants.

Tomas G. Masaryk, Independent Bohemia, Confidential Memorandum, April 1915

This Memorandum gives the programme for the reorganisation of Bohemia as an independent State. It is the programme of all Bohemian political parties except the Catholic Clericals. All details and minor problems are omitted. The plan of reconstructing the independent Bohemian State in the very heart of Europe naturally leads to the fundamental political problems of the present war. The interdependence of all these problems explains why they are touched upon here, in so far as the Bohemian and Slav questions seem to require it.

These views are of course presented from the Bohemian standpoint; this will, it is hoped, facilitate an understanding of the Bohemian Question.

The Aim of the Present War: Europe Regenerated

British statesmen and politicians have frequently proclaimed as the idea and aim of this war the liberation and freedom of the small states and nations. The same principle has been proclaimed in France. In Russia the Tsar and the Generalissimo publicly spoke of the liberation of their Slav brethren, while in Britain and France the integrity of Belgium was specially emphasised.

In these solemn proclamations of the Allies the Regeneration of Europe was accentuated as an aim of the war. . . .

Bismarck's Policy Towards Austria: Pan-Germanism

As a Continental, overpopulated, Power Germany presses constantly on Austria and uses her. Bismarck's policy towards Austria is the diplomatic and political formulation of the constant pressure of the Prussian North on the Austrian South. Lagarde, the father of modern Pan-Germanism, formulated the German programme: "Colonisation of Austria by Germany."

By colonising Austria Germany aspires to colonise the Balkans and thus to reach Constantinople and Bagdad. . . .

The other nations [of the Austrian Empire], especially the Bohemians and South Slavs, are in everlasting opposition against the two Prussified vassals, the Germans and Magyars [Hungarians]. Austria was unable to unite all nations in a strong federation and to pursue her own aim to work for the growth and development of the single national components. Germany—and that is Bismarck's plan with Austria—uses the seeming Great Power for her own ends. The war of 1914 has uncovered the weakness of the Dual Monarchy. Austria, though she initiated the war by her brutal and dishonest anti-Serbian policy, was not prepared for the war, was beaten by the Russians, lost the greater (2352) part of Galicia, and only the help of Germany and her strategical leading retards the final collapse. Austria is degenerated, she is the Catholic Turkey, she has lost her *raison d'être*. . . .

Bohemia Forced to Abandon Austria-Hungary

The war of 1914 revealed, as did the two wars of 1859 and 1866, that Austria-Hungary is unable to protect and to administer Bohemia and the other nations. Vienna has utterly failed in this war, and failed the more, in view of the recent military preparations, since the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina; indeed, it was boastfully proclaimed that Austria-Hungary alone would defeat the Russians, the Germans directing their main forces against France and her Allies in the West.

Bohemia must now take care of herself.

Bohemia for Russia, Serbia and the Allies: Bohemia's Share in the War

....

Since the beginning of the war last August and its antecedents the Bohemian nation has manifested its sympathy for Russia, Serbia and the Allies.

Bohemia, as the majority of the belligerent nations, was surprised by the sudden, unexpected outbreak of the war; she was therefore not prepared to manifest her opposition to Vienna by a regular revolution; but she manifested her feelings and thoughts strongly enough.

Whereas representatives of the Germans, Magyars and Poles proclaimed their support of the war and their allegiance to the dynasty, the representatives of the Bohemians did not join in these proclamations; the Bohemians did not favour the War Loan, and it is known that Bohemian public opinion is constantly in conflict with the authorities, expressing sympathy with the Allies. It is further known that many Bohemian regiments only went to the front under compulsion, and that they showed their antipathy to the war by frequent demonstrations—reported in the papers—by declining to fight, and by repeated surrenders. There is documentary evidence that the Austrian Generalissimo fears this attitude of the Bohemian troops and civil population as a serious weakening of the Austro-Hungarian army.

Bohemia Claims Her Independence

All the Bohemian colonies abroad, especially those in Russia, England, France, Switzerland and the United States of America, not being under the pressure of Austria, have repeatedly manifested the true feeling of the nation, proclaiming the necessity of restoring the political independence of Bohemia. . . .

To attain independence is the alleged aim of all Bohemia and of all political parties; there are only some few individual adherents of Austria. No politician of any repute is among them.

The Independent Bohemian State: Area and Population

The Bohemian State would be composed of the so-called Bohemian countries, namely of Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia; to these would be added the Slovak districts of North Hungary, from Ungvar through Kaschau along the

ethnographical boundaries down the river Ipoly (Eipel) to the Danube, including Pressburg and the whole Slovak north to the frontier line of Hungary. The Slovaks are Bohemians, in spite of their using their dialect as their literary language. The Slovaks strive also for independence and accept the programme of union with Bohemia.

The Bohemian State would have a population of over 12 millions. The extent of the new state would be about 50,000 English square miles (Belgium has 11,373).

Possible Objections to the Creation of an Independent Bohemia: Refutation of These Objections

Against the reconstruction of an independent Bohemia some objections will be made, perhaps not only by its adversaries. . . .

2. Very often the saying is repeated, that a small State is impossible, small nations cannot protect and support themselves. . . .

The necessary protection against hostile neighbours free Bohemia can get from alliances with equally threatened neighbours or with friendly neighbours. Bohemia will be contiguous with Poland and Russia, and perhaps with Serbia.

3. Economically and financially Bohemia is acknowledged to be the “pearl of Austria”—she will be as rich as she is now; she will be richer, because she (2353) will not have to support the economically “passive” provinces of Austria.

Be it noted that the part of Austria which really pays its way consists of Bohemia (with Moravia, Silesia), Lower Austria with Vienna, North Styria, part of West Galicia (this latter only in recent years).

Bohemia, of course, would take a part of the Austrian public debt, and as the war will augment this debt very greatly, Independent Bohemia would have to begin her own administration with a considerable burden: the leading political men of Bohemia are aware of this serious task, and of the necessity for a solid, thoroughly balanced financial administration. . . .

Bohemia Not the Only Nation to Be Freed

The difficulties of reconstructing Independent Bohemia will be smaller if we take the problem in its connection with the other difficulties, i.e. with the

construction and reconstruction of Poland and Serbo-Croatia, and of course with the liberation of the French and Danes in Germany, with the solution of the Balkan and Turkish question, and with all questions agitating the world in this war. The attempt to solve these questions is the very aim of regenerating Europe. All these questions together form the European problem.

Free Bohemia and Serbo-Croatia, as Neighbouring Countries

The maximum of Bohemian and Serbo-Croatian wishes would be the connection of Bohemia and Serbo-Croatia.

This can be effected by giving the strip of land at the Hungarian frontier in the west either to Serbia or the half of it (north) to Bohemia, the other (south) to Serbia. . . .

The Serbo-Bohemian corridor would facilitate the economic interchange of both countries—industrial Bohemia and agricultural Serbo-Croatia—and it would lead from Bohemia to the Serbo-Croatian ports. The corridor would, of course, have a great military significance.

It must be added that many Serbo-Croatian politicians accept this plan of a corridor, just as the Bohemian politicians.

The Slavic Barrier against Germany's March to Constantinople-Bagdad

By forming this Serbo-Bohemian corridor the Allies would prevent Germany from colonising the Balkans and Asia Minor, and they would prevent the Magyars from being the obedient advanced guard of Berlin.

This Slavic Barrier Coincident with the Interests of the Allies in Asia

England as well as France once protected Turkey; that was unconsciously an anti-German policy, though it was directed against Russia, who protected the Balkan Slavs and nations. Now England and France have accepted the policy of Russia, while Germany has taken up the abandoned policy of the two Allies.

By protecting the Balkan Slavs and nations the Allies attain as much, and even more, than they attained by protecting Turkey, and they serve the cause of liberty and civilisation.

Logically the expulsion of Germany from Asia involves taking East Africa from her also. That is the direct consequence of the fall of Kiau-chau. . . .

Bohemia and the Balkans: England, Russia and Germany

Bohemia must wish that the Serbo-Croatian nation should be united and that Serbia should come to a satisfactory agreement with Bulgaria.

The Bohemian politicians hope that the final reconstruction of the Balkans will be solved in accordance with Russia and her Allies. For Bohemia and the Balkan Slavs the friendship and help of Russia is essential.

The Bohemian politicians think that Constantinople, and therefore the Straits, can only belong to Russia. . . .

Constantinople and the Straits mean a heavy administrative and financial burden, which only a Great Power will be able to support; Greece, Bulgaria, even in joining their efforts, would not be able to stand the task. It is to be hoped that both these nations will acknowledge this fact and accept its bearing on the final distribution of Asia Minor.

The Bohemian politicians hope and wish that Turkey will be wiped off the map. England is a greater Mohammedan power than Turkey, Russia nearly so: their agreement guarantees the future solution of the religious and political problems of the Mohammedan world. The Slavs are interested in this solution, for there are a good many Serbian and Bulgarian Mohammedans.

2353

2354

The Bohemian politicians set great value on the agreement of Russia and England, as they must fear that Bismarck's old policy of conciliating Russia will be revived by the war. . . .

Independent Bohemia: Constitution and Government

Bohemia is projected as a monarchical State; a Bohemian Republic is only advocated by a few Radical politicians.

The dynasty could be established in one of two ways. Either the Allies could give one of their princes, or there could be a personal union between Serbia and Bohemia, if the Serbo-Bohemian corridor could be formed. . . .

The Bohemian people, that must be emphasised once more, are thoroughly Russophile. A Russian dynasty, in whatever form, would be most popular. At any rate, the Bohemian politicians wish the establishment of the kingdom of Bohemia in full accordance with Russia. Russia's wishes and plans will be of determining influence. . . .

Bohemia will, of course, be constitutional and democratic—as befits the nation of Hus, Chelcicky and Comenius, the nation which was the first to break the mediaeval theocracy, and which by its reformation and fight for spiritual liberty prepared the modern development of Europe. It is this great service Bohemia has rendered to Europe and to mankind which gives her the right to claim her independence, and to have her seat and vote in the areopagus of free nations. The regeneration of Europe will be attained not only by foreign policy, it must be chiefly attained by the active furtherance of liberty and progress in the inner life of the European nations. For this task the Allies can fully rely on the Bohemian nation.

A “Sine Qua Non”

The presupposition of the Bohemian programme is the restriction of Germany and her defeat in this war. This defeat must be twofold. First, it is the direct victory of the Allies over Germany; second, the lasting defeat of Germany will be the defeat of Austria-Hungary and the dismemberment of this artificial State. Every weakening of Austria is a weakening of Germany; Bismarck's plan of squeezing the Austrian lemon will be at an end.

To-day Germany disposes of the 50 millions of Austria's population; but after the non-German and non-Magyar nations have been freed, only 10 millions of these will be left—always assuming that German Austria remained on good terms with Germany, or even became incorporated.

Liberated Bohemia certainly will act in accordance with the Entente, and will always be a loyal ally to them; now Bohemia wishes and hopes that her Russian brethren will soon succeed in occupying the Bohemian and Slovak districts. This would be the best solution not merely of the Bohemian, but also of the Austrian, German, and other questions at issue.

Source

R. W. Seton-Watson, *Masaryk in England* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press and Macmillan, 1943), 116–134. Reprinted with the permission of Cambridge University Press.

Tomas Garrigue Masaryk (1850–1937)

Tomas Masaryk, of mixed Czech and Slovak origin, studied at the universities of Vienna and Leipzig before becoming an intellectually brilliant professor of history, religion, and philosophy at the University of Prague. In the early 1890s he represented the radical Young Czech Party in the Austrian and Czech assemblies, but in 1907 he helped to found the more moderate Realist Party. Both, however, shared the objective of creating an independent Czech state. As a parliamentary deputy, Masaryk opposed the Austro-Hungarian alliance with Germany and also the 1908 annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. These views, together with his sense of Slavic identification with both Russia and Serbia, made him suspect to the Austro-Hungarian authorities.

Once World War I began, Masaryk favored the Allied cause, in part because he believed an Allied victory would promote Czech independence, though his Slavophile feelings toward Russia also influenced him. With various sympathizers in Prague he immediately formed an underground network known as the Maffia to work for this cause, and in October 1914 he met covertly in Holland with an old acquaintance, the well-connected British historian of Central Europe R. W. Seton-Watson, to plead the Czech cause. Official suspicion soon fell on Masaryk, who fled Prague in December (2355) 1914, first to Switzerland and then to London in March 1915. For the remainder of the war he devoted himself to a crusade for an independent Czech state. In late 1917 he negotiated with the new Bolshevik government of Russia the release of Czech prisoners of war, mostly deserters from the Austro-Hungarian forces, and their formation into a Czech Legion, a unit that fought first on the Eastern Front and from mid-1918 became embroiled in the developing Russian Civil War. In March 1918 Masaryk traveled to the United States, where he raised substantial financial backing from the country's Czech and Slovak immigrant population. He also met President Woodrow Wilson and Secretary of State Robert Lansing, both of whom found him impressive. In May 1918 Lansing issued a declaration supporting Czech independence, which the Allied governments endorsed the following month. On 14 November 1918 Masaryk was elected president of the new state of Czechoslovakia, whose precise boundaries he helped to negotiate at the subsequent Paris Peace Conference. He served three terms as president before retiring in 1935.

About The Document

This memorandum, a confidential document written by Masaryk within two weeks of his arrival in England, was effectively a piece of propaganda designed to influence the British government to support the cause of Czech

independence. It was not published until 1943, when Seton-Watson included it in a memoir of Masaryk's time in England. One reason Seton-Watson wrote this book was not just to memorialize his dead friend, whom according to his sons he considered "one of the few great man of his age, and certainly the greatest man whom he had personally known," but to suggest to its readers that when World War II ended Czechoslovakia should be reunited and independent, not dominated by the Soviet Union, which was already expected to control most of postwar Eastern and Central Europe. The British Foreign Office, unwilling at this stage to commit itself to specific postwar political and territorial arrangements, circumspectly insisted that Seton-Watson not publish this memoir under his own name.

Masaryk arrived in London on 18 April 1915, and two days later Seton-Watson took him to meet George R. Clerk, head of the War Department of the British Foreign Office and that organization's leading expert on Near Eastern affairs. On this occasion Clerk asked Masaryk to prepare for him a short memorandum summarizing his views on Czechoslovakia that he could hand to his superiors. On 3 May 1915 Masaryk submitted his paper titled "Independent Bohemia" to Clerk. Essentially, it was a brief arguing the case for Czech independence. Masaryk contended that Austria-Hungary was dominated by and dependent upon Wilhelmine Germany, which had lost it the trust of its minorities, especially the Czechs and Serbs, the bulk of whom opposed their country's alliance with Germany in the war. He anticipated that when the war ended, the map of Europe would be redrawn, with Poland and "Bohemia" reconstituted, Serbia expanded, and Germany deprived of the gains won from France and Denmark in the nineteenth century. The great majority of both Czechs and Slovaks, he claimed, desired an independent Czechoslovakia, a particularly problematic allegation where the Slovaks were concerned. By reducing the Austro-Hungarian Empire to a rump state of perhaps 10 million people, the secession of the minorities from Habsburg rule would effectively weaken Germany, depriving it of what had been its most significant ally. Masaryk also supported the destruction of the Ottoman Empire.

Masaryk then set out to prove that an independent Czech state would be economically and politically viable and desirable, especially if it allied itself as he expected with postwar Poland, Russia, and Serbia. Appealing to Allied self-interest, Masaryk argued that such an arrangement would block German expansion into "the Balkans and Asia Minor" and preclude Germany from regaining its East African colonies. A strong Slavophile who felt a sense of kinship with Russia, Masaryk sought to win that country's support by promising that a Czech state would consent to the Russian acquisition of

Constantinople and the Dardanelles and the disappearance of the Ottoman Empire and would be pro-Russian in outlook. At that time, when Russian forces were making inroads against their Habsburg enemies, he also expected that they might well occupy the Czech and Slovak provinces of Austria-Hungary, which naturally enough impelled him to conciliate Russia. Writing at a time when democracy was not the watchword it became toward the end of the war, Masaryk claimed that very few Czechs or Slovaks wanted a republic and that most would be happy to (2356) accept an Allied princeling as their monarch, possibly the Serb king or, better still, “a Russian dynasty.” The country would, he promised, be economically self-supporting, financially responsible, and willing to assume a fair share of the Habsburg Empire’s existing debts. It would, “of course, be constitutional and democratic,” a progressive nation that would assist with postwar European regeneration, and would always be “a loyal ally” to the Entente powers.

Masaryk’s memorandum was carefully tailored to win support from policymakers within the British and other Allied governments by appealing to both their national self-interest and their stated higher ideals. Some of his territorial claims, especially that for a Hungarian corridor, defied the principle of national self-determination and could only be justified on grounds of economic and strategic expediency. His professions of support for monarchical rule may well have been the product of circumstances rather than representing his true convictions; it is worth noting that the Czechoslovak state established at Paris in 1919 was a republic. Upon receiving Masaryk’s memorandum, Clerk and other leading figures in the Foreign Office read it carefully, with Clerk commenting that: “The Allies have a long way to go before this is practical, but the paper should be borne in mind.”

Masaryk’s memorandum represented only the beginning of a sustained propaganda campaign he launched on behalf of Czech independence, efforts that went hand in hand with a movement for the secession of all “South Slavs” from the Austrian Empire and their amalgamation into a greater Serbian state. In October 1916 Seton-Watson launched a new weekly magazine, *The New Europe*, financed in part from his own personal funds but also by large subsidies it received from Masaryk. Until it ceased publication in October 1920, the journal persistently and pertinaciously made the public case for the European minorities of the Austro-Hungarian, German, and Ottoman Empires, publishing articles by Masaryk, his colleague Edvard Beneš, and numerous other leaders of the European independence movements together with generally sympathetic pieces by Seton-Watson and other observers on the European situation. Allied officials read it with care, and it also generated public support

for the position of the Czechs and other minorities. By the time the journal ceased publication, the map of Europe had been redrawn and Czechoslovakia was an independent state as Masaryk had hoped.

Further Reading

Cornwall, Mark. *The Undermining of Austria-Hungary: The Battle for Hearts and Minds*. New York: St. Martin's, 2000.

Judson, Pieter M. *Exclusive Revolutionaries: Liberal Politics, Social Experience, and National Identity in the Austrian Empire, 1848–1914*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996.

Masaryk, T. G. *The Making of a State: Memories and Observations, 1914–1918*. New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1927.

Rees, H. Louis. *The Czechs during World War I: The Path to Independence*. Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1992.

Roshwald, Aviel. *Ethnic Nationalism and the Fall of Empires: Central Europe, the Middle East and Russia, 1914–1923*. New York: Routledge, 2000.

Seton-Watson, Hugh, and Christopher Seton-Watson. *The Making of a New Europe: R. W. Seton-Watson and the Last Years of Austria-Hungary*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1981.

Seton-Watson, R. W. *Masaryk in England*. New York: Macmillan, 1943.

Sked, Alan. *The Decline and Fall of the Hapsburg Empire, 1815–1918*. 2nd ed. London: Longman, 2001.

Skilling, H. Gordon. *T. G. Masaryk: Against the Current, 1882–1914*. London: Macmillan, 1994.

Winters, Stanley B., Robert B. Pynsent, and Harry Hanak, eds. *T. G. Masaryk (1850–1937)*. 3 vols. New York: St. Martin's, 1990.

Zeman, Zbynek. *The Masaryks: The Making of Czechoslovakia*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1976.

MLA

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "38. Nationalist Forces Threaten the Austro-Hungarian Empire." *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*, ABC-CLIO, 2005, pp. . *ABC-CLIO eBook Collection*, legacy.abc-clio.com/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2239.

Chicago Manual of Style

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "38. Nationalist Forces Threaten the Austro-Hungarian Empire." In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005. <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2239>.

APA

Roberts, P. M., S. C. Tucker (2005). 38. Nationalist Forces Threaten the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia* (pp.). Retrieved from <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2239>

Essay 39. The Middle East during World War I: Britain Encourages Anti-Ottoman Muslim Independence Movements and Zionism

Allied Ambitions toward the Ottoman Empire and the Arab Revolt

Each side in World War I sought to destabilize the imperial position and possessions of its opponents. Germany hoped to provoke rebellion against the British in (2357) Egypt and India and to encourage anti-French and anti-British sentiment in its enemies' assorted African and Asian colonies. British and Japanese forces quickly moved against Germany's relatively few colonial holdings in China, the Pacific, and Africa. The most significant Allied and French efforts to destabilize the dominions of the Central Powers, however, were attempts to destroy the increasingly fragile ties that bound together two neighboring multinational, multireligious, and multiethnic states, the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Ottoman Empire. In each case, the origins of these ramshackle conglomerates dated back many centuries, and by the early nineteenth century nationalist and separatist forces had grown increasingly strong in many of their constituent provinces and regions. During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, both Austria-Hungary and Ottoman Turkey gradually lost control of and sovereignty over substantial domains, many of which seceded to become part of the assorted new and highly nationalist successor states, including Belgium, Greece, Italy, Romania, Serbia, and Albania, that emerged during this period. Other areas of the Ottoman Empire, notably Egypt and North Africa, fell prey to British and French colonial ambitions, while Russia also cherished expansionist designs on neighboring Turkish territories.

Once Turkey joined Germany and Austria-Hungary in World War I, Britain, France, and Russia all began to hone their own plans to destabilize the remaining Ottoman Empire and, if possible, enhance their own position there, especially in the oil-rich lands of Syria, Mesopotamia (Iraq), Palestine, and the Persian Gulf, where Britain already had important oil interests in neighboring Persia (Iran). The tsarist government soon extracted a promise from Britain and France that, when the war ended, Russia would receive the Turkish capital of Constantinople, the former Byzantium, and the surrounding region, including the strategically important Dardanelles Straits, which commanded access from the Russian-dominated Black Sea to the Mediterranean. Russian foreign policy had long sought to acquire these territories. In 1916 Britain and France also

reached agreement as to how they would divide Ottoman territories among themselves. France would gain control of Lebanon and Silesia and indirect power over Syria, while Britain was to control Iraq from Baghdad to the Persian Gulf directly and exercise indirect rule over the region east of Palestine, as far as the Persian border to the north of Baghdad. Palestine would be under international rule, an arrangement later amended at the Paris Peace Conference to give Britain control of that territory too, along with the oil-producing area of Mosul in Iraq, originally promised to France. In return for recognizing the Sykes-Picot Agreement, Russia was promised Turkish Armenia, and Italy expected to take western and southern Anatolia from Turkey.

Britain also waged major military offensives against the Ottoman Empire, using India and Egypt as bases. In November 1914 Britain launched a military campaign in Mesopotamia that met with initial success but experienced humiliating disaster in April 1916, when 10,000 British troops confined to the city of Kut-al-Amara were forced to surrender to Ottoman forces. This defeat necessitated a British reassessment of the Mesopotamian situation. Railway, port, and other communications and logistical facilities were improved, and a larger and better-equipped force under Lieutenant General Sir Frederick S. Maude took up the Mesopotamian campaign with a fighting force of 166,000 troops and another force of equal strength to hold the country and provide support. In March 1917 Maude's troops took the Iraqi capital of Baghdad, and over the next eighteen months British forces gradually extended their control over the country, though the campaign did not end until October 1918, when Turkey was forced to seek an armistice.

In early 1915 Turkish troops based in Palestine mounted an ultimately unsuccessful assault on British-controlled Egypt and the Suez Canal. In mid-1916 British troops in turn attacked Palestine, where reinforcements of German officers and men had come to Turkey's assistance. Two attempts to take the strong-point of Gaza failed in early 1917, and in June of that year General Edmund Allenby took command of Britain's Palestine armies, which included Indian and Australian units and three squadrons of aircraft. On 9 December 1917 Allenby captured the strategically and symbolically significant city of Jerusalem, routing Turkish-German forces, after which he consolidated his position in Palestine. Eventually, in September 1918, he mounted a successful lightning assault on Trans-Jordan, which made extensive and innovative use of heavy air cover and shattered the remaining Turkish forces in the region.

(2358)

Britain also sought to encourage increasingly assertive separatist Muslim Arab forces in the Middle East, who seized upon the excuse that the secularist Turkish government had allied itself with Christian Germany to justify their withdrawal of allegiance. Husayn ibn 'Alī, the high priest or sharif of the Islamic territory of the Hejaz, which contains the holy cities of Medina and Mecca, moved gingerly toward seeking full independence. Before the war began, Arabs had already sought greater political influence within the modernizing new Turkish state, and after a period of popular unrest and general strikes they had been promised political representation within the Ottoman Empire's institutions and the use of Arabic in schools and public affairs. From the onset of war British officials sought to encourage Husayn to mount an open rebellion against Ottoman rule, but he, his sons, and top Arab advisors initially feared that Britain and other Allied Powers would seek to replace Ottoman domination with their own. In October 1915 Sir Henry McMahon, British high commissioner in Egypt, sent Husayn a letter promising Arab independence if such a revolt succeeded and enumerating those territories where Husayn and his family would rule supreme. The French had not at this stage endorsed these promises to the Arabs. After several further months of hesitation on Husayn's part, in June 1916 the Arab Revolt began, when Husayn proclaimed himself king of the Hejaz and the rightful spiritual leader, or caliph, of Islam, a position supposedly reserved for the Ottoman sultan of Turkey. He argued that the policies of the Young Turks, who now dominated the Ottoman government, contravened fundamental Islamic principles. His three sons, 'Alī ibn Husayn, Abdullah, and Faisal, each headed armies that fought against Turkish rule, and the Turks committed more troops to fighting the Arabs than they did to opposing the British forces in the region. Emir Faisal became the top military leader of the Arab Revolt, playing a major role in the Palestine campaign and entering Damascus at the head of his army in October 1918.

When Turkey signed an armistice with the Allies at the end of October 1918, much still remained unclear as to the future of the Middle East. During 1918 Sharif Husayn had repeatedly expressed concern that British agreements with the French and with Arab rulers in the Gulf states of Kuwait, Yemen, and Saudi Arabia ran counter to the pledges he had received from McMahon. Britain and France both sought to ignore the Arab rulers and establish their own permanent spheres of influence in the region, another development that alarmed Husayn, who had expected his family to preside over a united Arab state. In addition, in November 1917 British Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour promised influential British Zionist Jews, including Chaim Weizmann and Lord Rothschild, "the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people," yet another vague and ill-defined commitment that was inimical to the Arabs.

The peace conference that met at Paris in January 1919 took up the question of the future governance of the Middle East. Although the conference refused to transfer territories of the defeated powers to the victorious Allies with formal colonial status, in accordance with the Sykes-Picot Agreement Britain obtained League of Nations mandates over Iraq, Trans-Jordan, and Mesopotamia, and France received mandates over Syria and Lebanon. Arab rebellions against British and French rule broke out in Iraq and Syria in 1920. The rebel Syrian National Congress proclaimed Emir Faisal king of Syria in 1920, but French troops expelled him from Syria. The British, however, anxious to withdraw from troubled Iraq and establish a moderately friendly regime there, made him king of Iraq (Mesopotamia) the following year, while his brother Abdullah became king of Trans-Jordan. For almost thirty more years the British maintained a mandate in Palestine, as relations between Jewish settlers and indigenous Arabs became increasingly troubled. Many of the present-day difficulties in the region had their roots in the variety of often conflicting or overlapping commitments made by the Great Powers during World War I.

Sir Henry McMahon, British High Commissioner in Cairo, to Husayn ibn ‘Āli, Sharif of Mecca, 24 October 1915

I have received your letter of the 29th Shawal, 1333, with much pleasure and your expression of friendliness and sincerity have given me the greatest satisfaction.

I regret that you should have received from my last letter the impression that I regarded the question of limits and boundaries with coldness and hesitation; (2359) such was not the case, but it appeared to me that the time had not yet come when that question could be discussed in a conclusive manner.

I have realised, however, from your last letter that you regard this question as one of vital and urgent importance. I have, therefore, lost no time in informing the Government of Great Britain of the contents of your letter, and it is with great pleasure that I communicate to you on their behalf the following statement, which I am confident you will receive with satisfaction.—

The two districts of Mersina and Alexandretta and portions of Syria lying to the west of the districts of Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo cannot be said to be purely Arab, and should be excluded from the limits demanded.

With the above modification, and without prejudice to our existing treaties with Arab chiefs, we accept those limits.

As for those regions lying within those frontiers wherein Great Britain is free to act without detriment to the interests of her ally, France, I am empowered in the name of the Government of Great Britain to give the following assurances and make the following assurances and make the following reply to your letter:

- (1) Subject to the above modifications, Great Britain is prepared to recognise and support the independence of the Arabs in all the regions within the limits demanded by the Sherif of Mecca.
- (2) Great Britain will guarantee the Holy Places against all external aggression and will recognise their inviolability.
- (3) When the situation admits, Great Britain will give to the Arabs her advice and will assist them to establish what may appear to be the most suitable forms of government in those various territories.
- (4) On the other hand, it is understood that the Arabs have decided to seek the advice and guidance of Great Britain only, and that such European advisers and officials as may be required for the formation of a sound form of administration will be British.
- (5) With regard to the vilayets of Bagdad and Basra, the Arabs will recognise that the established position and interests of Great Britain necessitate special administrative arrangements in order to secure these territories from foreign aggression to promote the welfare of the local populations and to safeguard our mutual economic interests.

I am convinced that this declaration will assure you beyond all possible doubt of the sympathy of Great Britain towards the aspirations of her friends the Arabs and will result in a firm and lasting alliance, the immediate results of which will be the expulsion of the Turks from the Arab countries and the freeing of the Arab peoples from the Turkish yoke, which for so many years has pressed heavily upon them.

I have confined myself in this letter to the more vital and important questions, and if there are any other matters dealt with in your letters which I have omitted to mention, we may discuss them at some convenient date in the future.

It was with very great relief and satisfaction that I heard of the safe arrival of the Holy Carpet and the accompanying offerings which, thanks to the clearness of your directions and the excellence of your arrangements, were landed without trouble or mishap in spite of the dangers and difficulties occasioned by

the present sad war. May God soon bring a lasting peace and freedom of all peoples.

I am sending this letter by the hand of your trusted and excellent messenger, Sheikh Mohammed ibn Arif ibn Uraifan, and he will inform you of the various matters of interest, but of less vital importance, which I have not mentioned in this letter.

Source

Walter Laquer, ed., *The Israel-Arab Reader: A Documentary History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, 6th revised ed. (New York: Penguin, 2001), 11–13.

King Husayn I, Sharif of the Hejaz, Proclamation of 27 June 1916

Proclamation of the Sherif of Mecca

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate

This is our general circular to all our Brother Moslems

“O Lord, do thou judge between us and our nation with truth; for Thou art the best Judge”

It is well known that of all the Moslem Rulers and Emirs, the Emirs of Mecca, the Favored City, were the first to recognize the Turkish Government. This they (2360) did in order to unite Moslem opinion and firmly establish their community, knowing that the great Ottoman Sultans (may the dust of their tombs be blessed and may Paradise be their abode) were acting in accordance with the Book of God and the Sunna of his Prophet (prayers be unto him) and were zealous to enforce the ordinances of both these authorities. With this noble end in view the Emirs before mentioned observe those ordinances unceasingly. I myself, protecting the honor of the State, caused Arabs to rise against their fellow Arabs in the year 1327 [1909 of the Christian era] in order to raise the siege of Abha, and the following year a similar movement was carried out under the leadership of one of my sons, as is well known. The Emirs continued to support the Ottoman State until the Society of Union and Progress appeared in the State, and proceeded to take over the administration thereof and all its affairs.

The result of this new administration was that the State suffered a loss of territory which quite destroyed its prestige, as the whole world knows, was

plunged into the horrors of war and brought to its present perilous position, as is patent to all. This was all done for certain well-known ends, which our feelings forbid to dilate upon. They caused Moslem hearts to ache with grief for the Empire of Islam, for the destruction of the remaining inhabitants of her provinces—Moslem as well as non-Moslem—some of them hanged or otherwise done to death, others driven into exile. Add to this the losses they have sustained through the war in their persons and property, the latter especially in the Holy Land as is briefly demonstrated by the fact that in that quarter the general stress compelled even the middle classes to sell the doors of their houses, their cupboards and the wood from their ceilings, after selling all their belongings to keep life in their bodies. All this evidently did not fulfill the designs of the Society of Union and Progress.

They proceeded next to sever the essential bond between the Ottoman Sultanate and the whole Moslem community, to wit, adherence to the Koran and to the Sunna. One of the Constantinople newspapers, called *Al-Ijtihad*, actually published an article maligning (God forgive us) the life of the Prophet (on whom be the prayer and peace of God), and this under the eye of the Grand Vizier of the Ottoman Empire and its Sheikh of Islam, and all the Ulema, ministers and nobles. It adds to this impiety by denying the word of God, “The male shall receive two portions,” and decides that they [both sexes] shall share equally under the law of inheritance. Then it proceeds to the crowning atrocity of destroying one of the five vital precepts of Islam, the Fast of Ramadan, ordering that the troops stationed at Medina, Mecca or Damascus may break the fast in the same way as troops fighting on the Russian frontier, thereby falsifying the clear Koranic injunction, “Those of you who are sick or on a journey.” It has put forth other innovations touching the fundamental laws of Islam (of which the penalties for infringement are well known) after destroying the Sultan’s power, robbing him even of the right to choose the chief of his Imperial Cabinet or the private minister of his august person, and breaking the constitution of the Caliphate of which Moslems demand the observance.

In spite of all, we have accepted these innovations in order to give no cause for dissension and schism. But at last the veil was removed and it became apparent that the Empire was in the hands of Enver Pasha, Djemal Pasha and Talaat Bey, who were administering it just as they liked and treating it according to their own sweet will. The most striking proof of this is the notice lately sent to the Kadi of the Tribunal at Mecca, to the effect that he must deliver judgment solely on evidence written down in his presence in court and must not consider any evidence written down by Moslems among themselves, thus ignoring the verse in the Surat-al-Baqara. Another proof is that they caused to be hanged at

one time 21 eminent and cultured Moslems and Arabs of distinction, in addition to those they had previously put to death—the Emir Omar el-Jazairi, the Emir Arif esh-Shihabi, Shefik Bey el-Oayyard, Shukri Bey el-Asalia, Abd el-Wahab, Taufik Bey el-Baset, Abd el-Hamid el-Zahrawi, Abd el-Ghani el-Arisi, and their companions, who are well-known men. Cruel-hearted men could not easily bring themselves to destroy so many lives at one blow, even if they were as beasts of the field. We might hear their excuse and grant them pardon for killing those worthy men, but how can we excuse them for banishing under such pitiful and heart-breaking circumstances the innocent families of their victims—infants, delicate women and aged men—and inflicting on them other forms of suffering in addition to the agonies they had (2361) already endured in the death of those who were the support of their homes?

God says, “No burdened soul shall bear the burden of another.” Even if we could let all this pass, how is it possible we can forgive them confiscating property and money of those people after bereaving them of their dear ones? Try to suppose we closed our eyes to this, also feeling that they might have some excuse on their side; could we ever forgive them desecrating the grave of that pious, zealous and godly man the Sherif Abd el-Kadir el-Hasani? The above is a brief account of their doings, and we leave humanity at large and Moslems in particular to give their verdict.

We have sufficient proof of how they regard the religion and the Arab people in the fact that they shelled the Ancient House, the Temple of the Divine Unity, of which it is said in the word of God, “Purify my House for those that pass round it,” the Kibla of Mohammedans, the Kaaba of believers in the Unity, firing two shells at it from their big guns when the country rose to demand its independence. One fell about a yard and a half above the Black Stone and the other three yards from it. The covering of the Kaaba was set in a blaze. Thousands of Moslems rushed up with shouts of alarm and despair to extinguish the flames. To reach the fire they were compelled to open the door of the building and climb on to the roof. The enemy fired a third shell at the Makam Ibrahim in addition to the projectiles and bullets aimed at the rest of the building. Every day three or four people in the building itself were killed, and at last it became difficult for the Moslems to approach the Kaaba at all. We leave the whole Mohammedan world from East to West to pass judgment on this contempt and profanation of the Sacred House. But we are determined not to leave our religious and national rights as a plaything in the hands of the Union and Progress Party.

God (blessed and exalted be He) has vouchsafed the land an opportunity to rise in revolt, has enabled her by His power and might to seize her independence and crown her efforts with prosperity and victory, even after she was crushed by the maladministration of the Turkish civil and military officials. She stands quite apart and distinct from countries that still groan under the yoke of the Union and Progress Government. She is independent in the fullest sense of the word, freed from the rule of strangers and purged of every foreign influence. Her principles are to defend the faith of Islam, to elevate the Moslem people, to found their conduct on Holy Law, to build up the code of justice on the same foundation in harmony with the principles of religion, to practice its ceremonies in accordance with modern progress, and make a genuine revolution by sparing no pains in spreading education among all classes according to their station and their needs.

This is the policy we have undertaken in order to fulfill our religious duty, trusting that all our brother Moslems in the East and West will pursue the same in fulfillment of their duty to us, and so strengthen the bands of the Islamic brotherhood.

We raise our hands humbly to the Lord of Lords for the sake of the Prophet of the All-Bountiful King that we may be granted success and guidance in whatsoever is for the good of Islam and the Moslems. We rely upon Almighty God, who is our Sufficiency and the best Defender.

The Sherif and Emir of Mecca, EL HUSSEIN IBN ALI

Source

Charles F. Horne and Warren F. Austin, eds., *Great Events of the Great War*, 7 vols. (Washington, DC: National Alumni, 1920), 4:234–238.

Lieutenant-General Sir Frederick Stanley Maude, The Proclamation of Bagdad, 19 March 1917

To the People of Baghdad Vilayet:

In the name of my King, and in the name of the peoples over whom he rules, I address you as follows:—

Our military operations have as their object the defeat of the enemy, and the driving of him from these territories. In order to complete this task, I am charged with the absolute and supreme control of all regions in which British

troops operate; but our armies do not come into your cities and lands as conquerors or enemies, but as liberators.

Since the days of Halaka your city and your lands have been subject to the tyranny of strangers, your palaces have fallen into ruins, your gardens have sunk in desolation, and your forefathers and yourselves have groaned in bondage. Your sons have been carried off to (2362) wars not of your seeking, your wealth has been stripped from you by unjust men and squandered in distant places.

Since the days of Midhat, the Turks have talked of reforms, yet do not the ruins and wastes of to-day testify to the vanity of those promises?

It is the wish not only of my King and his peoples, but it is also the wish of the great nations with whom he is in alliance, that you should prosper even as in the past, when your lands were fertile, when your ancestors gave to the world literature, science, and art, and when Baghdad was one of the wonders of the world.

Between your people and the dominions of my King there has been a close bond of interest. For 200 years have the merchants of Baghdad and Great Britain traded together in mutual profit and friendship. On the other hand, the Germans and Turks, who have despoiled you and yours, have for twenty years made Baghdad a center of power from which to assail the power of the British and the Allies of the British in Persia and Arabia. Therefore the British Government cannot remain indifferent as to what takes place in your country now or in the future, for in duty to the interests of the British people and their Allies, the British Government cannot risk that being done in Baghdad again which has been done by the Turks and Germans during the war.

But you people of Baghdad, whose commercial prosperity and whose safety from oppression and invasion must ever be a matter of the closest concern to the British Government, are not to understand that it is the wish of British Government to impose upon you alien institutions. It is the hope of the British Government that the aspirations of your philosophers and writers shall be realised and that once again the people of Baghdad shall flourish, enjoying their wealth and substance under institutions which are in consonance with their sacred laws and racial ideals. In Hedjaz the Arabs have expelled the Turks and Germans who oppressed them and proclaimed the Sherif Hussein as their King, and his Lordship rules in independence and freedom, and is the ally of the nations who are fighting against the power of Turkey and Germany; so, indeed, are the noble Arabs, the Lords of Koweyt, Nejd, and Asir.

Many noble Arabs have perished in the cause of Arab freedom, at the hands of those alien rulers, the Turks, who oppressed them. It is the determination of the Government of Great Britain and the great Powers allied to Great Britain that these noble Arabs shall not have suffered in vain. It is the hope and desire of the British people and the nations in alliance with them that the Arab race may rise once more to greatness and renown among peoples of the earth, and that it shall bind itself together to this end in unity and concord.

O people of Baghdad remember that for twenty-six generations you have suffered under strange tyrants who have endeavoured to set one Arab house against another in order that they might profit by your dissensions. This policy is abhorrent to Great Britain and her Allies, for there can be neither peace nor prosperity where there is enmity and misgovernment. Therefore I am commanded to invite you, through your nobles and elders and representatives, to participate in the management of your civil affairs in collaboration with the political representatives of Great Britain who accompany the British Army, so that you may be united with your kinsmen in North, East, South, and West in realising the aspirations of your race.

Source

Harper's Magazine, <http://www.harpers.org/ProclamationBaghdad.html>; originally published in *Harper's Magazine* 306(1836) (May 2003).

The Balfour Declaration: Arthur Balfour to Lord Rothschild, 2 November 1917

I have much pleasure in conveying to you, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, the following declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations which has been submitted to, and approved by, the Cabinet.

"His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country."

I should be grateful if you would bring this declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist Federation.

Source

The World War I Document Archive,
<http://www.lib.byu.edu/~rdh/wwi/1917/balfour.html>.

(2363)

About The Documents

Each document included here is a significant official pronouncement of some kind bearing on the situation in the Middle East. McMahon's letter to Sharif Husayn was intended to provide its recipient with assurances of British support and commitments as to the future governance of the territories he hoped to gain that would suffice to persuade him to mount an open rebellion against Arab rule. Although it was not designed to be published immediately, almost certainly Husayn and his family would treat it in the future as a binding British commitment to them. It was therefore carefully drafted, though reservations as to the attitude of France, Britain's ally, and a certain vagueness as to "the limits demanded by the Sherif of Mecca" meant that British officials might well be able to disavow any portions of the agreement that had become inconvenient to them. McMahon also states that his government expected the Arabs to recognize "the established position and interests of Great Britain" in the Iraqi cities of Baghdad and Basra and that these would "necessitate special administrative arrangements," an early and ominous indication that Britain had every intention of retaining control of those regions in particular, a policy that helped to provoke a postwar anti-British Iraqi uprising.

Husayn's proclamation of rebellion against Ottoman rule was a public statement, intended to inspire as many Arabs as possible to support and follow him. It is worth noting that far from expressing liberal sentiments, Husayn attacked the secular Ottoman government for having abandoned accepted Muslim traditions and principles by introducing equal inheritance rights for men and women, disregarding religious rules on fasting, shelling Muslim holy sites in cities where revolts occurred, and weakening the position of the sultan, who was supposed to serve as not just the political but also the religious head of the Ottoman Empire. Arguing that these developments meant that he himself was now better qualified than the sultan for this position, Husayn therefore sought to replace him in his capacity as Muslim caliph and to become both the religious and political head of a new Arab state.

In March 1917 British forces under Sir Frederick Stanley Maude took Baghdad from the Turks. On entering the city, Maude issued a proclamation declaring the city's liberation and avowing British intentions to implement reforms that would restore Baghdad's prosperity and allow the city and, more broadly, the

country of Iraq to flourish once more, as it had in distant history. Maude carefully insisted that the British government did not “wish . . . to impose upon you alien institutions.” Instead, the people of Baghdad should enjoy “institutions which are in consonance with their sacred laws and racial ideals.” He expressed Britain’s desire to work with the Arab leaders who were fighting the Turks and Germans, to promote Arab unity, and to encourage prominent representative Arabs in Baghdad “to participate in the management of your civil affairs in collaboration” with the British. Given the subsequent history of bitter Iraqi rebellion against British rule, Maude’s words were somewhat ironic. His proclamation nonetheless later became a rallying cry for Arab nationalist sentiment, encapsulating goals that many Arabs claimed to seek to implement.

The Balfour Declaration promising Jews a “national home” in Palestine was issued eight months later. An official pledge by the British government, intended to encourage the influential Zionists who were increasingly prominent among the Jewish communities in all countries engaged in the war to give enthusiastic support to the Allies, it was in part the product of Foreign Secretary Balfour’s romantic view of the Zionist quest to restore the Jewish state that had been destroyed under the Roman Empire almost 1,900 years earlier. A brief document, giving no real specifics, effectively committing the British government to rather little, and supposedly reserving the rights of existing Arab communities in Palestine, it nonetheless became a rallying point for the Zionist cause. Jewish activists quickly expanded their ambitions from simply seeking the right to establish Jewish settlements in Palestine to a quest for an actual Jewish state, an ambition that would be fulfilled in 1948 with the creation of Israel. As the twenty-first century began, however, the grievances separating Israelis and Palestinians still remained unresolved, as did many of the other issues arising from the post–World War I Middle Eastern settlement imposed on the former Ottoman territories in 1919–1921.

Further Reading

Adelson, Roger. *London and the Invention of the Middle East: Money, Power, and War, 1902–1922*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995.

(2364)

Bruce, Anthony. *The Last Crusade: The Palestine Campaign in the First World War*. London: John Murray, 2003.

Fromkin, David. *A Peace to End All Peace: Creating the Modern Middle East, 1914–1922*. New York: Hamilton Holt, 1989.

James, Lawrence. *Golden Warrior: The Life and Legend of Lawrence of Arabia*. New York: Paragon House, 1993.

Karsh, Efraim, and Inari Karsh. *Empires of the Sand: The Struggle for Mastery in the Middle East, 1789–1923*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001.

Kayali, Hasan. *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908–1918*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.

Kent, Marian, ed. *The Great Powers and the End of the Ottoman Empire*. 2nd ed. Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 1996.

Macfie, A. L. *The End of the Ottoman Empire, 1918–1923*. London: Longman, 1998.

Tauber, Eliezer. *The Arab Movements in World War I*. London: Frank Cass, 1993.

———. *The Formation of Modern Syria and Iraq*. Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 1995.

MLA

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "39. The Middle East during World War I." *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*, ABC-CLIO, 2005, pp. . *ABC-CLIO eBook Collection*, legacy.abc-clio.com/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2244.

Chicago Manual of Style

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "39. The Middle East during World War I." In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005. <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2244>.

APA

Roberts, P. M., S. C. Tucker (2005). 39. The Middle East during World War I. In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia* (pp.). Retrieved from

<http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2244>

Essay 40. The Weakening of British Imperial Rule

World War I and Independence Movements within the British Empire

World War I gave new impetus to the efforts of nationalist forces within the British Empire to win independence. This was true both of Ireland, geographically part of the British Isles but an island whose largely Roman Catholic population had for the most part rejected the British embrace, and of more remote territories, notably India and Egypt, where independence activists took new heart from Irish efforts to win complete freedom from British rule during the war and its aftermath.

Anglo-Irish relations had been strained for several centuries, as British and Scotch forces effectively used military methods to conquer Ireland but signally failed to gain the loyalties of the majority of the population. The fact that from the sixteenth century England and Scotland were officially Protestant in religion whereas Ireland remained predominantly Roman Catholic exacerbated Irish resentment of British rule. Throughout much of the nineteenth century, Irish nationalists campaigned for home rule, which would have granted the country partial autonomy covering domestic but not foreign and defense issues, a status that at least represented a halfway house to full independence. In 1914 the British government passed the Irish Home Rule Act, a measure that provoked deep resentment among the six northeastern Irish counties of Ulster, a region that was predominantly Protestant unlike the rest of Ireland. Ulstermen habitually enlisted disproportionately heavily in the British army, and in summer 1914 the government feared, quite possibly with justification, that civil war might be about to erupt in Ireland and that elements of the British military might well mutiny in support of Ulster. Both sides in the potential conflict established volunteer forces and smuggled weapons into Ireland to equip them.

At the outbreak of World War I action on Ireland was temporarily suspended. The Home Rule Act was eventually passed in early 1916, partly to make the potential introduction of military conscription in Ireland more palatable, but its implementation was deferred until the war had ended. John Redmond, leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party, pledged Irish support for the war, and substantial numbers of Irishmen, 95,000 by February 1916, of whom 25,000 were drawn from the Protestant and nonseparatist Ulster Volunteers, had enlisted in British wartime forces. The Ulster regiments suffered particularly heavy losses in the 1916 Somme offensive.

With some German encouragement, radical Irish nationalists hoped that the war would provide an opportunity to win full independence for Ireland, while

British attention was focused on the Western Front and other theaters of war. Sir Roger Casement, an Anglo-Irish former British diplomat and fervent nationalist, went to Berlin in November 1914 seeking support for such an enterprise. German officials were willing to offer financial assistance and munitions but would not, as Casement requested, deploy a sizable contingent of German officers to assist with this undertaking. Casement's efforts to recruit Irish prisoners of war in Germany to the cause also proved disappointing. Knowing that Irish activists planned an uprising for Easter 1916, in part to protest the anticipated imposition of military conscription within Ireland, Casement returned to Ireland by German submarine hoping to dissuade these radical enthusiasts from their projected rebellion, which he feared would end in bloody (2365) failure. British naval vessels had already intercepted ships carrying German weapons to support the uprising. On 21 April 1916 Casement landed in Ireland, but within hours British forces picked up his trail and promptly arrested him for treason.

Although some elements in Sinn Féin, the Irish nationalist party, tried to call off the uprising, three days later, on 24 April 1916, Easter Monday, between 1,000 and 1,500 armed but largely untrained Irish men and women, led by the radical socialists Patrick Pearse and James Connolly, attempted to take over Dublin, the seat of Irish government. The rebels failed to take Dublin Castle, the government's headquarters, but seized the massive General Post Office, from where Pearse announced the establishment of a new provisional government of the Republic of Ireland. British troops quickly moved in and within five days had successfully suppressed the revolt. Large parts of Dublin were left in ruins; British forces and civilians suffered about 500 dead and wounded, with Irish losses of perhaps twice that number. Initially, public support for the revolt was limited, but the harshness of British reprisals soon generated growing sympathy for its participants. Most of the uprising's leaders, including Pearse and Connolly, were captured and quickly executed by British firing squad. About 3,000 more suspected sympathizers were initially arrested, but most were later released. Casement was held for several months, eventually tried for treason in London several months later, and sentenced to death by hanging. When convicted, he took the opportunity to make a rousing courtroom speech in which he challenged the legitimacy of his trial, arguing that the British government, whose sovereignty over both Ireland and himself he declined to recognize, had no right to try him or to expect him to recognize its laws. His speech served as a rallying call to nationalist forces not just in Ireland but elsewhere in the British Empire.

The uprising marked the beginning of sustained Irish efforts to win complete freedom from British rule. Its survivors soon began to organize a new Irish Republican Army, the successor of the rather makeshift group whose members had been the core of the Easter Rising's support, while Sinn Féin boycotted an Irish convention that the British government summoned in 1917 in the hope of negotiating an Irish settlement. Although the population of Ireland, as part of the United Kingdom, was theoretically subject to military conscription, in practice the British government, despite suffering an acute manpower shortage in the final years of the war, never extended the draft to the island, fearing that its introduction would be too provocative and would prove counterproductive. In January 1919 civil war broke out in Ireland as guerrilla forces, led by the activist Michael Collins, sought to undermine British rule. After lengthy and convoluted negotiations and brutal bloodshed on both sides, in December 1921 the British government and Irish representatives reached a settlement under whose terms the twenty-six predominantly Catholic counties of Ireland received somewhat ill-defined Dominion status with full autonomy, while the six largely Protestant counties of Ulster remained part of the United Kingdom. For two more years a bitter internecine civil war raged between those Irish who were prepared to accept these terms and those who would be satisfied with nothing less than the independence and unity of all thirty-two Irish counties. Eventually, the government of the new state of Eire decided to accept the new status quo. In 1937 Eamon De Valera, the first president of the new republic, negotiated a new treaty with Britain whereby Eire cut all its remaining ties with the British Empire.

Irish success in winning independence, however circumscribed, helped to hearten nationalist forces in other parts of the empire. Whereas the white Dominions—Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa—were content to use largely nonconfrontational means to win British acquiescence and gradually expand their areas of autonomy, in India and Egypt indigenous nationalist movements sought a complete end to British rule. In both cases racial differences and discrimination by the colonial overlords enhanced resentment of British supremacy. By 1919 Egyptian nationalists were demanding full sovereignty over their own country, something the British eventually granted in theory but in practice undercut by leaving ultimate control of the country to British military forces and civil servants.

The Indian National Congress, founded in 1885, became the focus of the Indian independence movement, particularly after Mohandas Gandhi became its president in 1920. Approximately 1 million Indian troops, of whom around 100,000 were killed or (2366) wounded, fought in World War I, and India also

contributed £100 million in cash and war supplies to the imperial war effort. Indians such as Gandhi even helped to recruit troops for the war. The rhetoric of national self-determination popularized by Allied leaders in 1917 and 1918, especially by President Woodrow Wilson of the United States, also had an electrifying impact on nationalist movements around the world, as did the demands of the new Communist government of Russia for the wholesale end of all manifestations of colonialism and imperialism. When the war ended, most Indian leaders believed that Indian loyalty deserved some reward and recognition from its rulers, but little was forthcoming. Indian soldiers whose valor the British had praised during the war found that they had reverted to the status of natives and inferiors.

In the face of intense Indian opposition, in spring 1919 the British government hastily passed the Rowlatt Acts, an extension of sweeping wartime emergency control measures passed in 1915. Disaffection was centered in the Punjab province, which had provided more than half the Indian wartime forces. Gandhi, already a leading independence activist, called upon his countrymen to begin a campaign of civil disobedience and defy the Rowlatt Acts. On 10 April disorder broke out in the Sikh city of Amritsar in the Punjab, when British troops fired on demonstrators who were protesting the arrest of local independence leaders. A full-scale massacre of Indian civilians occurred at Jallanwagh Bagh in Amritsar three days later, when in the space of ten minutes 50 armed and strategically positioned soldiers under British command fired 1,650 rounds of ammunition into a crowd of 10,000 unarmed civilian protestors, killing 400 and wounding another 1,200. Two days later, martial law was declared for the entire Punjab. Despite press censorship, the Amritsar massacre helped to energize the Indian nationalist movement into demanding outright independence and the end of British rule in India. The following year Gandhi launched the first of his major nonviolent campaigns of civil disobedience, while younger activists such as Jawaharlal Nehru became dedicated adherents of the Congress Party and worked to undercut the various compromise solutions that, in an effort to avoid granting complete Indian independence, the British tried to implement in the subcontinent during the 1920s and 1930s.

James Connolly, “The Irish Flag,” *Workers’ Republic*, 8 April 1916

The Council of the Irish Citizen Army has resolved after grave and earnest deliberation, to hoist the green flag of Ireland over Liberty Hall, as over a fortress held for Ireland by the arms of Irishmen.

This is a momentous decision in the most serious crisis Ireland has witnessed in our day and generation. It will, we are sure, send a thrill through the hearts of every true Irish man and woman, and send the red blood coursing fiercely along the veins of every lover of the race.

It means that in the midst of and despite the treasons and backslidings of leaders and guides, in the midst of and despite all the weaknesses, corruption and moral cowardice of a section of the people, in the midst of and despite all this there still remains in Ireland a spot where a body of true men and women are ready to hoist, gather round, and defend the flag made sacred by all the sufferings of all the martyrs of the past.

Since this unholy war first started we have seen every symbol of Irish freedom desecrated to the purposes of the enemy, we have witnessed the prostitution of every holy Irish tradition. That the young men of Ireland might be seduced into the service of the nation that denies every national power to their country, we have seen appeals made to our love of freedom, to our religious instincts, to our sympathy for the oppressed, to our kinship with suffering.

The power that for seven hundred years has waged bitter and unrelenting war upon the freedom of Ireland, and that still declares that the rights of Ireland must forever remain subordinate to the interests of the British Empire, hypocritically appealed to our young men to enlist under her banner and shed their blood “in the interests of freedom.”

The power whose reign in Ireland has been one long carnival of corruption and debauchery of civic virtue, and which has rioted in the debasement and degradation of everything Irish men and women hold sacred, appealed to us in the name of religion to fight for her as the champion of christendom.

The power which holds in subjection more of the world's population than any other power on the globe, and holds them in subjection as slaves without any (2367) guarantee of freedom or power of self-government, this power that sets Catholic against Protestant, the Hindu against the Mohammedan, the yellow man against the brown, and keeps them quarrelling with each other whilst she robs and murders them all—this power appeals to Ireland to send her sons to fight under England's banner for the cause of the oppressed. The power whose rule in Ireland has made of Ireland a desert, and made the history of our race read like the records of a shambles, as she plans for the annihilation of another race appeals to our manhood to fight for her because of our sympathy for the suffering, and of our hatred of oppression.

For generations the shamrock was banned as a national emblem of Ireland, but in her extremity England uses the shamrock as a means for exciting in foolish Irishmen loyalty to England. For centuries the green flag of Ireland was a thing accursed and hated by the English garrison in Ireland, as it is still in their inmost hearts. But in India, in Egypt, in Flanders, in Gallipoli, the green flag is used by our rulers to encourage Irish soldiers of England to give up their lives for the power that denies their country the right of nationhood. Green flags wave over recruiting offices in Ireland and England as a bait to lure on poor fools to dishonourable deaths in England's uniform.

The national press of Ireland, the true national press, uncorrupted and unterrified, has largely succeeded in turning back the tide of demoralisation, and opening up the minds of the Irish public to a realisation of the truth about the position of their country in the war. The national press of Ireland is a real flag of freedom flying for Ireland despite the enemy, but it is well that also there should fly in Dublin the green flag of this country as a rallying point of our forces and embodiment of all our hopes. Where better could that flag fly than over the unconquered citadel of the Irish working class, Liberty Hall, the fortress of the militant working class of Ireland.

We are out for Ireland for the Irish. But who are the Irish? Not the rack-renting, slum-owning landlord; not the sweating, profit-grinding capitalist; not the sleek and oily lawyer; not the prostitute pressman—the hired liars of the enemy. Not these are the Irish upon whom the future depends. Not these, but the Irish working class, the only secure foundation upon which a free nation can be reared.

The cause of labour is the cause of Ireland, the cause of Ireland is the cause of labour. They cannot be dissevered. Ireland seeks freedom. Labour seeks that an Ireland free should be the sole mistress of her own destiny, supreme owner of all material things within and upon her soil. Labour seeks to make the free Irish nation the guardian of the interests of the people of Ireland, and to secure that end would vest in that free Irish nation all property rights as against the claims of the individual, with the end in view that the individual may be enriched by the nation, and not by the spoiling of his fellows.

Having in view such a high and holy function for the nation to perform, is it not well and fitting that we of the working class should fight for the freedom of the nation from foreign rule, as the first requisite for the free development of the national powers needed for our class? It is so fitting.

Therefore on Sunday, April 16th, 1916, the green flag of Ireland will be solemnly hoisted over Liberty Hall as the symbol of our faith in freedom, and as a token to all the world that the working class of Dublin stands for the cause of Ireland, and the cause of Ireland is the cause of a separate and distinct nationality.

In these days of doubt, despair, and resurgent hope we fling our banner to the breeze, the flag of our fathers, the symbol of our national redemption, the sunburst shining over an Ireland re-born.

Source

CELT: Corpus of Electronic Texts, <http://www.ucc.ie/celt/published/E900002-004/index.html>.

Jawaharlal Nehru on World War I and India

The World War absorbed our attention. It was far off and did not at first affect our lives much, and India never felt the full horror of it. Politics petered out and sank into insignificance. The Defense of India Act (the equivalent of the British Defense of the Realm Act) held the country in its grip. From the second year onward news of conspiracies and shootings came to us, and of press-gang methods to enroll recruits in the Punjab.

There was little sympathy with the British in spite of loud professions of loyalty. Moderates and Extremists alike learned with satisfaction of German victories. There was no love for Germany, of course, only the (2368) desire to see our own rulers humbled. It was the weak and helpless man's idea of vicarious revenge. I suppose most of us viewed the struggle with mixed feelings. Of all the nations involved my sympathies were probably most with France. The ceaseless and unabashed propaganda on behalf of the Allies had some effect, although we tried to discount it greatly. . . .

I remember being moved also, in those days after the Lucknow Congress, by a number of eloquent speeches delivered by Sarojini Naidu in Allahabad. It was all nationalism and patriotism, and I was a pure nationalist, my vague socialist ideas of college days having sunk into the background. Roger Casement's wonderful speech at his trial in 1916 seemed to point out exactly how a member of a subject nation should feel. The Easter Week rising in Ireland by its very failure attracted, for was that not true courage which mocked at almost certain failure and proclaimed to the world that no physical might could crush the invincible spirit of a nation.

Such were my thoughts then, and yet fresh reading was again stirring the embers of socialistic thought in my head. They were vague ideas, more humanitarian and utopian than scientific. A favorite writer of mine during the war years and after was Bertrand Russell. . . .

The end of the World War found India in a state of suppressed excitement. Industrialization had spread, and the capitalist class had grown in wealth and power. This handful at the top had prospered and were greedy for more power and opportunity to invest their savings and add to their wealth. The great majority, however, were not so fortunate and looked forward to a lightening of the burdens that crushed them. Among the middle classes there was everywhere an expectation of great constitutional changes which would bring a large measure of self-rule and thus better their lot by opening out many fresh avenues of growth to them. Political agitation, peaceful and wholly constitutional as it was, seemed to be working itself to a head, and people talked with assurance of self-determination and self-government. Some of this unrest was visible also among the masses, especially the peasantry. In the rural areas of the Punjab the forcible methods of recruitment were still bitterly remembered, and the fierce suppression of the “Komagata Maru” people and others by conspiracy trials added to the widespread resentment. The soldiers back from active service on distant fronts were no longer the subservient robots that they used to be. They had grown mentally, and there was much discontent among them.

Among the Moslems there was anger over the treatment of Turkey and the Khilafat question, and an agitation was growing. The treaty with Turkey had not been signed yet, but the whole situation was ominous. So, while they agitated, they waited.

The dominant note all over India was one of waiting and expectation, full of hope and yet tinged with fear and anxiety. Then came the Rowlatt Bills with their drastic provision for arrest and trial without any of the checks and formalities which the law is supposed to provide. A wave of anger greeted them all over India, and even the Moderates joined in this and opposed the measures with all their might. Indeed there was universal opposition on the part of Indians of all shades of opinion. Still the Bills were pushed through by the officials and became law, the principal concession made being to limit them to three years.

Gandhiji had passed through a serious illness early in 1919. Almost from his sick bed he begged the Viceroy not to give his consent to the Rowlatt Bills. That appeal was ignored as others had been, and then, almost against his will, Gandhiji took the leadership in his first all-India agitation. He started the

Satyagraha Sabha, the members of which were pledged to disobey the Rowlatt Act, if it was applied to them, as well as other objectionable laws to be specified from time to time. In other words, they were to court jail openly and deliberately.

. . . [Then] other events took place in India which changed the whole situation, and the *Satyagraha Sabha* stopped its activities.

Satyagraha Day—all-India *hartals* and complete suspension of business—firing by the police and military at Delhi and Amritsar, and the killing of many people—mob violence in Amritsar and Ahmedabad—the massacre of Jallianwala Bagh—the long horror and terrible indignity of martial law in the Punjab. The Punjab was isolated, cut off from the rest of India; a thick veil seemed to cover it and hide it from outside eyes. There was hardly any news, and people could not go there or come out from there.

Odd individuals, who managed to escape from that inferno, were so terror-struck that they could give no clear account. Helplessly and impotently, we who were outside waited for scraps of news, and bitterness (2369) filled our hearts. Some of us wanted to go openly to the affected parts of the Punjab and defy the martial law regulations. But we were kept back, and meanwhile a big organization for relief and inquiry was set up on behalf of the Congress.

Source

Jawaharlal Nehru, *Toward Freedom: The Autobiography of Jawaharlal Nehru* (New York: John Day, 1941), 41–49. Reprinted by permission of Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund.

James Connolly (1868–1916)

James Connolly was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, and served briefly in the British army, from which he deserted. In 1890 Connolly married an Irishwoman, and six years later he and his family moved to Dublin, where he became the paid organizer of the Irish Socialist Club and one of Ireland's most prominent radicals. A staunch supporter of Irish independence from British rule, in 1897 Connolly published his book *Erin's Hope*. He also lectured extensively in England, Scotland, and the United States. From 1903 to 1910 Connolly lived in the United States, where he was involved with both the Socialist Labor Party and the Industrial Workers of the World. After returning to Ireland, he was once more active for Irish independence, publishing the books *Labor in Irish History* (1910) and *Re-Conquest of Ireland* (1915). As a

firm socialist, Connolly opposed British involvement in World War I as the unjustified consequence of imperialism and capitalism. In 1915 he became acting general secretary of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union. In 1916 he took part in the Easter Rising in Dublin. On 12 May 1916 Connolly, who had been wounded in the fighting and was tried by court-martial in his hospital room and was still so weak he had to sit in a chair when facing execution, was shot by a British firing squad.

Jawaharlal Nehru (1889–1964)

Jawaharlal Nehru became a leader of the moderate socialist wing of the Indian Congress Party, his status second only to Mohandas Gandhi within that party, and eventually served as the first prime minister of postindependence India, holding office from 1947 until his death in 1964. He also founded a formidable political dynasty whose scions would, albeit with intervals, lead India until at least the early twenty-first century. The son of Motilal Nehru, another prominent and wealthy Congress leader, the young Jawaharlal was educated at Harrow School and Cambridge University and called to the bar in 1912, when he returned to India. Although the younger Nehru almost automatically joined the Congress independence movement, initially he found himself rather bored with the prospects open to him. During and after the war he gradually moved from a moderate to an extremist position, demanding action rather than talk in the nationalist movement for Indian independence. Nehru, a protégé of Gandhi and an intellectual, able, and rather aloof man possessing considerable charisma, soon became one of the most prominent and respected Congress leaders. For much of the period from 1930 to 1934 he was jailed by the British, and during his absence his rather frail wife died, a lasting blow to him. In 1942, during World War II, he came out in support of the Quit India movement demanding British withdrawal from the subcontinent and spent a further thirty-two months in prison. In July 1946 he formed his country's first Indian government but when independence came one year later was unable to prevent its partition along sectarian lines into a predominantly Muslim Pakistan and a largely Hindu India.

About The Documents

Although both of the documents included here were the product of struggles to gain independence from British rule, they are otherwise very different in nature. Connolly's statement was a manifesto setting forth the principles for which the Irish rebels of Easter 1916 believed they were fighting. It was designed to win public support and also to serve as a defiant proclamation of

the ideals of the uprising. Given that its outnumbered participants recognized from the outset that they would probably fail, this declaration was also aimed as much at posterity as at any immediate audience. It is worth noting that Connolly not only highlighted the injustices he believed centuries of British rule had inflicted upon Ireland but also proclaimed the rebellion's adherence to radical socialist principles. This statement was, indeed, published in a socialist journal, the *Workers' Republic*. For much of the twentieth century, nationalist movements were often synonymous with Socialism or Communism, a pattern already well established in Ireland halfway through World War I, more than eighteen months before a radical Communist (2370) regime took power in Russia. Connolly proclaimed that he and his compatriots were fighting not just for "the green flag" of Ireland, in whose name the British oppressors were now seeking recruits for their military, but also for the rights of "the militant working class of Ireland" and "the cause of labour."

Nehru's recollections of the impact of World War I upon himself personally and also upon the Indian nationalist movement were taken from the autobiography he published in 1941, six years before his country finally attained independence. This memoir was in part an exercise in propaganda, designed to introduce Nehru, a leading Indian nationalist, to the broader educated public in Western countries and more especially in the United States, so as to win their support for the ending of British imperial rule. Although the United States did not formally enter World War II until December 1941, when Nehru's book appeared Great Britain, heavily embattled against Hitler, had become heavily dependent on U.S. assistance to continue fighting.

While Nehru probably gave a substantially truthful picture of his younger self, he was also seeking to present himself and the Indian nationalist movement in a favorable light before his target audience, most of whom would probably possess little detailed knowledge of the Indian political situation. Seeking to minimize any genuine Indian support for British rule, he perhaps downplayed the "loud professions of loyalty" Indians made to the British during the earlier conflict. Even so, he carefully emphasized that, while Indian nationalists "learned with satisfaction of German victories" in World War I, this was not due to any "love for Germany" but merely because Indians hoped "to see our own rulers humbled." Not wishing to appear overly radical, Nehru also characterized his "vague" youthful support for socialism as primarily "humanitarian and utopian" and mentioned how congenial and attractive he found the writings of the idealistic pacifist and socialist philosopher and mathematician Bertrand Russell. The British, he charged, had betrayed the Indian people once the war was over. He portrayed most Indians at the end of

World War I as rather excitedly anticipating “great constitutional changes” in the direction of self-rule and undertaking entirely “peaceful” political agitation to this end, only to have their seemingly justified hopes dashed by unreasonable and ultimately brutal British intransigence. Like the rest of his autobiography, this extract was carefully crafted to win popular and elite support in the West for the cause of Indian independence, whose objectives had not yet been attained. Nehru was unlikely to include anything in his memoirs that might compromise what had become the great overriding goal of his career, to which he had repeatedly sacrificed the interests of his family as well as his own comfort and career.

Further Reading

Brown, Judith M. *Nehru: A Political Life*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003.

Brown, Judith, and William Roger Louis, eds. *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Twentieth Century*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Coogan, Tim Pat. *1916: The Easter Rising*. London: Cassell, 2001.

Costello, Francis J. *The Irish Revolution and Its Aftermath, 1916–1923: Years of Revolt*. Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2003.

Doerries, Reinhard R. *Prelude to the Easter Rising: Sir Roger Casement in Imperial Germany*. London: Frank Cass, 2000.

Gopal, Sarvepalli. *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography*. 3 vols. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975–1984. Abridged one-volume edition, New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.

Jeffery, Keith. *Ireland and the Great War*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Morgan, Austen. *James Connolly: A Political Biography*. Manchester, England: Manchester University Press, 1988.

Sawyer, Roger. *Casement: The Flawed Hero*. New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984.

Wolpert, Stanley. *Nehru: A Tryst with Destiny*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.

MLA

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "40. The Weakening of British Imperial Rule." *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*, ABC-CLIO, 2005, pp. . *ABC-CLIO eBook Collection*, legacy.abc-clio.com/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2251.

Chicago Manual of Style

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "40. The Weakening of British Imperial Rule." In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara, CA41. : ABC-CLIO, 2005. <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2251>.

APA

Roberts, P. M., S. C. Tucker (2005). 40. The Weakening of British Imperial Rule. In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia* (pp.). Retrieved from <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2251>

Essay 41. Strains upon the British Empire

The British White Dominions and the War

In 1914 Great Britain presided over a worldwide empire on which, according to the traditional saying, the sun never set. The British government expected its Dominions to contribute to the war effort both in men and financially to the limits of their capacity. When Britain declared war on Germany and Austria-Hungary in August 1914, Canada, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, and India all found themselves automatically (2371) at war with the Central Powers. For the most part, the Dominions gave strong support to the war in terms of men, money, and supplies. When the war began, for example, Andrew Fisher, leader of Australia's Labor Party, enthusiastically asserted that his country would give "our last man and our last shilling" to the cause. Approximately 330,000 Australians, more than 600,000 Canadians, 128,449 New Zealanders—over one-tenth of that country's entire population—and 136,000 South Africans fought in the war, mostly in Europe and the Middle East; the South Africans also took the lead in mounting campaigns against German colonial possessions in South-West Africa and East Africa. Seeking to utilize their manpower to the fullest, New Zealand emulated Britain in introducing conscription in 1916, and Canada followed suit in 1917. India too contributed approximately 1 million troops to both the Western Front and the Mesopotamian theater of war, together with a gift of £100 million in cash, £80 million in military supplies, and millions of pounds' worth of other goods. Throughout the empire, governments increased taxes to support the costly war effort. Canada was particularly significant in providing financial support for the British war effort, raising several major war loans. Canadian industry also quickly geared itself to turning out munitions of war and other supplies, and additional goods manufactured in the United States were shipped to Canada and thence to Britain and the Western Front.

As potential threats to British supremacy from Germany and other powers burgeoned from the late nineteenth century onward, a number of influential British political figures—notably Joseph Chamberlain, a prominent Conservative colonial secretary; Alfred Viscount Milner, South African high commissioner and governor general during and after the Boer War; and Cecil Rhodes, the buccaneering businessman who founded the eponymous British colony of Rhodesia—had urged that the bonds among the constituent parts of the British Empire should be strengthened dramatically and that the Dominions and colonies should be expected to contribute more to imperial defense. To

coordinate defense policies for the entire empire, in 1906 the British War Office created an Imperial General Staff, normally headed by a top British general, and a Committee of Imperial Defense.

Ironically, the wartime experience tended to promote independence sentiment within the empire. While their contributions in manpower, money, and supplies were essential to Britain's ability to wage war effectively, without exception in every Dominion the demands of the conflict also tended to generate demands for greater autonomy from the imperial metropolitan center. This was particularly so as casualties mounted, while Britain's financial and economic demands upon the Dominions grew ever more intense. Of the Australian troops who fought in World War I, 60,000 died and another 165,000 were seriously wounded. The comparable figures for Canada were 57,000 dead and 173,000 wounded, and for New Zealand 17,000 dead and 41,000 wounded.

While the Dominions rallied to Britain's support during the war, in return they soon expected greater consultation on wartime policy and more extensive domestic autonomy than they had previously enjoyed. The heavy casualties that Australian and New Zealand forces suffered in the disastrous Gallipoli campaign of 1915, in origin a British scheme, and major Canadian losses on the Western Front at the second Ypres battle in spring 1915, the Somme in 1916, and Vimy Ridge and Passchendaele in spring 1917 provoked Dominion dissatisfaction with British military leadership, as did heavy wartime taxation. In referenda held in 1917, the Australian electorate twice refused to endorse the introduction of military conscription. Inspecting his country's troops on the Western Front in 1915, Canadian Prime Minister Sir Robert Borden was horrified by conditions under which they were fighting in the trenches and also by the inadequacies of their hospital facilities, while revelations of incompetence within the British military high command made him determined to win a greater voice in the making of policy. Other Dominion leaders expressed similar sentiments.

Until the end of 1916, these desires remained largely unfulfilled. When Borden complained to British Prime Minister Herbert H. Asquith of his frustration over his exclusion from the making of wartime policy, Asquith merely responded that while such consultation with the Dominions was undoubtedly desirable in theory, he could conceive of no practical mechanisms whereby it might be implemented. Asquith's replacement in December 1916 by David Lloyd George, heading a coalition government committed to the intensive prosecution of the war, gave new saliency to Dominion demands. At the beginning (2372) of 1917 a small War Cabinet was created to supervise the British Empire's war effort. The British government invited General Jan Christiaan Smuts, the able

and respected former South African defense minister, to join the new body, where he quickly won a position of great influence and authority. An Imperial War Cabinet was also established.

In April 1917 representatives of the British and Dominion governments held an Imperial War Conference to discuss issues relating to the war, and a second such gathering took place the following year. These meetings provided an opportunity for the Dominions to express their desire for greater autonomy and presaged the postwar imperial conferences of Dominion representatives, which led in 1931 to the passage of the Statute of Westminster whereby the various white Dominions—Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, and South Africa—gained complete control of their own foreign and domestic affairs and full autonomy from the British government, their only formal bonds being their common loyalty to the British monarch and their shared membership in the British Empire or, as it was increasingly restyled, the British Commonwealth. As early as 1923 the Dominions had won the right to sign separate international treaties on their own behalf. After the Statute of Westminster, the British government could no longer claim to speak for the Dominions. World War I had effectively accelerated separatist tendencies within the white British Empire.

Source

Judith Brown and William Roger Louis, eds., *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 115.

Canadian Prime Minister Sir Robert Borden to Sir George Perley, Canada's Acting High Commissioner in the United Kingdom, 4 January 1916

I beg to acknowledge your letter of the 5th November enclosing copy of correspondence with the Right Hon. the Secretary of State for the Colonies [Bonar Law] touching my message as to information and consultation during the war.

Mr. Bonar Law's letter is not especially illuminating and leaves the matter precisely where it was before my letter was sent.

During the past four months since my return from Great Britain, the Canadian Government (except for an occasional telegram from you or Sir Max Aitken) have had just what information could be gleaned from the daily press and no

more. As to consultation, plans of campaign have been made and unmade, measures adopted and apparently abandoned and generally speaking steps of the most important and even vital character have been taken, postponed or rejected without the slightest consultation with the authorities of this Dominion.

It can hardly be expected that we shall put 400,000 or 500,000 men in the field and willingly accept the position of having no more voice and receiving no more consideration than if we were toy automata. Any person cherishing such an expectation harbours an unfortunate and even dangerous delusion. Is this war being waged by the United Kingdom alone or is it a war waged by the whole Empire? If I am correct in supposing that the second hypothesis must be accepted then why do the statesmen of the British Isles arrogate to themselves solely the methods by which it shall be carried on in the various spheres of warlike activity and the steps which shall be taken to assure victory and a lasting peace?

It is for them to suggest the method and not for us. If there is no available method and if we are expected to continue in the role of automata the whole situation must be reconsidered.

Procrastination, indecision, inertia, doubt, hesitation and many other undesirable qualities have made themselves entirely too conspicuous in this war. During my recent visit to England a very prominent Cabinet Minister in speaking of the officers of another Department said that he did not call them traitors but he asserted that they could not have acted differently if they had been traitors. They are still doing duty and five months have elapsed. Another very able Cabinet Minister spoke of the shortage of guns, rifles, munitions, etc., but declared that the chief shortage was of brains.

Source

Canada, Department of External Affairs, *Documents on Canadian External Relations*, Vol. 1, 1909–1918 (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1967), 104.

(2373)

Extracts from Minutes of Proceedings of the Imperial War Conference, 16 April 1917, on the Constitution of the Empire

SIR ROBERT BORDEN: I should like to make a slight amendment in the terms of the Resolution by substituting for the word “thereafter” at the end of

the first paragraph the words “as soon as possible after the cessation of hostilities.” It would then read in this way: “The Imperial War Conference are of opinion that the readjustment of the constitutional relations of the component parts of the Empire is too important and intricate a subject to be dealt with during the War and that it should form the subject of a special Imperial Conference to be summoned as soon as possible after the cessation of hostilities. They deem it their duty, however, to place on record their view that any such readjustment, while thoroughly preserving all existing powers of self-government and complete control of domestic affairs, should be based upon a full recognition of the Dominions as autonomous nations of an Imperial Commonwealth, should recognize their right to an adequate voice in foreign policy and in foreign relations, and should provide effective arrangements for continuous consultation in all important matters of common imperial concern and for such necessary concerted action founded on consultation as the several Governments may determine.”

This subject is one upon which I might speak at great length. Many proposals with regard to the subject have been discussed in the United Kingdom and in all the Dominions of the Empire for many years past in all possible phases. There can be no doubt as to its importance. The growth of the Dominions in wealth and population has been very remarkable during the past fifty years, especially during the last twenty-five years. Their future growth we hope—and, more than that we believe—will be even more marked. Foreign policy and foreign relations, with which is intimately connected the question of the common defence of the empire, have been under the immediate control of the Government of the United Kingdom, responsible to the Parliament of the United Kingdom. It would appear from the views of constitutional writers that this condition during the later phases of the growth of the Oversea Dominions has proceeded on a theory of trusteeship which, whatever may be said of it in the past, is certain to prove not only entirely inadequate to the needs of the Empire but incompatible with the aspirations of the people of the Dominions in the future. I have spoken of the growth of the Dominions; it is by no means improbable that children now living will see their population surpass that of the United Kingdom. It is quite within the range of possibility that a single Dominion might grow to the extent which I have mentioned. Therefore it seems to me beyond question that the theory of trusteeship to which I have alluded cannot be continued indefinitely in the future.

In approaching the subject one is impressed especially with this consideration, that the greatest intellects of the Empire in the past have miscalculated the conditions that would develop in the Dominions, and have failed to foresee the

relations of the Empire under the policy of developing full powers of self-government which was supposed to have the tendency of weakening, if not severing, the ties which unite the Dominions to the Mother Country. The policy of complete control in domestic affairs and complete autonomy in all local affairs, instead of weakening the ties which unite the Empire, has very greatly strengthened them. It was said by a statesman of the highest capacity after that policy had been embarked upon (that is the policy of granting to the Dominions complete autonomy) that it was an absolute mistake, that it could only lead to the weakening and severance of relations, and that it would have been a wise policy to preserve in the United Kingdom control over their fiscal policy; that this would have tended to unite the Empire, and regret was expressed that some such policy had not been maintained. All of us in the Dominions, and I think the people of the British Isles, realize now that any such policy would have had most unfortunate and, more than that, disastrous results. The policy which was supposed to weaken the Empire has really strengthened it, and I look forward to a development in the future along the line of an increasingly equal status between the Dominions and the Mother Country. It seems to me that the attainment of full citizenship, which involves a voice in foreign relations, will proceed along the line to which I have alluded. The nations of the Empire are really bound together by the tie of a common allegiance, by like (2374) institutions and ideals of democracy, and by like purposes. Such ties will bring the nations of the Empire together more closely upon the line which I have mentioned. I say this with a full understanding that it is unwise, having regard to the lessons of the past, for any of us to predict absolutely the developments of the future. But, nevertheless, the line of development which has been noticeable during the past twenty or twenty-five years seems to point unmistakably to that conclusion. Indeed, the action of the Dominions in this war has made the spirit of nationhood splendidly manifest. The fact that one million men in the Dominions have taken up arms for the defence of the Empire's existence and the maintenance of its future influence is so significant a lesson that one would be unwise not to have it constantly in mind. I believe that the Dominions fully realize the ideal of an Imperial Commonwealth of United Nations and one should not forget the importance of the Crown as a tie between the Dominions and the Mother Country. His Majesty King George V is especially associated with the Overseas Dominions, because he is the first Sovereign who, before he ascended the Throne, availed himself of the opportunity to visit all parts of the Empire and to make himself acquainted with the ideals and aspirations of their people. And the Queen was recognized throughout the Dominions of the Empire as distinctively a British princess before her marriage to the King.

Now the subject of the future relations of the Empire is not only an important but a very complex one. I would not make any conjectures beyond what I have said as to the ultimate solution. It is manifest, I think, that under the present conditions it would be unwise for this Conference to attempt to enter upon that subject. I hope that the delegation which will come to the next Conference from the Dominion which I have the honour to represent will be representative of all political parties. A subject of the vast importance which is involved in the consideration of future inter-Imperial relations would seem to demand that condition if it is to be approached in a proper spirit, because we all agree, I am sure, that so great a question ought not to be made, either here or in the Dominions, a question of party strife or party controversy if it can possibly be prevented.

There has been a very remarkable advance even since we arrived in the British Islands; it is a development which has greatly impressed me, and it seems to be due to the force of great events rather than to any premeditation or design. The fact that an Imperial War Cabinet, as well as a British War Cabinet are sitting in London to-day is itself of great significance. There may be possibly some guidance in that step for the future relations which will give to the Overseas Dominions their proper voice in the great matters which I have mentioned. However, it would be unwise to attempt to forecast. The Resolution which I have proposed does not attempt to do so; it merely proposes that a special Imperial Conference shall be summoned as soon as possible after the War; and it does at the same time place on record the view of this Conference that any readjustment of relations must, in the first place, preserve all the existing powers of self-government and complete control of domestic affairs, that it must be based on a complete recognition of the Dominions as autonomous nations of an Imperial Commonwealth, and must fully recognize their right to a voice in foreign policy and in foreign relations. The willing acceptance of that principle by the Mother Country is an immense stride in advance.

I have had the advantage of discussing the terms of the Resolution to some extent with my colleagues round this board, and I have made them all acquainted with the principle which is embodied in the Resolution. I hope that it may commend itself to their judgment. I hope further that the Conference to be summoned will approach its deliberations and frame its conclusions on the lessons of the past, so that the future structure of the Empire may be erected on the sure and firm foundations of freedom and cooperation, autonomy, and unity.

Source

Canada, Department of External Affairs, *Documents on Canadian External Relations*, Vol. 1, 1909–1918 (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1967), 308–311.

Sir Robert Borden (1854–1937)

Robert Borden, the son of a farmer who was also the local stationmaster, was born in Nova Scotia, Canada, in modest circumstances. As a young man he apprenticed himself to a Halifax law firm and soon became a successful lawyer before being drawn into Canadian politics. In 1901 he became leader of the Conservative Party, spending ten years as leader of the opposition (2375) before taking office as prime minister in 1911. Unlike his Liberal Party opponent, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, Borden was a staunch supporter of the British Empire. When war with the Central Powers broke out in 1914, he actively spearheaded and facilitated the mobilization of Canadian manpower, industry, and finance for the war effort. A visit to the Western Front in 1915 convinced Borden that Canadian troops fighting there must be able to count on adequate reinforcements, and he took the lead in introducing the controversial policy of military conscription. He also brought Liberals into his government as part of an all-party coalition. Despite his imperialist leanings, the experience of war convinced Borden that it was in Canada's best interests to exercise greater autonomy within the British Empire and to have more input into policymaking. In 1919 he insisted that Canada send a separate delegation to the Paris Peace Conference and that his country's representation and concerns should not be subsumed within a broad British Empire delegation. Other British Dominions—Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and India—followed suit. At the conference, Borden was a strong supporter of the creation of the League of Nations and contributed to the drafting of that organization's charter. He retired from politics for health reasons in 1920 and subsequently enjoyed many lengthy and productive years, during which he was active in various business concerns and wrote and lectured extensively.

About The Documents

Although both of the documents included here are official and revealing, they are different in nature. The first was a dispatch from the Canadian prime minister to Sir George Perley, his country's top representative in Great Britain. At the time he wrote it, Borden was clearly exasperated with the British government, leading him to express himself quite frankly and undiplomatically in what was official government correspondence. Borden himself apparently

felt that he might have been too sharp, since a few days later he dispatched a cable to Perley, instructing him to take no action upon this letter. That does not mean, however, that Borden in any sense withdrew his criticisms of British policies and the cavalier attitude of the British government toward the Dominions, subjects about which he clearly felt strongly. However undiplomatic in tone, it seems that this dispatch effectively expressed Borden's underlying resentment of the second-class status the Dominions enjoyed within the British Empire, even as they were expected to exert their utmost efforts to help win a primarily European war from which they might otherwise have been able to hold aloof.

Further confirmation that Borden's sentiments were genuine and deep-seated can be found in the second document, the minutes of the first Imperial War Conference, held in London in spring 1917 and attended not only by Borden but by all the other leading Dominion prime ministers. At this meeting Borden, together with his South African ally Jan Christian Smuts, was instrumental in drafting Resolution IX, which called for full autonomy for the Dominions. His speech, as reported verbatim in the minutes, was an eloquent if more tactful restatement of some of the points made in his earlier dispatch to Perley. Designed to convince his fellow prime ministers—including the British premier—to support Resolution IX, it smoothly depicted greater Dominion autonomy as a means of strengthening rather than weakening the bonds uniting the British Empire and making the organization a more effective and efficient unit in times of crisis. One suspects that Borden's professional ability as a lawyer to argue a plausible case led him to adopt this tactic. Borden's speech also contained an implicit threat that unless the Dominions received more autonomy, in a future crisis their support for Great Britain might be less enthusiastic. In reality, the measures he advocated were likely to encourage greater independence among the various Dominions, as indeed proved to be the case from the 1930s onward. In the long run, the impact of World War I facilitated existing divisive tendencies within the British Empire.

Further Reading

Borden, Robert Laird. *Robert Laird Borden: His Memoirs*. Ed. Henry Borden. 2 vols. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1969.

Brown, Robert Craig. *Robert Laird Borden: A Biography*. 2 vols. Toronto: Macmillan, 1975–1980.

Brown, R. C., and G. R. Cook. *Canada, 1896–1921: A Nation Transformed*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974.

Dyer, Gwynne, and Tina Viljoen. *The Defence of Canada: In the Arms of the Empire*. Toronto: M & S Press, 1990.

Eayrs, James George. *In Defence of Canada*. 5 vols. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965–1983.

English, John. *Borden: His Life and World*. Toronto and New York: McGraw Hill Ryerson, 1977.

(2376)

———. *The Decline of Politics: The Conservatives and the Party System, 1901–1920*. Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1993.

McKercher, B. J. C., and Lawrence Aronsen, eds. *The North Atlantic Triangle in a Changing World: Anglo-American-Canadian Relations, 1902–1956*. Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1996.

Preston, Richard A. *Canada and "Imperial Defense": A Study of the Origins of the British Commonwealth's Defense Organization, 1867–1919*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1967.

Stacey, C. P. *Canada and the Age of Conflict, Vol. 1, 1867–1921*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984.

Wilson, Harold A. *The Imperial Policy of Sir Robert Borden*. Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1966.

MLA

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "41. Strains upon the British Empire." *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*, ABC-CLIO, 2005, pp. . *ABC-CLIO eBook Collection*, legacy.abc-clio.com/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2258.

Chicago Manual of Style

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "41. Strains upon the British Empire." In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005. <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2258>.

APA

Roberts, P. M., S. C. Tucker (2005). 41. Strains upon the British Empire. In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia* (pp.). Retrieved from <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2258>

Essay 42.

The Murder of Rasputin, 29–30 December 1916

The Murder of Rasputin, December 1916

One of the more spectacular episodes of World War I was the murder by Russian aristocrats and politicians of the charismatic monk Grigory Yefimovich Rasputin (1864?–1916), a tale of claustrophobic palace intrigue such as might have occurred at almost any period of Russian history. Rasputin owed his political importance to the fact that the Tsarevich Aleksey, the heir and only son of Tsar Nicholas II and his wife the Empress Alexandra Fyodorovna, born in 1904 after the imperial couple had produced four daughters, suffered from hemophilia. Throughout his short life the young boy, whom both parents adored, experienced unpredictable attacks of bleeding that threatened his life and caused him great pain. Rasputin, a rather coarse peasant who joined a deviant religious order and claimed he could work miracles, apparently possessed some genuine ability, whether through hypnosis, autosuggestion, or the exercise of healing powers, to alleviate Aleksey's illnesses. By the time World War I began, Rasputin had therefore won great influence over the tsar and tsarina, especially the latter, who chose to ignore other aspects of his behavior, including his indulgence in alcohol, his blatant sexual affairs with numerous women, and even his indiscreet and probably untruthful boasts that the tsar and tsarina virtually groveled before him.

Rasputin's perceived influence escalated dramatically during World War I. With Russia at war with Germany, the German-born tsarina's origins—she had been a princess of Hesse-Darmstadt, though she was also a granddaughter of the British Queen Victoria—became a liability to the monarchy. The first three years of war were marked by dramatic Russian victories followed by reverses, a pattern that characterized 1914, 1915, and 1916. Gossip abounded that the empress sought to implement pro-German policies and was even surreptitiously conveying secret information to German officials and her cousin Kaiser Wilhelm II. The tsar, a devoted husband and father, relied heavily on his wife's advice, and Alexandra tended to encourage him to act autocratically and to ignore all calls for greater democracy or political participation by the various liberal parties. Resentment of the tsarina's influence increased after the tsar took command himself of his armies at the front in fall 1915, entrusting many of his responsibilities to his wife. Her grasp of politics was limited and her behavior somewhat erratic, with frequent firings and appointments of senior ministers. Rasputin became one of her closest confidential advisors, though historians who have studied the nature of his influence suggest that in reality he

shrewdly kept the favor of his patroness by diligently repeating to her the advice he had already realized she wished to receive. He also, however, tended to feel that the war had gone on too long and that its domestic impact on Russia was so destructive that a negotiated peace with Germany was desirable, advice that, if acted on by Nicholas and Alexandra, might well have saved not just their thrones but their lives. By the end of 1916 charges were openly made in the State Duma, or parliament, that both Rasputin and the empress were acting in German interests.

Whatever the real nature of Rasputin's political influence, his ascendancy infuriated many at the Russian court. On several occasions members of the Romanov royal family, including her sister Elizabeth, the widow of a Russian archduke, remonstrated with the tsarina and unavailingly begged her to dismiss Rasputin. Many felt that Alexandra's own influence on her husband was so disastrous that she ought to renounce any political role. In late 1916, as the initially successful Brusilov military offensive bogged down and ended in fiasco and failure, a group of aristocratic (2377) conservatives decided to assassinate Rasputin. They included Prince Felix Yusupov, one of the wealthiest men in Russia and the husband of a niece of the tsar; the Grand Duke Dimitri Pavlovich, a cousin of Nicholas II who was 25 years old in 1916; and the politician V. M. Purishkevich, leader of the extreme right in the Russian Duma. On the evening of 16/29 December 1916 Rasputin was invited to a secret meeting at Yusupov's Petrograd mansion, where after considerable effort the three succeeded in assassinating him and subsequently disposing of his body under the ice of the frozen Neva River, where it was later discovered. Much of Petrograd high society had been privy to the plot in advance, and the identity of Rasputin's murderers quickly became known, especially since several of them told the story to various friends and acquaintances. The enraged tsar and tsarina insisted on the exile of both Yusupov and Grand Duke Dimitri, though Purishkevich's political popularity in the Duma and the fact that he immediately fled to active service with the frontline troops meant that he escaped all punishment. Despite the conspirators' hopes, the death of Rasputin failed to avert the political crisis and revolution that soon ensued.

Excerpt from Felix Yusupov, *Rasputin* (1927)

In the middle of the room stood the table at which Rasputin was to drink his last cup of tea.

My two servants, Gregory and Ivan, helped me to arrange the furniture. I asked them to prepare tea for six, to buy biscuits and cakes and to bring wine from the

cellar. I told them that I was expecting some friends at eleven that evening, and that they could wait in the servants' hall until I rang for them.

When everything was settled, I went up to my room. By eleven o'clock everything was ready in the basement. Comfortably furnished and well lit, this underground room had lost its grim look. On the table the samovar smoked, surrounded by plates filled with the cakes and dainties that Rasputin liked so much. An array of bottles and glasses stood on a sideboard. Ancient lanterns of coloured glass lit the room from the ceiling; the heavy red damask portières were lowered. On the granite hearth, a log fire crackled and it seemed as though, no matter what happened, the events of that night would remain for ever buried in the silence of those thick walls.

The bell rang, announcing the arrival of Dmitri and my other friends. I showed them into the dining room and they stood for a little while, silently examining the spot where Rasputin was to meet his end.

I took from the ebony cabinet a box containing the poison and laid it on the table. Doctor Lazavert put on rubber gloves and ground the cyanide of potassium crystals to powder. Then, lifting the top of each cake, he sprinkled the inside with a dose of poison which, according to him, was sufficient to kill several men instantly.

There was an impressive silence. We all followed the doctor's movements with emotion. There remained the glasses into which cyanide was to be poured. It was decided to do this at the last moment so that the poison should not evaporate and lose its potency.

When everything was ready, I put on an overcoat and drew a fur cap over my ears, completely concealing my face. Doctor Lazavert, in a chauffeur's uniform, started up the engine and we got into the car which was waiting in the courtyard by the side entrance. On reaching Rasputin's house, I had to parley with the janitor before he agreed to let me in. In accordance with Rasputin's instructions, I went up the back staircase; I had to grope my way up in the dark, and only with the greatest difficulty found the door. I rang the bell.

"Who's that?" called a voice from inside.

I began to tremble. "It's I, Grigory Efimovich. I've come for you."

I could hear Rasputin moving about the hall. The chain was unfastened, the heavy lock grated. I felt very ill at ease.

He opened the door and I went into the kitchen. It was dark. I imagined that someone was spying on me from the next room. Instinctively, I turned up my collar and pulled my cap down over my eyes.

“Why are you trying to hide?” asked Rasputin.

“Didn’t we agree that no one was to know you were going out with me tonight?”

“True, true; I haven’t said a word about it to anyone in the house, I’ll go and dress.”

I accompanied him to his bedroom; it was lighted only by the little lamp burning before the ikons. Rasputin lit the candle; I noticed that his bed was crumpled. He had probably been resting. Near the bed were his overcoat and beaver cap, on the ground his high felt-lined galoshes.

(2378)

Rasputin wore a silk blouse embroidered in cornflowers, with a thick raspberry-coloured cord as a belt. His velvet breeches and highly polished boots seemed brand new; he had brushed his hair and carefully combed his beard. As he came close to me, I smelt a strong odour of cheap soap which indicated he had taken pains with his appearance. I had never seen him look so clean and tidy.

“Well, it’s time to go; it’s past midnight.” . . .

I picked up the overcoat and helped him on with it.

Suddenly, a feeling of great pity for the man swept over me. I was ashamed of the despicable deceit, the horrible trickery to which I was obliged to resort. At that moment I was filled with self-contempt, and wondered how I could even have thought of such a cowardly crime. I could not understand how I had brought myself to decide on it.

I looked at my victim with dread, as he stood before me, quiet and trusting. What had become of his second sight? What good did his gift of foretelling the future do him? Of what use was his faculty for reading the thoughts of others, if he was blind to the dreadful trap that was laid for him?

As we entered the house, I could hear the gramophone played “Yankee Doodle went to town.”

“What’s all this?” asked Rasputin. “Is someone giving a party here?”

“No, just my wife entertaining a few friends; they’ll be going soon. Meanwhile, let’s have a cup of tea in the dining room.”

I offered him wine and tea; to my great disappointment, he refused both. Had something made him suspicious? I was determined, come what may, that he should not leave the house alive.

We sat down at the table and began to talk. . . .

Rasputin asked for some tea. I immediately poured out a cup and handed him a plate of biscuits. Why was it I offered him the only biscuits that were not poisoned? I even hesitated before handing him the cakes sprinkled with cyanide.

He refused them at first: “I don’t want any, they’re too sweet.” At last however, he took one, then another . . . I watched him, horror-stricken. The poison should have acted immediately but, to my amazement, Rasputin went on talking quite calmly.

I then suggested he should sample our Crimean wines. He once more refused. Time was passing, I was becoming nervous; in spite of his refusal, I filled two glasses. But, as in the case of the biscuits—and just as inexplicably—I again avoided using a glass containing cyanide. Rasputin changed his mind and accepted the wine I handed him. He drank it with enjoyment, found it to his taste and asked whether we made a great deal of wine in the Crimea. He seemed surprised to hear that we had cellars full of it.

“Pour me out some Madeira,” he said. This time I wanted to give it to him in a glass containing cyanide, but he protested: “I’ll have it in the same glass.”

“You can’t, Grigory Efimovich,” I replied, “you can’t mix two kinds of wines.”

“It doesn’t matter, I’ll use the same glass, I tell you . . .”

I had to give in without pressing the point, but I managed, as if by mistake, to drop the glass from which he had drunk, and immediately poured the madeira into a glass containing cyanide. Rasputin did not see anything.

I stood watching him drink, expecting any moment to see him collapse.

But he continued slowly to sip his wine like a connoisseur. His face did not change, only from time to time he put his hand to his throat as though he had some difficulty in swallowing. He rose and took a few steps. When I asked him what was the matter, he answered: "Why, nothing, just a tickling in my throat."

"The Madeira's good," he remarked, "give me some more."

Meanwhile, the poison continued to have no effect, and the *staretz* [holy man] went on walking calmly about the room.

I picked up another glass containing cyanide, filled it with wine and handed it to Rasputin.

He drank it as he had the others, and still with no result.

There remained only one poisoned glass on the tray. Then, as I was feeling desperate, and must try to make him do as I did, I began drinking myself.

A silence fell upon us as we sat facing each other.

He looked at me; there was a malicious expression in his eyes, as if to say: "Now, see, you're wasting your time, you can't do anything to me."

Suddenly his expression changed to one of fierce anger; I had never seen him look so terrifying. He fixed his fiendish eyes on me, and at that moment I (2379) was filled with such hatred that I wanted to leap at him and strangle him with my bare hands.

The silence became ominous. I had the feeling that he knew why I had brought him to my house, and what I had set out to do. We seemed to be engaged in a strange and terrible struggle. Another moment and I would have been beaten, annihilated. Under Rasputin's heavy gaze, I felt all my self-possession leaving me; an indescribable numbness came over me, my head swam . . .

When I came to myself, he was still seated in the same place, his head in his hands. I could not see his eyes. I had got back my self-control, and offered him another cup of tea.

"Pour me a cup," he said in a muffled voice. "I'm very thirsty." He raised his head, his eyes were dull and I thought he avoided looking at me.

While I poured the tea, he rose and began walking up and down. Catching sight of my guitar which I had left lying on a chair, he said: "Play something cheerful, I like listening to your singing."

I found it difficult to sing anything at such a moment, especially anything cheerful. "I really don't feel up to it," I said. However, I took the guitar and sang a sad Russian ditty.

He sat down and at first listened attentively; then his head drooped and his eyes closed. I thought he was dozing. When I finished the song he opened his eyes and looked gloomily at me: "Sing another, I'm very fond of this kind of music and you put so much soul into it."

I sang once more but did not recognize my own voice.

Time went by; the clock said two thirty . . . the nightmare had lasted two interminable hours. What would happen, I thought, if I had lost my nerve?

Upstairs my friends were evidently growing impatient, to judge by the racket they made. I was afraid that they might be unable to bear the suspense any longer and just come bursting in.

Rasputin raised his head: "What's all that noise?"

"Probably the guests leaving," I answered. "I'll go and see what's up."

In my study, Dmitri, Purishkevich and [Army Lieutenant Ivan] Soukhotin rushed at me, and plied me with questions.

"Well, have you done it? Is it over?"

I took Dmitri's revolver and went back to the basement.

Rasputin was where I had left him; his head drooping and his breathing laboured. I went up quietly and sat down by him, but he paid no attention to me. After a few minutes of horrible silence, he slowly lifted his head and turned vacant eyes in my direction.

"Are you feeling ill?" I asked.

"Yes, my head is heavy and I've a burning sensation in my stomach. Give me another little glass of wine. It'll do me good."

I handed him some Madeira; he drank it in a gulp; it revived him and he recovered his spirits. I saw that he was himself again and that his brain was functioning quite normally. . . .

Rasputin stood before me motionless, his head bent and his eyes on the crucifix. I slowly raised the revolver. Where should I aim, at the temple or the heart?

A shudder swept over me; my arm grew rigid, I aimed at his heart and pulled the trigger. Rasputin gave a wild scream and crumpled up on the bearskin.

For a moment I was appalled to discover how easy it was to kill a man. A flick of the finger and what had been a living, breathing man only a second before, now lay on the floor like a broken doll.

On hearing the shot my friends rushed in, but in their frantic haste they brushed against the switch and turned out the light. Someone bumped into me and cried out; I stood motionless for fear of treading on the body. At last, someone turned the light on.

Rasputin lay on his back. His features twitched in nervous spasms; his hands were clenched, his eyes closed. A bloodstain was spreading on his silk blouse. A few moments later all movement ceased. We bent over his body to examine it.

The doctor declared that the bullet had struck him in the region of the heart. There was no possibility of doubt: Rasputin was dead. Dmitri and Purishkevich lifted him from the bearskin and laid him on the flag-stones.

Our hearts were full of hope, for we were convinced that what had just taken place would save Russia and the dynasty from ruin and dishonour.

As we talked I was suddenly filled with a vague misgiving; an irresistible impulse forced me to go down to the basement.

(2380)

Rasputin lay exactly where we had left him. I felt his pulse: not a beat, he was dead.

Scarcely knowing what I was doing I seized the corpse by the arms and shook it violently. It leaned to one side and fell back. I was just about to go, when I

suddenly noticed an almost imperceptible quivering of his left eyelid. I bent over and watched him closely; slight tremors contracted his face.

All of a sudden, I saw the left eye open . . . A few seconds later his right eyelid began to quiver, then opened. I then saw both eyes—the green eyes of a viper—staring at me with an expression of diabolical hatred. The blood ran cold in my veins. My muscles turned to stone. I wanted to run away, to call for help, but my legs refused to obey me and not a sound came from my throat.

Then a terrible thing happened: with a sudden violent effort Rasputin leapt to his feet, foaming at the mouth. A wild roar echoed through the vaulted rooms, and his hands convulsively thrashed the air. He rushed at me, trying to get at my throat, and sank his fingers into my shoulder like steel claws. His eyes were bursting from their sockets, blood oozed from his lips. And all the time he called me by name, in a low raucous voice.

No words can express the horror I felt. I tried to free myself but was powerless in his vice-like grip. A ferocious struggle began . . .

This devil who was dying of poison, who had a bullet in his heart, must have been raised from the dead by the powers of evil. There was something appalling and monstrous in his diabolical refusal to die.

I realized now who Rasputin really was. It was the reincarnation of Satan himself who held me in his clutches and would never let me go till my dying day.

By a superhuman effort I succeeded in freeing myself from his grasp.

He fell on his back, gasping horribly and still holding in his hand the epaulette he had torn from my tunic during our struggle. For a while he lay motionless on the ground. Then after a few seconds he moved. I rushed upstairs and called Purishkevich, who was in my study.

Excerpt from the Account of Yusupov's Co-conspirator V. M. Purishkevich, *The End of Rasputin* (1923)

I heard someone's footsteps at the foot of the stairs, then the sound of the door opening to the dining room where Rasputin was lying, which evidently whoever came out did not close.

“Who on earth could that be?” I thought, but I hardly had time to think of an answer when a wild, inhuman shriek rang out, which seemed to me to be the voice of Yusupov. “Purishkevich, shoot, shoot, he’s alive! He’s getting away!” . . .

What I saw downstairs could have been a dream, had it not been a terrible reality: Grigory Rasputin, whom I had seen half an hour ago breathing his last on the stone floor of the dining room, was running through the light snow of the palace courtyard along the railings leading to the street, falling from side to side, in the very same clothes I had seen him in almost lifeless.

For the first minute I could not believe my eyes, but his loud cries as he ran through the stillness of the night:

“Felix, Felix, I will tell everything to the tsarina! . . .” convinced me that it really was him, Grigory Rasputin, that he could walk thanks to his phenomenal vitality, that in a few moments he would be through the gates into the street where, without giving away his identity, he could turn to the first passer-by and ask them to save him, as people were trying to kill him in that palace . . . and all would be lost, we would be discovered. I rushed in pursuit and fired.

In the quiet of the night the deafening noise of my revolver carried through the air—missed.

Rasputin went faster; I fired a second time at a run—and again missed.

I cannot express the feeling of rage I felt against myself at that moment. The proficient marksman, who practised the whole time on Semenovskiy parade ground with small targets, today seemed incapable of shooting a man at 20 paces. The moments passed . . . Rasputin was already at the gates, when I stopped and bit myself hard on the left wrist, to force myself to concentrate, and this third time hit him in the back.

He stopped; carefully taking aim I fired a fourth time, apparently hitting him in the head, for he collapsed face down onto the ground in the snow, tearing at his head. I ran up to him and kicked him as hard as I could in the temple.

He was lying with his hands stretched out in front of him, clawing at the snow as if he wanted to crawl forward on his stomach; but he was already unable to move and just lay there grinding and gnashing his teeth.

(2381)

I was certain now that his time was up, that he would not get to his feet again. I stood over him for a moment or two to satisfy myself there was no longer any point in guarding him, and then crossed quickly back into the palace through the same little door, but I remembered clearly that in the interval between the shots two men had passed along the pavement in the street, one of whom rushed over to the railings upon hearing gunfire. . . .

Once I had found out where Yusupov was, I went to try and calm him down. . . .

We passed through the lobby at the very moment when downstairs Yusupov's soldiers were dragging the corpse into the hall by the stairs.

Slipping away from me, Yusupov dashed into the study, snatched from the desk a rubber dumb-bell, and rushed back downstairs towards Rasputin's body.

For having poisoned him and seen the poison have no effect, shot him and seen the bullet did nothing—he obviously couldn't believe that Rasputin was really dead, and now began to beat him around the temples as hard as he could with the two-pound weight, in an unbelievable state of frenzy and wild rage.

From my position at the top of the stairs, I did not at first understand and was even more dumbfounded when, to my greatest amazement, Rasputin still appeared, even now, to display signs of life.

Turned over face upwards, he was rasping, and I saw quite clearly from upstairs how the pupil of his open right eye rolled as if looking at me, uncomprehending yet terrifying (even now I can see that eye before me).

Regaining my senses I shouted to the soldiers to pull Yusupov off the dying man, as he could splash himself and everything around with blood and in the case of an investigation the authorities would uncover the truth, even without police dogs, by the traces.

The soldiers obeyed, but it took an immense effort to drag off Yusupov, who was still beating Rasputin about the head, mechanically but with ever increasing ferocity. Finally they pulled the prince aside. . . .

I ordered the soldiers to obtain some material quickly from somewhere and to wrap the corpse in it completely from head to toe and bind it tightly with rope.

The body was completely wrapped in some sort of blue material; it even seemed to me it might be a curtain, tightly bound with rope. The head was covered. Now I saw that Rasputin was indeed a corpse and could no longer come to life.

Source

Translations from original documents, copyright © 1997 by Sergei Mironenko and Andrei Maylunas, from *A Lifelong Passion: Nicholas and Alexandra; Their Own Story*, by Andrei Maylunas and Sergei Mironenko, translated by Darya Galy. Used by permission of Doubleday, a division of Random House, Inc., and Weidenfeld & Nicholson, a division of The Orion Publishing Group.

Prince Felix Yusupov (1887–1967)

The young Felix Yusupov, one of the wealthiest of the Russian aristocracy, lived in great splendor in Moika Palace in Petrograd and also possessed vast estates in the Crimea and elsewhere. Educated at Oxford University, handsome, elegant, cultivated, and an aesthete, he had a well-deserved reputation as a homosexual and transvestite, though his 1913 marriage to Grand Duchess Irina Alexandrovich, daughter of one of the tsar's sisters, endured happily until his death more than fifty years later. Yusupov apparently enjoyed a homosexual liaison with Grand Duke Dimitri Pavlovich, one of the other conspirators. Somewhat undisciplined, Yusupov avoided military combat service during the war, but by late 1916 his patriotic resentment of Rasputin, which many of the nobility shared, had become so intense that he was prepared to act as one of the leaders of the assassination plot. Some months after the February 1917 revolution returned to Petrograd, just in time for the Bolshevik Revolution, after which he fled, first to his Crimean estates and eventually, with other members of the former imperial family, including his wife, by British warship to France, where he settled in Paris. The Yusupovs preserved sufficient wealth to enable them to spend the rest of their lives—with a break during World War II—in considerable comfort in France, and Yusupov became known for his generosity to other, less fortunate Russian exiles.

About The Documents

Yusupov and Purishkevich were the only two of the conspirators against Rasputin's life who subsequently gave accounts of their involvement in the murder. For each, his role in Rasputin's death was the only incident (2382) in his life likely to bring him historical fame. Both men produced their memoirs more than a decade after the event, when they had already told the story many

times; both also hoped to make a substantial sum of money from their writings. Yusupov, indeed, retold his story twice with very little variation, once in 1927 and again in a second volume of memoirs published in 1953. By the time the two conspirators were writing for posterity, their stories had hardened into an accepted form, its most salient feature Rasputin's extraordinary vitality, which made it almost impossible to kill him. Indeed, according to his daughter, the police autopsy apparently suggested that when thrust under the ice of the frozen Neva River, having been poisoned, shot repeatedly, battered, and bundled up in thick material and tied with rope, Rasputin nonetheless died of drowning, having managed to work one arm free.

Yusupov and Purishkevich told very similar stories, but according to historians, various important details were missing. On the evening of Rasputin's death the police, alerted by shots and shouting, visited Moika Palace and noted various vehicles leaving and arriving and the number of people each contained. Their reports suggested that additional conspirators were involved and named them as two of Yusupov's brothers-in-law, sons of Tsar Nicholas II's sister. In the course of the eventful evening, during which Rasputin was killed and his corpse removed, Yusupov apparently spent some time sleeping at his father-in-law's house. They also alleged that at least two women had been present in the palace during the night, one of them being Vera Korelli, a cousin of Yusupov, and were forcibly ejected around 6:00 the next morning, an episode that may have been an attempt to distract the now watchful police. Yusupov and Purishkevich may well have sought to protect these various associates, whom Korelli herself later claimed had been present at the time, by concealing their presence; alternatively, they may have wished to inflate their own personal responsibility for Rasputin's death. Other accounts of Rasputin's murder suggest that after the poison had failed to take effect, a group of up to ten individuals assailed the monk and, as they thought, bludgeoned him to death.

Some historians have attempted to minimize Rasputin's seemingly superhuman vitality by suggesting that his resistance to poison was due to the fact that, according to his daughter, he never ate sweet cakes; that cyanide would have settled to the bottom of the bottle from which his drink was poured; that Dr. Lavovert who provided it may have substituted something harmless for the original poison; or that Rasputin was suffering from acute alcoholic gastritis, which would have increased the time required for the cyanide to take effect. There are also suggestions that most if not all of the shots fired at Rasputin might have missed him, leading the conspirators to bludgeon him to death or at least into unconsciousness.

Yusupov's biographer Greg King expressed additional skepticism regarding his account of Rasputin's death, warning that: "Time and the stories of others have shown that Felix used his version of the murder to achieve his own ends and carefully presented the version which served him the best." In both his written accounts, Yusupov suggested that he lured the sexually voracious Rasputin to his palace on the promise that he would be able to meet Prince Felix's wife Irina, who was in fact absent in the Crimea. King suggests that Yusupov had developed what amounted to an obsessive homosexual fixation on Rasputin and may have invited the priest to an assignation with himself. There were also suggestions that Yusupov might have sexually abused and even castrated Rasputin's corpse, though the police reports did not mention any such mutilation. Given that all present at the time have been dead for several decades, the most one can fairly state of the two accounts included here is that they tell a memorable and amazing story that contains a kernel of truth but that certain highly significant facts may well have been omitted and other aspects of the evening substantially embroidered. What is clear, however, is that by the time the night ended, Rasputin had been killed.

Source

Greg King, *The Man Who Killed Rasputin: Prince Felix Youssoupov and the Murder That Helped Bring Down the Russian Empire* (Secaucus, NJ: Carol Publishing Group, 1995), 175.

Further Reading

De Jonge, Alex. *The Life and Times of Grigorii Rasputin*. New York: Coward, McCann, and Geoghegan, 1982.

Dobson, Christopher. *Prince Felix Yusupov: The Man Who Murdered Rasputin*. London: Harrap, 1989.

(2383)

Fuhrmann, Joseph T. *Rasputin: A Life*. New York: Praeger, 1990.

King, Greg. *The Man Who Killed Rasputin: Prince Felix Youssoupov and the Murder That Helped Bring Down the Russian Empire*. Secaucus, NJ: Carol Publishing Group, 1995.

Lieven, Dominic. *Russia's Rulers under the Old Regime*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989.

Massie, Robert K. *Nicholas and Alexandra*. New York: Atheneum, 1967.

Moynahan, Brian. *Rasputin: The Saint Who Sinned*. London: Aurum, 1998.

Radzinsky, Edvard. *The Rasputin File*. Trans. Judson Rosengrant. New York: Nan A. Talese, 2000.

Shukman, Harold. *Rasputin*. Stroud, Gloucestershire, UK: Sutton, 1997.

Youssoupov, Prince Felix. *Lost Splendour*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1953.

MLA

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "42. The Murder of Rasputin, 29–30 December 1916." *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*, ABC-CLIO, 2005, pp. . *ABC-CLIO eBook Collection*, legacy.abc-clio.com/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2264.

Chicago Manual of Style

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "42. The Murder of Rasputin, 29–30 December 1916." In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005. <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2264>.

APA

Roberts, P. M., S. C. Tucker (2005). 42. The Murder of Rasputin, 29–30 December 1916. In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia* (pp.). Retrieved from <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2264>

(2384)

This page intentionally left blank

(2385)

SECTION SIX
NEW EXPECTATIONS

[Section Six: New Expectations](#)

[43. The Bolshevik Revolution](#) pp. 622-635

[44. Wilson's Fourteen Points](#) pp. 636-653

[45. Challenges to Western Dominance](#) pp. 654-669

[46. The War's Impact on International Radicalism](#) pp. 670-684

[47. Walter Lippmann on World War I and the International Role of the United States](#) pp. 685-8-1

[48. A Postwar German Intellectual Triumph](#) pp. 702-713

Essay 43. The Bolshevik Revolution

Revolution in Russia, 1917

In February 1917 a spontaneous revolution overthrew the existing tsarist government of Russia. The demands of waging a major war placed great strains upon Russian society, where an autocratic governmental and social system coexisted uneasily with industrialization and middle-class demands for change and liberalization. Initially, all political parties rallied around the tsarist government in the national crisis, but dissatisfaction soon became widespread. Russian industrial mobilization caused major economic dislocations, intensified because 37 percent of men of working age, among them many skilled workers, had joined the army by 1917, and the women and untrained workers who substituted for them were often unable to match their levels of production. The loss of many of Russia's (2386) most fertile agricultural regions to German occupation in 1914 and 1915 helped to create food shortages, as did heavy peasant enlistments in the army. The Russian railway network proved too rudimentary to meet the logistical challenges of supplying the needs of the army while providing civilians with the basic commodities needed to maintain an adequate standard of living. Tsar Nicholas II's decision in fall 1915 to take command of his armies in person inevitably made him the direct target of criticism when any military setback occurred, especially when the initially successful Brusilov offensive of 1916 ultimately collapsed in failure as German troops moved against Romania, which joined the Allies in fall 1916. In his absence Nicholas entrusted many of his official powers to his wife, the German-born Tsarina Alexandra Fyodorovna, a woman of imperious instincts and autocratic tendencies whose erratic meddling in state affairs eventually provoked fierce public complaints in the rather ineffective Duma, the Russian parliamentary assembly, that she was not merely incompetent but a German traitor taking orders from Berlin.

In December 1916 a court intrigue by highly connected aristocrats linked to the imperial family who hoped to save the Romanov dynasty brought the murder of the tsarina's favorite, the monk Grigory Yefimovich Rasputin, but this did little to mend matters. Instead, Rasputin's death triggered a wave of complaints and protests against the government, the product of massive war casualties, war weariness and declining morale, economic shortages and hardships, and administrative shortcomings. Soldiers at the front deserted in increasing numbers and began refusing to obey orders. On 8 March 1917 popular demonstrations over food shortages and the war broke out in working-class areas of Petrograd, the Russian capital, and within three days the city was in

chaos. The authorities summoned the security forces, the police, the Red Guards, and the Cossacks to repress the disturbances, but military units were reluctant to fire on the people. Nicholas II, still at the front, ordered the dissolution of the Duma, but its members ignored him and centrist politicians formed a provisional committee to establish a temporary government until order was restored. A few socialist deputies simultaneously announced the independent formation of the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet of Workers and Soldiers Deputies, which served as an alternative center of power in the capital. The Soviet promptly invited the people to send delegates to a new revolutionary government and on 14 March issued “Order Number One” exhorting all military units to arrest their officers, form revolutionary committees, and await further instructions from the Soviet. When the tsar attempted to return by train to the capital, revolutionary workers intercepted him at Pskov, and on 15 March 1917 he abdicated in favor of his brother.

For the next eight months political confusion reigned as the moderate-liberal provisional government supposedly ran Russia, but in practice the Petrograd Soviet served as an alternative center of authority. With the Soviet’s acquiescence, on 16 March the Duma organized a provisional government, in the expectation that once the war had ended elections would be held and a constitution promulgated. The provisional government’s first prime minister was the aristocratic Prince Georgy Yevgenyevich Lvov, but in late April 1917 War Minister Alexandr Kerensky, a gifted orator and the only person to hold office in both the Soviet and the provisional government, replaced him as premier. Under considerable pressure and receiving substantial financial inducements from its Allies—Great Britain, France, and the United States, which declared war on Germany at the beginning of April 1917—the provisional government committed itself to continuing the war and making no separate peace. In mid-April 1917 the radical socialist Vladimir Ilyich Lenin and thirty-two other revolutionaries returned from exile in Switzerland, their safe passage by sealed train through German territory facilitated by the German government, in the hope that Lenin’s leftist political leanings might help to destabilize Russia, while his much-reiterated opposition to the conflict might encourage antiwar forces within Russia. In late June 1917 a Russian offensive against Austrian forces in Galicia ended in disaster when German troops counterattacked. In July, Lenin and other Bolsheviks, the radical majority grouping within the Russian Social Democratic Party, took advantage of this turn of events to attempt a coup against the provisional government; when this failed he fled to Finland, while most of his associates were imprisoned. In early autumn the German capture of Riga in Finland and a new coup attempt by right-wing forces headed by (2387) General Lavr Kornilov further weakened

the provisional government, causing the fall of the existing cabinet. As the government sought to energize the people to resist Kornilov, prominent Bolsheviks, including Leon Trotsky, Lenin's closest associate, were released from jail and asked to help defend the revolution.

Throughout autumn 1917 the Russian situation deteriorated, as food shortages became widespread and the ruble, the Russian currency, collapsed. In late September the Bolsheviks began a new propaganda campaign, sounding the themes of "peace, bread, and land" and "all power to the Soviets," since local socialist councils modeled on the Petrograd Soviet had by then appeared throughout much of Russia. In early October, Trotsky became president of the Petrograd Soviet. Although later that month Kerensky formally proclaimed Russia a republic and began to arrange to hold a constitutional assembly, the Bolsheviks continued to plan another coup. Lenin secretly returned to Petrograd to become the political leader of the Bolsheviks, delegating the coordination of military operations to Trotsky. On 6–7 November 1917, as a congress of the various Russian Soviets met in Petrograd, Red Guards—troops loyal to the Soviet—seized strategic positions within the city and arrested members of the provisional government. Although Kerensky escaped he was unable to attract military support and instead fled abroad. That same evening the remnants of the opposition surrendered to the Bolsheviks, and Lenin announced the formation of a new Soviet government.

Under Lenin's leadership, the Bolsheviks had established the world's first Communist government and state, whose very existence as well as ideology challenged the legitimacy of all other existing nations and governing systems. The Communists themselves openly stated that the only regimes with any valid claim to exercise power were those that represented the working class; proclaimed their adherence to the international class struggle and their opposition to capitalism, imperialism, and bourgeois democracy; and urged the workers of other nations to emulate their own prowess in rejecting and overthrowing both aristocratic and liberal governments. Lenin also proclaimed the opening of a new diplomatic era, based on open negotiations rather than secret treaties; the right of peoples to choose their own governments; and anti-imperialism. In addition, he announced Russia's adherence to a peace settlement without annexations or indemnities and urged workers from both the Allied and Central Powers to withdraw their support from the war and insist on the conclusion of a just peace. Within a few weeks the Bolsheviks opened peace negotiations with Germany, though the terms Russia received at Brest Litovsk in February 1918 were so disadvantageous that some Bolsheviks, including Trotsky, argued against their acceptance. For three years, from 1918

to 1921, Russia was riven by brutal civil war before the Bolsheviks and the Soviet government finally won control. From then until the Soviet Union dissolved in the early 1990s, its existence served as a conscious permanent challenge to both liberal democratic and Fascist regimes elsewhere in the world, and its leaders sought to make their country the fountainhead of international Communist revolution.

The Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets, Speeches and Decrees, 7–8 November 1917

Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, Address to Workers, Soldiers, and Peasants, Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, 25 October [7 November] 1917

To Workers, Soldiers, and Peasants!

The Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers and Soldiers' Deputies has opened. The vast majority of the Soviets are represented at the Congress. A number of delegates from the Peasants' Soviets are also present. The mandate of the compromising Central Executive Committee has terminated. Backed by the will of the vast majority of the workers, soldiers, and peasants, backed by the victorious uprising of the workers and the garrison which has taken place in Petrograd, the Congress takes power into its own hands.

The Provisional Government has been overthrown. The majority of the members of the Provisional Government have already been arrested.

The Soviet government will propose an immediate democratic peace to all the nations and an immediate armistice on all fronts. It will secure the transfer of the land of the landed proprietors, the crown and the monasteries to the peasant committees without (2388) compensation; it will protect the rights of the soldiers by introducing complete democracy in the army; it will establish workers' control over production; it will ensure the convocation of the Constituent Assembly at the time appointed; it will see to it that bread is supplied to the cities and prime necessities to the villages; it will guarantee all the nations inhabiting Russia the genuine right to self-determination.

The Congress decrees: all power in the localities shall pass to the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies, which must guarantee genuine revolutionary order.

The Congress calls upon the soldiers in the trenches to be vigilant and firm. The Congress of Soviets is convinced that the revolutionary army will be able to defend the revolution against all attack of imperialism until such time as the new government succeeds in concluding a democratic peace, which it will propose directly to all peoples. The new government will do everything to fully supply the revolutionary army by means of a determined policy of requisitions and taxation of the propertied classes, and also will improve the condition of the soldiers' families.

The Kornilov men—Kerensky, Kaledin and others—are attempting to bring troops against Petrograd. Several detachments, whom Kerensky had moved by deceiving them, have come over to the side of the insurgent people.

Soldiers, actively resist Kerensky the Kornilovite! Be on your guard!

Railwaymen, hold up all troop trains dispatched by Kerensky against Petrograd!

Soldiers, workers in factory and office, the fate of the revolution and the fate of the democratic peace is in your hands!

Long live the revolution!

Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, Report on Peace, 26 October [8 November] 1917

The question of peace is a burning question, the painful question of the day. Much has been said and written on the subject, and all of you, no doubt, have discussed it quite a lot. Permit me, therefore, to proceed to read a declaration which the government you elect should publish.

Decree on Peace

The workers' and peasants' government, created by the Revolution of 24–25 October [6–7 November] and basing itself on the Soviet of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies, calls upon all the belligerent peoples and their government to start immediate negotiations for a just, democratic peace.

By a just or democratic peace, for which the overwhelming majority of the working class and other working people of all the belligerent countries, exhausted, tormented and racked by the war, are craving—a peace that has been most definitely and insistently demanded by the Russian workers and

peasants ever since the overthrow of the tsarist monarchy—by such a peace the government means an immediate peace without annexations (i.e., without the seizure of foreign lands, without the forcible incorporation of foreign nations) and without indemnities.

The government of Russia proposes that this kind of peace be immediately concluded by all the belligerent nations, and expresses its readiness to take all the resolute measures now, without the least delay, pending the final ratification of all the terms of such a peace by authoritative assemblies of the people's representatives of all countries and all nations.

In accordance with the sense of justice of democrats in general, and of the working class in particular, the government conceives the annexation or seizure of foreign lands to mean every incorporation of a small or weak nation into a large or powerful state without the precisely, clearly, and voluntarily expressed consent and wish of that nation, irrespective of the time when such forcible incorporation took place, irrespective also of the degree of development or backwardness of the nation forcibly annexed to the given state, or forcibly retained within its borders, and irrespective, finally, of whether this nation is in Europe or in distant, overseas countries.

If any nation whatsoever is forcibly retained within the borders of a given state, if, in spite of its expressed desire—no matter whether expressed in the press, at public meetings, in the decisions of parties, or in protests and uprisings against national oppression—is (2389) not accorded the right to decide the forms of its state existence by a free vote, taken after the complete evacuation of the [aggressive] troops of the incorporating or, generally, of the stronger nation and without the least pressure being brought to bear, such incorporation is annexation, i.e., seizure and violence.

The government considers it the greatest of crimes against humanity to continue this war over the issue of how to divide among the strong and rich nations the weak nationalities they have conquered, and solemnly announces its determination immediately to sign terms of peace to stop this war on the terms indicated, which are equally just for all nationalities without exception.

At the same time the government declares that it does not regard the above-mentioned peace terms as an ultimatum; in other words, it is prepared to consider any other peace terms, and insists only that they be advanced by any of the belligerent countries as speedily as possible, and that in the peace proposals there should be absolute clarity and the complete absence of all ambiguity and secrecy.

The government abolishes secret diplomacy, and, for its part, announces its firm intention to conduct all negotiations quite openly in full view of the whole people. It will proceed immediately with the full publication of the secret treaties endorsed or concluded by the government of land-owners and capitalists from February to 25 October [7 November], 1917. The government proclaims the unconditional and immediate annulment of everything contained in these secret treaties insofar as it is aimed, as is mostly the case, at securing advantages and privileges for the Russian landowners and capitalists and at the retention, or extension, of the annexations made by the Great Russians.

Proposing to the governments and peoples of all countries immediately to begin open negotiations for peace, the government, for its part, expresses its readiness to conduct these negotiations in writing, by telegraph, and by negotiations between representatives of the various countries, or at a conference of such representatives. In order to facilitate such negotiations, the government is appointing its plenipotentiary representative to neutral countries.

The government proposes an immediate armistice to the governments and people of all the belligerent countries, and, for its part, considers it desirable that this armistice should be concluded for a period of not less than three months, i.e., a period long enough to permit the completion of negotiations for peace with the participation of the representatives of all peoples or nations, without exception, involved in or compelled to take part in the war, and the summoning of authoritative assemblies of the representatives of the peoples of all countries for the final ratification of the peace terms.

While addressing this proposal for peace to the governments and peoples of all the belligerent countries, the Provisional Workers' and Peasants' Government of Russia appeals in particular also to the class-conscious workers of the three most advanced nations of mankind and the largest states participating in the present war, namely, Great Britain, France, and Germany. The workers of these countries have made the greatest contributions to the cause of progress and socialism; they have furnished the great examples of the Chartist movement in England, a number of revolutions of historic importance effected by the French proletariat, and, finally, the heroic struggle against the Anti-Socialist Law in Germany, and the prolonged, persistent and disciplined work of creating mass proletarian organisations in Germany, a work which serves as a model to the workers of the whole world. All these examples of proletarian heroism and historical creative work are a pledge that the workers of the countries mentioned will understand the duty that now faces them of saving mankind from the horrors of war and its consequences, that these workers, by comprehensive, determined, and supremely vigorous action, will help us to

conclude peace successfully, and at the same time emancipate the labouring and exploited masses of our population from all forms of slavery and all forms of exploitation.

The workers' and peasants' government, created by the Revolution of 24–25 October [6–7 November] and basing itself on the support of the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers', and Peasants' Deputies, must start immediate negotiations for peace. Our appeal must be addressed both to the governments and to the peoples. We cannot ignore the governments, for that would delay the possibility of concluding peace, and the people's government dare not do that; but we have no right not to appeal to the peoples at the same time.

(2390)

Everywhere there are differences between the governments and the peoples, and we must therefore help the peoples to intervene in questions of war and peace. We will, of course, insist upon the whole of our programme for a peace without annexations and indemnities. We shall not retreat from it; but we must not give our enemies an opportunity to say that their conditions are different from ours and that therefore it is useless to start negotiations with us. No, we must deprive them of that advantageous position and not present our terms in the form of an ultimatum. Therefore the point is included that we are willing to consider any peace terms and all proposals. We shall consider them, but that does not necessarily mean that we shall accept them. We shall submit them for consideration to the Constituent Assembly which will have the power to decide what concessions can and what cannot be made. We are combating the deception practised by governments which pay lip-service to peace and justice, but in fact wage annexationist and predatory wars. No government will say all it thinks. We, however, are opposed to secret diplomacy and will act openly in full view of the whole people. We do not close our eyes to difficulties and never have done so. War cannot be ended by refusal, it cannot be ended by one side. We are proposing an armistice for three months, but shall not reject a shorter period, so that the exhausted army may breathe freely, even if only for a little while; moreover, in all the civilised countries national assemblies must be summoned for the discussion of the terms.

In proposing an immediate armistice, we appeal to the class-conscious workers of the countries that have done so much for the development of the proletarian movement. We appeal to the workers of Britain, where there was the Chartist movement, to the workers of France, who have in repeated uprisings displayed

the strength of their class-consciousness, and to the workers of Germany, who waged the fight against the Anti-Socialist Law and have created powerful organisations.

In the Manifesto [issued by the Petrograd Soviet] of 14 March [27 March], we called for the overthrow of the bankers, but, far from overthrowing our own bankers, we had entered into an alliance with them. Now we have overthrown the government of the bankers.

The governments and the bourgeoisie will make every effort to unite their forces and drown the workers' and peasants' revolution in blood. But the three years of war have been a good lesson to the masses—the Soviet movement in other countries and the mutiny in the German navy, which was crushed by the officer cadets of Wilhelm the hangman. Finally, we must remember that we are not living in the depths of Africa, but in Europe, where news can spread quickly.

The workers' movement will triumph and will pave the way to peace and socialism. [Prolonged applause.]

Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, Decision to Form the Workers' and Peasants' Government, Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, 26 October [8 November] 1917

The All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers', Soldiers', and Peasants' Deputies resolves:

To establish a provisional workers' and peasants' government, to be known as the Council of People's Commissars, to govern the country until the Constituent Assembly is convened. The management of individual branches of state activity is entrusted to commissions whose members shall ensure the fulfillment of the programme announced by the Congress, and shall work in close contact with mass organisations of men and women workers, sailors, soldiers, peasants and office employees. Governmental authority is vested in a collegium of the chairmen of those commissions, i.e., the Council of People's Commissars.

Control over the activities of the People's Commissars with the right to replace them is vested in the All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers', Peasants' and Soldiers' Deputies and its Central Executive Committee. . . .

Source

Marxists.org Internet Archive,
<http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/oct/25-26/26e.htm>.

Vladimir Ilyich Lenin (1870–1924)

Born Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov into a well-to-do Russian family of officials, the youthful Lenin was an excellent student. The execution in 1887 of his elder brother Aleksandr, a student at the University of St. Petersburg who was arrested for taking part in an abortive assassination plot against Tsar Alexander III, permanently radicalized Vladimir. Enrolling at Kazan University, he (2391) immediately absorbed himself in left-wing student politics and within three months was arrested, expelled from the university for taking part in a student demonstration, and sentenced to three years of internal exile on his grandparents' remote estate. While there he continued his studies of law as an external student at the University of St. Petersburg, graduating first in his class in 1891, and also read voraciously in the works of Karl Marx, Georgii Plekhanov, and other socialist writers. Passing the bar examinations the following year, Lenin moved to St. Petersburg in 1893, where he quickly became associated with a Marxist group and founded a radical faction of the Russian Social Democratic Party. In December 1895 Lenin was arrested and sentenced to fifteen months in prison and an additional three years in internal exile, during which time he wrote *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* (1898).

In 1900 Lenin left Russia for Stuttgart and the life of a professional revolutionary in Europe, publishing prolifically and moving frequently in order to escape the attentions of Russian agents. At this time he took the name Lenin as one of his numerous aliases. His pamphlet *What Is To Be Done?* (1902) called for revolution to be implemented by a small core of dedicated professional revolutionaries, thereby avoiding the risks of unfriendly infiltration and internal dissent. He became a leader of the Bolshevik faction within the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party, which sought rapid revolution spearheaded by workers and peasants, as opposed to the Menshevik faction, which favored gradualist evolution from monarchy to socialism guided by liberal bourgeois leaders. When World War I began, Lenin blamed the outbreak of hostilities upon the forces of international capitalism and imperialism and—unlike many socialists—totally refused to rally to the support of his own country's government. He quickly became one of the leaders of the most radical antiwar European socialists and set forth his views at length in *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1917). Lenin hoped that the

experience of war would destroy the existing European regimes and empires and thereby provide an opening for Marxist socialists to gain power throughout much of the world.

The overthrow of the tsarist government in Russia and German officials' offer to transport him back to Petrograd gave Lenin the long-awaited opportunity to put into practice the plans he had matured during years of exile. Austere, ruthless, unscrupulous, and uncompromising, Lenin nonetheless showed himself capable of dealing with harsh realities, which forced him to bow to German intransigence during the peace negotiations of early 1918 and adopt the New Economic Policy of 1921, measures that were not strictly consonant with Marxist theory. Soon after the Bolshevik revolution Lenin's health began to deteriorate, and before his death in January 1924 he suffered a series of strokes that eventually left him partially paralyzed and speechless.

About The Documents

The documents here are all public declarations and addresses Lenin gave before the All-Russia Congress of Soviets on the second and third days of the Bolshevik Revolution. This was obviously a time of some stress, and Lenin, albeit fueled by adrenalin and success, was under considerable time pressure when he prepared these speeches, which he knew would be widely reported. There was, however, nothing improvised about his speeches; he had, after all, had many years to contemplate what measures he would take if his struggles for revolution ever ended triumphantly. Lenin, who had spent many years out of Russia before returning in 1917, also needed to introduce himself as the new president of the Russian people, especially to the leading members of the Soviets upon whom the power of the new Bolshevik regime rested.

On the second evening of the revolution Lenin simply gave a brief address, welcoming the Soviet delegates and stating that the provisional government no longer existed and had been replaced by a Soviet government and that in the future all political power would reside in the various Soviets. He briefly outlined the new government's projected policies of land reform without compensation to proprietors; military measures to enshrine authority in the common soldiers; the control and ownership of production by workers; the supply of bread and other vital supplies to all; the eventual convocation of a constitutional assembly, to draft a new constitution for Russia; and the right of all nationalities within Russia itself to self-determination. Seeking to appease the military elements, he also promised that the new government would seek a democratic peace but that the army must continue fighting until this had been accomplished, and he promised to tax the (2392) "propertied classes" heavily

while providing more benefits for soldiers' families. Fearing that their swift victory might bring overconfidence, he finally urged all the assembled soldiers and workers to be ready to defend the revolution at all costs.

The following day Lenin made several additional lengthy speeches to the Congress of Soviets, where he was the most prominent figure. Most dealt at some length with internal policies, including the appropriation of the assets of the wealthy, industrialists, landowners, rentiers, and professional classes; the introduction of land reform; and short-term measures to alleviate existing hardships caused by the war. He finished the day by introducing a resolution to establish a "Council of People's Commissars" to govern the country until a Constituent Assembly could be convened. Lenin expected the Congress of Soviets to support those measures he was putting forward without overmuch debate.

Most significant in terms of Russia's international relations was his "Report on Peace," which effectively challenged not just Russia's enemies, the Central Powers, but also the Allied Powers, to whom Russia still theoretically belonged. Although the Bolsheviks had openly advocated peace for several months, by no means did all his listeners favor ending the war at any price, and Lenin needed to convince any dissenters that given Russia's desperate military position, his strategy was the wisest one available to the new regime. Although supposedly addressed to the Congress of Soviets, its broader intended audience was the working class and the left around the world. He deliberately and consciously appealed to the peoples of all countries, not just their governments. Regardless of the implications for the other belligerents, Lenin demanded the negotiation of an immediate "just, democratic peace," one "without annexations . . . and without indemnities." He hoped that other nations would join Russia in this quest but was, if necessary, prepared to seek a separate peace with the Central Powers. Lenin also urged the working classes of all belligerent nations to reject the war and force their rulers to seek peace immediately, or even to overthrow their existing governments and replace them with a workers' regime modeled on the new Soviet state. Secret diplomacy, he argued, must come to an end. Such exhortations threatened the legitimacy and security of all other governments then in existence and presaged what would become long decades of hostility between the Soviet Union and other noncommunist powers.

The threat Lenin's appeal posed was intensified by his opposition to "annexations," which effectively included every form of imperial and colonial rule, however "backward" the peoples subject to such domination might be, as well as the incorporation of territories into larger entities against the will of their inhabitants. He proclaimed the right of the people of all territories who did

not enjoy self-determination to take up arms against their oppressors. Lenin also charged that the belligerent nations were only fighting over how best to apportion such territories among themselves. He promised to publish immediately from the tsarist archives the secret treaties the Allies had signed among themselves in which they had agreed to divide with each other the spoils from their defeated enemies. Since Britain, France, Russia, and Italy had all promised one another portions of the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires, this charge was well founded and the publication of these secret accords was liable to be highly embarrassing to the Allies, who all claimed to be fighting for higher ideals, including civilization and democracy, not for mere selfish territorial gains.

Lenin's action was likely to be particularly compromising to the Allies at a critical juncture when the war hung in balance, their populations weary after more than three years of bitter, grinding, and, as it was coming to seem to many, pointless conflict to which no end yet seemed in sight, with the prospect that Russia's withdrawal from the war would enable Germany to concentrate most of its forces on the Western Front. Russia's own dire straits, which had helped to bring the Bolsheviks to power, made the negotiation of peace imperative. The manner in which Lenin proposed to do so, however, was deliberately designed as an affront to the other powers of the world, appealing to the international left while casting doubt upon the legitimacy of the Western empires and all capitalist and nonsocialist governments. In the immediate future, the Allies would soon find it essential to respond to the challenge Lenin had presented to them. For another seven decades, moreover, in the face of fierce Communist criticism most other powers would be forced in one way or another to defend the validity of the basis of their rule.

(2393)

Further Reading

Carr, E. H. *The Bolshevik Revolution, 1917–1923*. 3 vols. London: Macmillan, 1950–1953.

Laver, John. *Lenin: Liberator or Oppressor?* London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1994.

Lincoln, W. Bruce. *Passage through Armageddon: The Russians at War and in Revolution, 1914–1918*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1968.

Medvedev, Roy A. *The October Revolution*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1979.

Nation, R. Craig. *War on War: Lenin, the Zimmerwald Left, and the Origins of Communist Internationalism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1989.

Service, Robert. *Lenin: A Biography*. New York: Macmillan, 2000.

Ulam, Adam B. *The Bolsheviks: The Intellectual and Political History of the Triumph of Communism in Russia*. With new preface. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998.

Volkogonov, Dmitri. *Lenin: A New Biography*. Trans. Harold Shukman. New York: Free Press, 1994.

White, James D. *Lenin: The Practice and Theory of Revolution*. New York: Palgrave, 2001.

Williams, Beryl. *Lenin*. New York: Longman, 2000.

MLA

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "43. The Bolshevik Revolution." *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*, ABC-CLIO, 2005, pp. . *ABC-CLIO eBook Collection*, legacy.abc-clio.com/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2271.

Chicago Manual of Style

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "43. The Bolshevik Revolution." In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005. <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2271>.

APA

Roberts, P. M., S. C. Tucker (2005). 43. The Bolshevik Revolution. In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia* (pp.). Retrieved from <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2271>

Essay 44. President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points

Allied War Aims and the Fourteen Points

When World War I began, Allied war aims were unclear. The crisis of July 1914 developed so quickly that policymakers were initially preoccupied with responding to immediate challenges—for France, Belgium, and Russia enemy invasion, and for the British government first the decision whether or not to intervene and then the desperate effort to prevent a swift German victory over France. Britain originally claimed to be fighting in defense of international law and treaties and to seek no territorial expansion from the war but during 1915 and 1916 nonetheless took part in deliberations with the other Allies, who from summer 1915 included Italy, whereby not only would those areas of France and Belgium currently under German occupation be returned to their original governments (together, in France's case, with the border provinces of Alsace and Lorraine ceded to Germany in 1871), but each Allied Power would obtain control of portions of either or both the Ottoman and the Austro-Hungarian Empires. The prospect of such acquisitions was, indeed, the major reason that Italy and, in 1916, Romania decided to join the Allies rather than the Central Powers. Although these agreements remained secret, for centuries the great European powers had fought each other in competition for similar spoils.

By 1914, however, European leaders faced a situation very different from that in earlier wars. They needed to raise mass armies of millions of men, mobilize industry and agriculture for war, increase the burden of taxation on the wealthy, and persuade large civilian populations, many of whom possessed the vote, to support the war with enthusiasm and determination even though this might involve real sacrifices, hardships, and suffering. Early enthusiasm for the war, which all governments presented as a defensive one against vindictive aggressors, was widespread in almost all belligerent countries, but not always easy to sustain at a high pitch. The issue of popular motivation loomed larger over time as the war settled into a lengthy and largely stalemated conflict whose resolution was impossible to foresee, while casualties mounted, as did the demands on the civilian population. In some cases—Italy, for example—the prospect of acquiring long-coveted territories was a major inducement to support of the war, but over time more idealistic goals were often required.

Since the late eighteenth century the forces of both nationalism and liberalism had burgeoned throughout much of Europe, especially among the influential intellectual elites whose views were disproportionately significant in setting the tone of public opinion both domestically and internationally. From the

beginning of the war, each coalition claimed to be seeking higher objectives than simply its own territorial expansion and to represent the forces of civilization, humanity, progress, and liberal ideals. While many on the left supported the governments of their own countries, other members of the Second Socialist International also condemned the conflict as the regrettable but foreseeable outcome of international capitalist and imperialist competition among the Great Powers and demanded a nonpunitive negotiated peace settlement based on the principles of no territorial annexations and no indemnities imposed by the victorious powers (2394) upon the defeated. Such antiwar socialists also called on the workers of all countries to refuse to support the war either as soldiers or through their labor. The war also gave new impetus to nationalist forces within the various empires involved. Czechs, Poles, Serbs, Arabs, and others sought to create or reestablish independent states from portions of the Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman, and German Empires. Irish nationalists likewise hoped the war would facilitate their efforts to make Ireland entirely independent of Great Britain and in April 1916 launched a bloody though unsuccessful uprising to this end. Independence activists normally appealed to the principle of national self-determination to justify their often violent actions.

Coming after several decades when the great powers had repeatedly and successfully resolved international crises without resorting to major hostilities, the outbreak of World War I and the massive and ever-growing cost in casualties, money, resources, and devastation impelled many to seek to prevent future wars. By spring 1915 private groups of well-connected politicians, intellectuals, and others who favored the establishment after the war of an international organization to mediate future international crises and thereby avert hostilities had emerged in Britain, France, and the United States. A year later, President Woodrow Wilson of the United States, speaking before the League to Enforce Peace, the most prominent American body favoring such policies, committed his country in principle to the creation of such an organization. In conversations with Colonel Edward M. House, Wilson's confidential advisor, British Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey expressed his own personal support for such proposals, impelled most probably by a mixture of genuine belief and a desire to conciliate the United States, continued access to whose industrial and financial resources was vital to the Allied war effort. By the end of 1916 the British Foreign Office had embarked on serious studies of potential proposals for such an organization. In December 1916 Wilson, fearful that his country might be drawn into the war, made one last effort to mediate the conflict and negotiate a compromise peace settlement, asking both sides to state their war objectives and formally pledging the United States to

assist in the creation of a postwar organization to help prevent future conflicts. Both sides politely but firmly rejected this overture, and in January 1917 the German government declared that it would resume unrestricted submarine warfare, a policy that would almost certainly involve the destruction of American merchant shipping and the deaths of American citizens and was therefore liable to bring the United States into the war.

The United States broke diplomatic relations with Germany immediately and, after several incidents in which German submarines sank American and Allied merchant vessels, with consequent loss of American lives, on 2 April 1917 Wilson asked the U.S. Congress for a declaration of war on Germany. The president consciously sought to place the grounds for intervention on grounds far more exalted than the simple defense of U.S. rights. After stating that the United States had no quarrel with the German people, only with their government, he told his audience within and outside the United States:

The world must be made safe for democracy. Its peace must be planted upon the tested foundations of political liberty. We have no selfish ends to serve. We desire no conquest, no dominion. We seek no indemnities for ourselves, no material compensation for the sacrifices we shall freely make. We are but one of the champions of the rights of mankind. We shall be satisfied when those rights have been made as secure as the faith and the freedom of nations can make them. (Wilson, address to Congress, 2 April 1917)

From the American perspective the war, in Wilson's formulation, was therefore to be a crusade to prevent future wars by encouraging the spread of democracy and "the rights of mankind." The president distrusted the Allies, whom he considered to be motivated primarily by narrowly self-interested objectives, and believed their governments did not share American ideals and values. Although linked with them in a coalition, he therefore refused to allow the United States to be termed an Ally, and instead his country entered the war as an Associated Power, which it remained. Wilson nonetheless believed that the Allies' desperate need for American supplies, funding, and men would leave them no alternative but to accept his recasting and amplification of war aims, sometimes termed the New Diplomacy. Among both the Allied (2395) and Central Powers, Wilson's high-minded enlightened internationalism appealed powerfully to liberal forces and the left.

Despite the secret treaties the Allies had concluded among themselves, after more than thirty months of war their stated war aims remained vague in many respects, a policy Wilson emulated. While all agreed that German troops must leave occupied Belgium and France and that the latter should receive Alsace

and Lorraine, other territorial commitments might have proved self-defeating. As late as 1918, the Allies hoped it might be possible to conclude a separate peace with Austria-Hungary or the Ottoman Empire, a course of action that definite commitments to the breakup of either empire would have precluded. It was likewise very unclear what conditions would obtain when the war ended on the Eastern Front, where Germany and Austria-Hungary faced Russia. By the end of 1917, however, several new developments impelled the Allies to be far more specific as to their war objectives. American troops did not arrive in France in any significant numbers until spring 1918, and in the interval the war turned against the Allies. After the disastrous failure of the Nivelle offensive, in spring 1917 widespread mutinies occurred among French troops and, although they were suppressed and order restored, the French armies were left in no condition to launch future major offensives. Throughout July to November 1917, British troops waged the inconclusive Third Battle of Ypres (also known as Passchendaele), deepening the British-held Ypres salient by perhaps 5 miles at a cost of some 300,000 British casualties. In October 1917 German troops inflicted a crushing defeat on Italian troops at Caporetto. On the Eastern Front, Russian forces were routed in late summer and autumn 1917, helping to precipitate a second revolution in that country in November 1917, which brought to power a radical Socialist, or Communist, government headed by the Bolshevik revolutionary Vladimir Ilyich Lenin. A passionate opponent of the war, he immediately upon taking power announced that he intended to open peace negotiations with Germany and Austria-Hungary, opening the prospect that the Germans would soon be able to concentrate all their forces against France and Britain on the Western Front.

Lenin's seizure of power in Russia posed additional challenges for the Allies. Heading the world's first Communist government, he hoped that the workers of other states would emulate Russia, rise in revolution, and overthrow their existing rulers, a course he vocally urged upon them, arguing that only governments representative of working-class interests were truly legitimate. Lenin also urged the workers of the remaining belligerent countries to withdraw their support from the war and force their governments to sue for peace. Determined to undermine the credibility of the Allied Powers and to undercut their claims to moral superiority over the Central Powers, in part to justify his decision to abandon them and seek a separate peace, he also published the various secret treaties and agreements on the future fate of Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian, and German territories that the Allies had concluded among themselves, calling into question the Allied contention that they were fighting for principles higher than narrow national interests.

In the second half of 1917 several peace initiatives also put the onus on the Allies to justify their continuation of an increasingly costly and inconclusive war. In July 1917 a largely socialist majority of members of the German Reichstag passed a resolution calling for a negotiated peace without annexations or indemnities, a theme taken up by a congress of socialists convened that fall in neutral Stockholm, the Swedish capital, a gathering the Allied governments forbade socialist and labor would-be representatives from their own countries to attend. In August 1917 Pope Benedict XV appealed to the leaders of all the Allied and Central Powers to reach a liberal peace settlement. Under Emperor Karl, who ascended the throne in November 1916, Austrian officials were receptive to the possibility of a separate peace. Without Germany's knowledge, in early 1917 Karl sent out feelers to the Allies, though these were ultimately unsuccessful; in August Austria once again expressed interest in Benedict's suggestions; and in December 1917 Austro-Hungarian Foreign Minister Count Ottokar Czernin issued another call for a negotiated peace. In practice, the German military high command, determined to win outright victory in both the West and East, intransigently blocked all such overtures, but in 1917 this fact was not generally known.

Given these circumstances, the Allied governments, especially that of Britain, came under significant pressure to justify their continuation of the war.

(2396)

Popular morale in both Britain and France was flagging. In November 1917 the Conservative Lord Lansdowne, a former British foreign secretary, publicly appealed for a negotiated peace on the grounds that the war was destroying European civilization and any victory that was attained would leave both sides equally exhausted. By fall 1917 leaders of the British Labour Party felt that, by comparison with Wilson's stirring pronouncements, which both they and other less prowar labor organizations, including the Independent Labor Party and Union of Democratic Control, had all welcomed, British war aims were limited and uninspiring. Labour leader Arthur Henderson, who had a seat in the British War Cabinet, returned from a visit to Russia urging that if Russia were to remain in the war, the British government must reformulate its war aims so as to appeal to liberal forces. The Bolshevik Revolution of November 1917 gave added force to these criticisms. In December the Labour Party told the British government that its continued endorsement of the war and the government's ever-tightening conscription policies depended upon receiving a clear public statement of acceptable and justifiable British war aims. In the "Memorandum on War Aims" drafted in collaboration with the Trades Union Congress, the

Labour Party demanded a program to ensure that “there should be henceforth on earth no more war” that included not just the creation of an international organization for that purpose but also the establishment of democratic political systems in all countries; open diplomacy; the abandonment of imperialism; disarmament; and government ownership of the munitions industry.

Seeking to win the loyalties of the left at home and abroad, British Prime Minister David Lloyd George and Wilson each made major speeches on the subject of war aims. Lloyd George spoke first, on 5 January, addressing the Trades Union Congress at Caxton Hall. Although the principles he enunciated did not go as far as the “Memorandum on War Aims” envisaged, he stated that the Allies had no desire to destroy Germany, Austria-Hungary, or Turkey, or to dictate their postwar form of government, and that the Allies were merely fighting a war of self-defense. The harsh peace conditions Germany had just presented to Russia at Brest Litovsk, whereby Russia would lose much of its territory and pay heavy indemnities, strengthened his case that the Central Powers were not offering genuinely liberal peace terms. Lloyd George repeated the existing British position on France and Belgium and, while disavowing any desire to break up the Austro-Hungarian Empire, expressed himself in favor of at least limited self-determination for minorities there and in the Ottoman Empire. The Allied secret treaties might, he suggested, be renegotiated in the light of new circumstances, and the peace conference would determine the disposition of Germany’s former colonies. The British premier also came out strongly in favor of “the creation of some international organization to limit the burden of armaments and diminish the probability of war.” For the most part, this speech met the concerns of British labor and successfully mollified those who had formerly been critical of the war effort.

Speaking three days later before the U.S. Congress, in his much more famous “Fourteen Points” address Wilson produced an ideological liberal and internationalist manifesto crafted to appeal not just to his own country but to progressive forces around the world. It was a deliberate effort to regain the initiative from Lenin, with whom the president felt a conscious sense of competition for the loyalties of the left.

Source

George W. Egerton, *Great Britain and the Creation of the League of Nations: Strategy, Politics, and International Organization, 1914–1919* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 56, 61.

President Woodrow Wilson, “The Fourteen Points,” Address to Joint Session of the U.S. Congress, 8 January 1918

Gentlemen of the Congress:

Once more, as repeatedly before, the spokesmen of the Central Empires have indicated their desire to discuss the objects of the war and the possible basis of a general peace. Parleys has been in progress at Brest-Litovsk between Russian representatives and representatives of the Central Powers to which the attention of all the belligerents has been invited for the purpose of ascertaining whether it may be possible to extend these parleys into a general conference with regard to terms of peace and settlement.

The Russian representatives presented not only a perfectly definite statement of the principles upon (2397) which they would be willing to conclude peace but also an equally definite program of the concrete application of those principles. The representatives of the Central Powers, on their part, presented an outline of settlement which, if much less definite, seemed susceptible of liberal interpretation until their specific program of practical terms was added. That program proposed no concessions at all either to the sovereignty of Russia or to the preferences of the populations with whose fortunes it dealt, but meant, in a word, that the Central Empires were to keep every foot of territory their armed forces had occupied—every province, every city, every point of vantage—as a permanent addition to their territories and their power.

It is a reasonable conjecture that the general principles of settlement which they at first suggested originated with the more liberal statesmen of Germany and Austria, the men who have begun to feel the force of their own people's thought and purpose, while the concrete terms of actual settlement came from the military leaders who have no thought but to keep what they have got. The negotiations have been broken off. The Russian representatives were sincere and in earnest. They cannot entertain such proposals of conquest and domination.

The whole incident is full of significance. It is also full of perplexity. With whom are the Russian representatives dealing? For whom are the representatives of the Central Empires speaking? Are they speaking for the majorities of their respective parliaments or for the minority parties, that military and imperialistic minority which has so far dominated their whole policy and controlled the affairs of Turkey and of the Balkan states which have felt obliged to become their associates in this war?

The Russian representatives have insisted, very justly, very wisely, and in the true spirit of modern democracy, that the conferences they have been holding with the Teutonic and Turkish statesmen should be held within open, not closed, doors, and all the world has been audience, as was desired. To whom have we been listening, then? To those who speak the spirit and intention of the resolutions of the German Reichstag of the 9th of July last, the spirit and intention of the Liberal leaders and parties of Germany, or to those who resist and defy that spirit and intention and insist upon conquest and subjugation? Or are we listening, in fact, to both, unreconciled and in open and hopeless contradiction? These are very serious and pregnant questions. Upon the answer to them depends the peace of the world.

But, whatever the results of the parleys at Brest-Litovsk, whatever the confusions of counsel and of purpose in the utterances of the spokesmen of the Central Empires, they have again attempted to acquaint the world with their objects in the war and have again challenged their adversaries to say what their objects are and what sort of settlement they would deem just and satisfactory. There is no good reason why that challenge should not be responded to, and responded to with the utmost candor. We did not wait for it. Not once, but again and again, we have laid our whole thought and purpose before the world, not in general terms only, but each time with sufficient definition to make it clear what sort of definite terms of settlement must necessarily spring out of them. Within the last week [British prime minister] Mr. Lloyd George has spoken with admirable candor and in admirable spirit for the people and Government of Great Britain.

There is no confusion of counsel among the adversaries of the Central Powers, no uncertainty of principle, no vagueness of detail. The only secrecy of counsel, the only lack of fearless frankness, the only failure to make definite statement of the objects of the war, lie with Germany and her allies. The issues of life and death hang upon these definitions. No statesman who has the least conception of his responsibility ought for a moment to permit himself to continue this tragical and appalling outpouring of blood and treasure unless he is sure beyond a peradventure that the objects of the vital sacrifice are part and parcel of the very life of Society and that the people for whom he speaks think them right and imperative as he does.

There is, moreover, a voice calling for these definitions of principle and of purpose which is, it seems to me, more thrilling and more compelling than any of the many moving voices with which the troubled air of the world is filled. It is the voice of the Russian people. They are prostrate and all but hopeless, it would seem, before the grim power of Germany, which has hitherto known no

relenting and no pity. Their power, apparently, is shattered. And yet their soul is not subservient. They will not yield either in principle or in action. Their conception of what is right, of what is humane (2398) and honorable for them to accept, has been stated with a frankness, a largeness of view, a generosity of spirit, and a universal human sympathy which must challenge the admiration of every friend of mankind; and they have refused to compound their ideals or desert others that they themselves may be safe.

They call to us to say what it is that we desire, in what, if in anything, our purpose and our spirit differ from theirs; and I believe that the people of the United States would wish me to respond, with utter simplicity and frankness. Whether their present leaders believe it or not, it is our heartfelt desire and hope that some way may be opened whereby we may be privileged to assist the people of Russia to attain their utmost hope of liberty and ordered peace.

It will be our wish and purpose that the processes of peace, when they are begun, shall be absolutely open and that they shall involve and permit henceforth no secret understandings of any kind. The day of conquest and aggrandizement is gone by; so is also the day of secret covenants entered into in the interest of particular governments and likely at some unlooked-for moment to upset the peace of the world. It is this happy fact, now clear to the view of every public man whose thoughts do not still linger in an age that is dead and gone, which makes it possible for every nation whose purposes are consistent with justice and the peace of the world to avow now or at any other time the objects it has in view.

We entered this war because violations of right had occurred which touched us to the quick and made the life of our own people impossible unless they were corrected and the world secure once for all against their recurrence. What we demand in this war, therefore, is nothing peculiar to ourselves. It is that the world be made fit and safe to live in; and particularly that it be made safe for every peace-loving nation which, like our own, wishes to live its own life, determine its own institutions, be assured of justice and fair dealing by the other peoples of the world as against force and selfish aggression. All the peoples of the world are in effect partners in this interest, and for our own part we see very clearly that unless justice be done to others it will not be done to us. The program of the world's peace, therefore, is our program; and that program, the only possible program, as we see it, is this:

I. Open covenants of peace, openly arrived at, after which there shall be no private international understandings of any kind but diplomacy shall proceed always frankly and in the public view.

II. Absolute freedom of navigation upon the seas, outside territorial waters, alike in peace and in war, except as the seas may be closed in whole or in part by international action for the enforcement of international covenants.

III. The removal, so far as possible, of all economic barriers and the establishment of an equality of trade conditions among all the nations consenting to the peace and associating themselves for its maintenance.

IV. Adequate guarantees given and taken that national armaments will be reduced to the lowest point consistent with domestic safety.

V. A free, open-minded, and absolutely impartial adjustment of all colonial claims, based upon a strict observance of the principle that in determining all such questions of sovereignty the interests of the populations concerned must have equal weight with the equitable claims of the government whose title is to be determined.

VI. The evacuation of all Russian territory and such a settlement of all questions affecting Russia as will secure the best and freest cooperation of the other nations of the world in obtaining for her an unhampered and unembarrassed opportunity for the independent determination of her own political development and national policy and assure her of a sincere welcome into the society of free nations under institutions of her own choosing; and, more than a welcome, assistance also of every kind that she may need and may herself desire. The treatment accorded Russia by her sister nations in the months to come will be the acid test of their good will, of their comprehension of her needs as distinguished from their own interests, and of their intelligent and unselfish sympathy.

VII. Belgium, the whole world will agree, must be evacuated and restored, without any attempt to limit the sovereignty which she enjoys in common with all other free nations. No other single act will serve as this will serve to restore confidence among the nations in the laws which they have themselves set and determined for the government of their relations with one another. Without this healing act the whole structure and validity of international law is forever impaired.

VIII. All French territory should be freed and the invaded portions restored, and the wrong done to (2399) France by Prussia in 1871 in the matter of Alsace-Lorraine, which has unsettled the peace of the world for nearly fifty years, should be righted, in order that peace may once more be made secure in the interest of all.

IX. A readjustment of the frontiers of Italy should be effected along clearly recognizable lines of nationality.

X. The peoples of Austria-Hungary, whose place among the nations we wish to see safeguarded and assured, should be accorded the freest opportunity of autonomous development.

XI. Rumania, Serbia, and Montenegro should be evacuated; occupied territories restored; Serbia accorded free and secure access to the sea; and the relations of the several Balkan states to one another determined by friendly counsel along historically established lines of allegiance and nationality; and international guarantees of the political and economic independence and territorial integrity of the several Balkan states should be entered into.

XII. The Turkish portion of the present Ottoman Empire should be assured a secure sovereignty, but the other nationalities which are now under Turkish rule should be assured an undoubted security of life and an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development, and the Dardanelles should be permanently opened as a free passage to the ships and commerce of all nations under international guarantees.

XIII. An independent Polish state should be erected which should include the territories inhabited by indisputably Polish populations, which should be assured a free and secure access to the sea, and whose political and economic independence and territorial integrity should be guaranteed by international covenant.

XIV. A general association of nations must be formed under specific covenants for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike.

In regard to these essential rectifications of wrong and assertions of right we feel ourselves to be intimate partners of all the governments and peoples associated together against the Imperialists. We cannot be separated in interest or divided in purpose. We stand together until the end. For such arrangements and covenants we are willing to fight and to continue to fight until they are achieved; but only because we wish the right to prevail and desire a just and stable peace such as can be secured only by removing the chief provocations to war, which this program does remove. We have no jealousy of German greatness, and there is nothing in this program that impairs it. We grudge her no achievement or distinction of learning or of pacific enterprise such as have made her record very bright and very enviable. We do not wish to injure her or

to block in any way her legitimate influence or power. We do not wish to fight her either with arms or with hostile arrangements of trade if she is willing to associate herself with us and the other peace-loving nations of the world in covenants of justice and law and fair dealing. We wish her only to accept a place of equality among the peoples of the world,—the new world in which we now live,—instead of a place of mastery.

Neither do we presume to suggest to her any alteration or modification of her institutions. But it is necessary, we must frankly say, and necessary as a preliminary to any intelligent dealings with her on our part, that we should know whom her spokesmen speak for when they speak to us, whether for the Reichstag majority or for the military party and the men whose creed is imperial domination.

We have spoken now, surely, in terms too concrete to admit of any further doubt or question. An evident principle runs through the whole program I have outlined. It is the principle of justice to all peoples and nationalities, and their right to live on equal terms of liberty and safety with one another, whether they be strong or weak.

Unless this principle be made its foundation no part of the structure of international justice can stand. The people of the United States could act upon no other principle; and to the vindication of this principle they are ready to devote their lives, their honor, and everything they possess. The moral climax of this the culminating and final war for human liberty has come, and they are ready to put their own strength, their own highest purpose, their own integrity and devotion to the test.

Source

Arthur S. Link, ed., *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson, November 11, 1917–January 15, 1918*, Vol. 45 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), 534–539.

Woodrow Wilson (1856–1924)

Wilson, a Democrat who was elected president of the United States in 1912, had acquired little international (2400) experience before taking office. Born in Virginia, the son of a Presbyterian minister, he was greatly influenced by his father's stern religious beliefs, which he inherited. Wilson was not a professional politician but a leading academic specialist in government. He had taught at Bryn Mawr College and Princeton University, becoming president of

the latter in 1902. An aloof man with few close friends and happiest in the company of his wife and daughters, Wilson was also an inspiring orator whose rhetoric impelled many of his auditors to become devoted followers. At Princeton he introduced modernizing reforms to the graduate program before winning election in 1910 as governor of New Jersey, running on a progressive platform of social reform. In 1912 he advocated similar policies when running for president of the United States. After taking office, Wilson enacted an extensive program of measures intended to reform and rationalize the United States politically and economically.

When World War I began in Europe in August 1914, a conflict whose effects within the United States were politically divisive, Wilson appealed to his countrymen to remain neutral in thought as well as action on the conflict. Over the following thirty months, he tried several times to serve as a mediator in the war, but in each case his overtures were rejected. Apart from his genuine hatred of the devastating effects of war, another reason Wilson sought peace was his justified fear that otherwise the United States might well be drawn into the fray. German submarine attacks on Allied merchant shipping in 1915 and 1916 and Wilson's reluctance to compromise American rights as a neutral power, including the right of Americans to trade with the Allies and to travel freely on belligerent merchant vessels, precipitated a series of crises with Germany over its successive sinkings of the *Lusitania*, the *Arabic*, and the *Sussex*.

In spring 1916 Wilson endorsed the postwar creation of an international organization to prevent future conflicts. After American intervention in April 1917, he became the foremost international advocate of liberal war aims, and his rousing speeches on the subject caught the imagination of progressive individuals and groups in every country, including the Central Powers. A man of soaring ambition and great moral certainty, Wilson saw it as his mission not merely to protect the interests of his own country but to remake the entire international system on what he considered to be American principles. When he arrived in Europe in late 1918 to attend the Paris Peace Conference, Wilson was the subject of mass adulation. Although he was forced to compromise on some aspects of the peace settlement during the conference, it was largely due to his insistence that the League of Nations was created at this time. Ironically, the United States then failed to join the organization. When Wilson returned to the United States, he undertook a grueling public speaking tour in support of American membership, but in September 1919 he suffered a major stroke, which left him an invalid for the rest of his life. The ailing president's refusal to permit his supporters in the U.S. Senate to accept reservations to the League

charter was one major reason the United States neither ratified the Treaty of Versailles nor entered the League of Nations.

About The Document

Wilson's Fourteen Points speech was not merely an attempt to revitalize leftist and liberal elements in the Allied countries to support the ongoing war effort but was also one of the seminal documents of twentieth-century U.S. foreign policy. The president presented a program of war aims, much of which effectively sought to recast the entire international system on liberal internationalist lines, whose implementation has ever since been one of the major impulses governing the formulation of American diplomacy. He envisaged the United States not simply as a Great Power resembling other Great Powers and demanding a prominent place within the existing international structure but as an exceptional state whose special insights would lead the rest of the world to a new diplomatic order. Whereas three of Lloyd George's closest advisors had helped to produce drafts of the British prime minister's speech three days earlier, which they then melded together according to his preferences—a normal practice for politicians—Wilson, a secretive man with great faith in his own powers of expression and intellectual abilities, wrote this speech himself, as he normally did his major addresses, and consulted few people over its themes and wording. On some details, such as his offer of autonomy rather than total independence to component national blocs within the Austro-Hungarian Empire, a tactic adopted in order to leave open the possibility of a separate peace with Austria-Hungary, Wilson did, however, draw on some of the recommendations of the "Inquiry," a think (2401) tank of intellectuals and academics assembled by his advisor Colonel Edward M. House and officially attached to the State Department.

The immediate occasion of this speech was the president's desire to explain to Congress, the American people, and others why the United States and the Allies had declined Russian President Vladimir Ilyich Lenin's invitation to participate in the peace negotiations between Russia and the Central Powers then in progress at the Finnish city of Brest Litovsk. Wilson disposed of this rather swiftly, stating accurately that the peace terms offered there were far from being the liberal and lenient ones that Russia had hoped to receive or, indeed, that the Reichstag had suggested the previous summer, and it would be extremely disadvantageous for the Allies to accept such a settlement. He did, however, tactfully express admiration for the "generosity of spirit" and "universal human sympathy" of the war aims stated by the Russian leaders and his hope that at some future date the United States would be able "to assist the people of Russia to attain their utmost hope of liberty and ordered peace."

Wilson also affirmed his own faith in the principles of open diplomacy expressed by Lenin, stating that in the future negotiations among nations would undoubtedly be conducted along these lines, and rightly so.

The meat of Wilson's speech lay in the fourteen points of a future peace settlement that he laid out. Eight were concerned primarily with specific territorial details: the Central Powers were to evacuate all Romanian, Serbian, Montenegrin, Russian, Belgian, and French territory, including Alsace-Lorraine; Italy's frontiers would be adjusted so as to incorporate ethnic Italian areas into the country; the component nationalities of the Austro-Hungarian Empire would enjoy "the freest opportunity of autonomous development," a compromise formulation tactfully designed to preserve the possibility of a separate peace with Austria; Serbia would gain access to the sea; a general Balkan settlement would be put in place; non-Turkish nationalities of the Ottoman empire should receive autonomy and unfettered development; and an independent Poland would be established. The precise boundaries of all these new territorial arrangements were left unclear, to be decided at the future peace conference, where it would be amply demonstrated that the devil lay in the details.

Even though the exact implementation of these provisions would give rise to many bitter disputes, the more innovative portions of Wilson's speech were those that drew on the tenets of classic liberalism to demand a reworking of the existing state of international relations. As he had on several other occasions, Wilson urged the creation of "[a] general association of nations" that, by guaranteeing "political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike," would prevent future wars. Wilson's suggestion of a universal guarantee of all states' independence, which member powers would presumably be obliged to enforce, went far beyond most schemes advanced by the contemporary peace movement in both the United States and Britain and would ultimately prove a major stumbling block when he sought Senate ratification of the Treaty of Versailles. He also expressed himself in favor of "open covenants of peace, openly arrived at," a major break with traditional diplomatic practices of secret negotiations and the nonpublication of some major international agreements; complete freedom of the seas, an implicit challenge to the basis of British naval supremacy; free and equal trade; the reduction of armaments; and the "adjustment of all colonial claims," with equal weight given to the interests of the "population concerned" and the colonial rulers. In practice, at the Paris Peace Conference this provision was only applied to colonies belonging to the defeated powers, but its very inclusion among Wilson's principles was an encouragement to nationalist movements

within the empires of the Allied and neutral powers, for whom it soon served as a rallying cry. The young Vietnamese activist Ho Chi Minh, for example, took it so seriously that he presented a petition to the statesmen assembled at the Paris Peace Conference demanding that Vietnam enjoy greater autonomy from French rule and that the indigenous population should receive better treatment and greater equality with the French. German officials, meanwhile, seized on this as an opportunity to attack the legitimacy of British rule in Egypt, India, and Ireland.

In the new world Wilson envisaged, the security and self-determination of all nations, large and small, would be guaranteed, while imperialism and armaments would disappear and freedom of navigation, trade, and investment would be assured. It was an astonishingly ambitious program, particularly for a (2402) nation whose pre-1914 international role had been decidedly limited by comparison with that of Britain, France, Germany, or Japan. Wilson also told the Germans that they would receive fair treatment from the Allies and hinted discreetly that a democratic government might well receive better peace terms. Nine months later, in October 1918, when German officials began to seek an armistice on the basis of the Fourteen Points, they chose to open negotiations with the U.S. president alone. He in turn insisted on dealing with a liberal government, whereupon Prince Max of Baden was appointed chancellor. Shortly afterward, Kaiser Wilhelm II was encouraged to abdicate and a government dominated by Social Democrats took power, moves the German Foreign Office hoped would please the American president and persuade him to grant them more lenient peace terms, though in reality this strategy proved unavailing. The belief of Wilson, shared by other American and European liberals of his time, that democratic nations were inherently more likely to be peaceful and antimilitarist implicitly anticipated the arguments of the Princeton political scientist Michael Doyle that democracies never go to war with each other, an outlook that U.S. policy makers of the 1990s made into something close to a dogma.

In the longer run, Wilson's principles of the juridical equality of all nations, national self-determination, free trade, anti-imperialism, and disarmament would form a program of international reform that American policy makers would seek to implement for the rest of the twentieth century and beyond. The United States assumed an often messianic mission to improve the world rather than simply accept the existing balance of power system and attempt to maximize American influence within it, the strategy adopted by former President Theodore Roosevelt, Wilson's greatest contemporary rival in terms of seeking a greater world role for his country. Then and now, many governments

and individuals, not just those who did not share Wilson's principles, found the American commitment to them arrogant and even hypocritical, given that it often coexisted with a determined unilateralist promotion of specific American national interests. Whatever the merits of the U.S. position, it was Wilson who unequivocally stated his country's intention to function as an exceptionalist nation possessing a special mission to improve and reform the manner in which the other countries of the world dealt with each other internationally and even conducted their own internal affairs.

Further Reading

Ambrosius, Lloyd E. *Wilsonian Statecraft: Theory and Practice of Liberal Internationalism During World War I*. Wilmington, DE: SR Books, 1991.

Cooper, John Milton, Jr. *Breaking the Heart of the World: Woodrow Wilson and the Fight for the League of Nations*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Egerton, George W. *Great Britain and the Creation of the League of Nations: Strategy, Politics, and International Organization, 1914–1919*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978.

Esposito, David M. *The Legacy of Woodrow Wilson: American War Aims in World War I*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 1996.

Ferrell, Robert H. *Woodrow Wilson and World War I, 1917–1921*. New York: Harper and Row, 1985.

Knock, Thomas J. *To End All Wars: Woodrow Wilson and the Quest for a New World Order*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992.

Link, Arthur S. *Wilson*. 5 vols. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1947–1965.

Macmillan, Margaret. *Paris, 1919: Six Months That Changed the World*. New York: Random House, 2002.

Ninkovich, Frank. *The Wilsonian Century: U.S. Foreign Policy since 1900*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999.

Thompson, John A. *Woodrow Wilson*. London: Longman, 2002.

MLA

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "44. Wilson's Fourteen Points." *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*, ABC-CLIO, 2005, pp. . *ABC-CLIO eBook Collection*, legacy.abc-clio.com/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2279.

Chicago Manual of Style

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "44. Wilson's Fourteen Points." In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005. <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2279>.

APA

Roberts, P. M., S. C. Tucker (2005). 44. Wilson's Fourteen Points. In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia* (pp.). Retrieved from <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2279>

Essay 45. Challenges to Western Dominance

Opposition to Racism and Imperialism

Even before the Great War, imperialism and racism, though still dominant, were coming under attack from liberals and socialists. Marxists went so far as to blame the outbreak of the war on the international rivalries imperialism generated, and radical socialist ideology generally demanded an immediate end of all colonial rule. Moderate socialists, such as the British Fabians, believed that over time imperialism should be gradually phased out. Developments during the conflict, notably the insistence of the Allies and even more the United States that they were fighting not simply in self-defense or in pursuit of limited national aims but for such idealistic war aims as democracy, freedom, the (2403) rights of small nations, and to create an international organization to prevent future wars, nonetheless stoked opposition to Western dominance. So too did the seizure of power in Russia by a Communist government publicly pledged to anti-imperialist principles. In addition, the war itself challenged popular Social Darwinist beliefs that since the Western powers were the world's richest and most economically and technologically advanced nations, their very success demonstrated the unsurpassed excellence of their political and socioeconomic institutions and also the inherent racial superiority of their populations to all others, which in turn entitled them to dominate less advanced peoples and lands. From 1914 the states that had claimed to epitomize the highest attainments of civilization for four years mobilized all their energies and resources to pursue mass slaughter and devastation, calling into question the validity of their pretensions to represent progress and advanced development and their proclamations of political, racial, and cultural supremacy.

The influence of this climate of opinion was evident in demands by African Americans and Asians for equal rights and national independence. When the war ended, the assorted nations involved, especially those that had supported the winning side, pinned their hopes upon the impending peace conference, which was widely expected to have a broad range and settle many international issues beyond the actual peace settlement. President Woodrow Wilson's eloquent statements of the liberal principles that he believed should govern international relations made the United States a magnet for all countries seeking to redress their perceived grievances or injustices. Almost every state, national or ethnic group, or organization that sought to improve its international standing took measures to bring its claims to the attention of the statesmen assembled at the Paris Peace Conference. In the short run such pleas often

proved ineffective, as their recipients politely ignored them. In the longer term they represented the beginning of a formidable challenge to Western international dominance and to the fundamental assumption of many Europeans and North Americans that both biologically and by virtue of their political, economic, social, and cultural attainments the “white” races were inherently superior to all others in the world and therefore entitled to rule over them. Within a few decades, demands for racial equality and the ending of colonial rule would become an almost irresistible international political force.

Demands for International Change

Marcus Garvey, “Advice of the Negro to Peace Conference,” Editorial, *The Negro World*, 30 November 1918

Now that the statesmen of the various nations are preparing to meet at the Peace Conference, to discuss the future government of the peoples of the world, we take it as our bounden duty to warn them to be very just to all those people who may happen to come under their legislative control. If they, representing the classes, as they once did, were alive to the real feeling of their respective masses four and one-half years ago, today Germany would have been intact, Austria-Hungary would have been intact, Russia would have been intact, the spirit of revolution never would have swept Europe, and mankind at large would have been satisfied. But through graft, greed and selfishness, the classes they represented then, as some of them represent now, were determined to rob and exploit the masses, thinking that the masses would have remained careless of their own condition for everlasting.

It is a truism that you “fool half of the people for half of the time, but you cannot fool all of the people for all of the time”; and now that the masses of the whole world have risen as one man to demand true equity and justice from the “powers that be,” then let the delegates at the Peace Conference realize, just now, that the Negro, who forms an integral part of the masses of the world, is determined to get no less than what other men are to get. The oppressed races of Europe are to get their freedom, which freedom will be guaranteed them. The Asiatic races are to get their rights and a larger modicum of self-government.

We trust that the delegates to the Peace Conference will not continue to believe that Negroes have no ambition, no aspiration. There are no more timid, cringing Negroes; let us say that those Negroes have now been relegated to the limbo of the past, to the region of forgetfulness, and that the new Negro is on the stage, and he is going to play his part good and well. He, like the other

heretofore oppressed peoples (2404) of the world, is determined to get restored to him his ancestral rights.

When we look at the map of Africa today we see Great Britain with fully five million square miles of our territory, we see France with fully three million five hundred thousand square miles, we see that Belgium has under her control the Congo, Portugal has her sway over Southeast Africa, Italy has under her control Tripoli, Italian Somaliland on the Gulf of Aden and Erythria on the Red Sea. Germany had clamored for a place in the sun simply because she has only one million square miles, with which she was not satisfied, in that England had five millions and France three millions five hundred thousand. It can be easily seen that the war of 1914 was the outcome of African aggrandizement, that Africa, to which the white man has absolutely no claim, has been raped, has been left bleeding for hundreds of years, but within the last thirty years the European powers have concentrated more than ever on the cleaning up of the great continent so as to make it a white man's country. Among those whom they have killed are millions of our people, but the age of killing for naught is passed and the age of killing for something has come. If black men have to die in Africa or anywhere else, then they might as well die for the best of things, and that is liberty, true freedom and true democracy. If the delegates to the Peace Conference would like to see no more wars we would advise them to satisfy the yellow man's claims, the black man's claims and the white man's claims, and let all three be satisfied so that there can be indeed a brotherhood of men. But if one section of the human race is to arrogate to itself all that God gave for the benefit of mankind at large, then let us say human nature has in no way changed, and even at the Peace Conference wherefrom the highest principles of humanity are supposed to emanate there will come no message of peace.

There will be no peace in the world until the white man confines himself politically to Europe, the yellow man to Asia and the black man to Africa. The original division of the earth among mankind must stand, and any one who dares to interfere with this division creates only trouble for himself. This division was made by the Almighty Power that rules, and therefore there can be no interference with the plans Divine.

Cowardice has disappeared from the world. Men have died in this world war so quickly and so easily that those who desire liberty today do not stop to think of death, for it is regarded as the price which people in all ages will have to pay to be free; that is the price the weaker people of Europe have paid; that is the price the Negro must pay some day.

Let the Peace Conference, we suggest, be just in its deliberations and in its findings, so that there can be a true brotherhood in the future with no more wars.

Source

African-American History,
http://afroamhistory.about.com/library/blmarcus_garvey_advice.htm.

The Chinese Government Demands an End to Foreign Dominance, November 1918: Memorandum by the Third Assistant Secretary of State (Breckinridge Long), Washington, 27 November 1918

The Chinese Minister called today and discussed China's program for the Peace Conference, which included the following:

1. The establishment and revision of the full territorial integrity.
2. Her political sovereignty and its full realization.
3. Her physical and economic independence.

Program was further developed as follows:

1. Territorial Integrity

1. (a) Their concessions and settlements; their abrogations. He said that the original reason for their establishment had ceased to exist; that they had been created to give occidental merchants some place of safety and security in the days when China was not conversant with Western ways and Western people, and that they had been found and developed in the settlements with political rights and that they each were an infraction upon the territorial integrity of China.

(b) Leased territories and their relinquishment.

He said that they had been taken by force or by threat under various pretext[s] and that they (2405) served to create a balance of power in China, but a balance of power not between China and other Governments but between different Governments who had interests in China. He felt that the abrogation of them all would leave the same balance of power between the other Governments and would reestablish general political integrity. He further stated that they were in many instances strategically situated and constituted a hindrance to the development of China and to the free exercise of her sovereignty, because by reason of their situation and the political activities possible

there they impeded or could be used to interfere with the exercise of China's free will. He felt that they were separate and distinct territorial sub-divisions with political attributes used by foreign powers for purposes other than those which were entirely consistent with China's ambitions; that they were really, as he expressed it, *Imperia Imperium* [*imperium in imperio*, or a state within a state].

2. Sovereignty

1. (a) The abrogation of Articles 7 and 9 of the Protocol of September [in reality December] 22d, 1900 and the Protocol of September 7th, 1901, pertains to the Legation guards and private communications between Peking and the sea.
- (b) Extraterritoriality; its abolition as regards China.
He argued that China was different from Egypt, Turkey and Persia in that the extraterritoriality in those countries was imposed by military and political situations which existed in the countries or in other countries near them and that had grown up and developed from mediaeval times but that in China extraterritoriality was a recent development and had not been imposed upon China by treaty. He felt that the same reasons did not exist and that it was also a hindrance to the free and full development of China.

3. Physical Economic Independence

1. (a) Freedom of tariff and administration.
He feels that the tariff is limited to a five per cent duty and based upon a valuation which was small enough many years ago at the time the population remained stationary. During a period of years in which the crisis generally has arisen and the revenue derivable from that source is not only totally inadequate to China's needs but wholly inconsistent with the prices of dutiable goods and with the revenues which other countries derive from the tariff.
- (b) Spheres of influence; their renunciation.
He feels that it is quite anomalous for spheres of influence to exist in China and says that China has never consented to it; that they do not now but they have simply grown up by an agreement between other Governments as to what part of China they might set aside for themselves and in which each of them was to have special rights, both economic and industrial in this sphere which that power claimed for itself. I told him that we did not recognize that spheres of influences

existed and that we were thoroughly sympathetic to his nation's ambitions in that respect.

Source

U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States: The Paris Peace Conference*, 13 vols. (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1943), 2:507–509.

Ho Chi Minh (Nguyen Ai Quoc), The Rightful Demands of the Annamite (Vietnamese) People, Declaration Submitted to the Paris Peace Conference, Early 1919

Ever since the Allied victory, all the subject peoples have been trembling with hope at the prospect of the era of right and justice which must be opening for them, given the formal and solemn promises which the various Entente Powers have made before the entire world during the struggle of Civilization against Barbarism.

While waiting for the principle of Nationalism to pass from the land of the ideal into that of reality through the effective recognition of the sacred right of peoples to decide upon their own governments, the People of the Former Empire of Annam, known today as French Indochina, present to the Noble Governments of the (2406) Allies in general and to the French Government in particular the following humble rightful demands:

1. A general amnesty for all indigenous political prisoners.
2. The reform of the Indochinese judicial system by the extension to the Indigenous people of the same judicial guarantees that Europeans enjoy, and the complete and final suppression of the special Tribunals which have been the instruments of the terrorization and oppression of the best and most honest groups among the Annamite people.
3. Freedom of the Press and of Speech.
4. Freedom of association and meeting.
5. Freedom of emigration and of foreign travel.
6. Freedom of education and the establishment in every province of schools of technical and professional education for the use of the indigenous people.
7. The replacement of a government by decree by a government by law.
8. A permanent delegation of indigenous representatives to be elected to the French parliament so that it may be kept apprised of indigenous wishes.

The Annamite people, in presenting the aforesaid rightful demands, have faith in the international spirit of justice of all the Powers, and trust themselves especially to the goodwill of the Noble French People in whose hands they now are and who, since France is a Republic, may be said to have taken the Annamite people under their own protection. In thus appealing to the protection of the French people, the Annamite people, far from humiliating themselves, are honoring themselves: for they know that the French people represent liberty and justice, and will never renounce the sublime ideal of universal Fraternity. Therefore, in listening to the voice of the oppressed, the French people will simply be carrying out its duty to both France and Humanity.

Source

Alain Ruscio, ed., *Ho Chi Minh: Textes, 1914–1969* (Paris: Éditions L'Harmattan, 1990), 22–23 [translated from Ruscio by Priscilla Roberts].

Japan Demands Racial Equality: Extract from Minutes of Plenary Session of the Preliminary Peace Conference, Protocol No. 5, Paris, 28 April 1919

Baron Makino (Japan) explains the grounds for the amendment proposed by the Japanese Delegation to the Commission with a view to secure recognition in the Covenant for the equality of all nations and of their subjects:

I had first on the 13th of February an opportunity of submitting to the Commission of the League of Nations our amendment to the Covenant, embodying the principle of equal and just treatment to be accorded to all aliens who happen to be the nationals of the States which are deemed advanced enough and fully qualified to become Nationals of the League, making no distinction on account of race or nationality.

On that occasion I called the attention of the Commission to the fact that the race question being a standing grievance which might become acute and dangerous at any moment, it was desirous that a provision dealing with the subject should be made in this Covenant. We did not lose sight of the many and varied difficulties standing in the way of a full realization of this principle. But they were not insurmountable, I said, if sufficient importance were attached to the consideration of serious misunderstandings between different peoples which might grow to an uncontrollable degree, and it was hoped that the matter would be taken in hand on such opportunity as the present, when what was deemed impossible before was about to be accomplished. Further, I made it unmistakably clear that, the question being of a very delicate and complicated nature, involving the play of a deep human passion, the immediate realization

of the ideal equality was not proposed, but that the clause presented enunciated the principle only, and left the actual working of it in the hands of the different Governments concerned; that, in other words, the clause was intended as an invitation to the Governments and peoples concerned to examine the question more closely and seriously, and to devise in a fair and accommodating spirit means to meet it.

Attention was also called to the fact that the League being, as it were, a world organization of insurance (2407) against war; that in cases of aggression nations suitably placed must be prepared to defend the territorial integrity and political independence of a fellow member; that this meant that a national of a State Member must be ready to share military expenditure for the common cause and, if needs be, sacrifice his own person. In view of these new duties, I remarked, arising before him as a result of his country entering the League, each national would naturally feel, and in fact demand, that he be placed on an equal footing with the people whom he undertakes to defend even with his own life. The proposed amendment, however, was not adopted by the Commission.

On the next day, that is, on the 14th February, when the draft Covenant was reported at a plenary session of the Conference without the insertion of our amendment, I had the privilege of expressing our whole-hearted sympathy and readiness to contribute our utmost to any and every attempt to found and secure an enduring peace of the world. At the same time, I made a reservation that we would again submit our proposal for the consideration of the Conference at an early opportunity.

At the meeting of the Commission on the 11th of April, I proposed the insertion, in the Preamble of the Covenant, of a phrase endorsing the principles of the equality of nations and the just treatment of their nationals. But this proposal again failed to be adopted by unanimity, although it obtained, may I be permitted to say, a clear majority in its favor.

This modified form of amendment did not, as I had occasion already to state at the Commission, fully meet our wishes, but it was the outcome of an attempt to conciliate the view points of different nations.

Now that it has been decided by the Commission that our amendment, even in its modified form, would not be included in the draft Covenant, I feel constrained to revert to our original proposal and to avail myself of this occasion to declare clearly our position in regard to this matter.

The principle which we desire to see acted upon in the future relationship between nations was set forth in our original amendment as follows:

The equality of nations being a basic principle of the League of Nations, the High Contracting Parties agree to accord, as soon as possible, to all aliens nationals of States Members of the League equal and just treatment in every respect, making no distinction, either in law or in fact, on account of their race or nationality.

It is our firm conviction that the enduring success of this great undertaking will depend much more on the hearty espousal and loyal adherence that the various peoples concerned would give to the noble ideals underlying the organization, than on the acts of the respective governments that may change from time to time. In an age of democracy, peoples themselves must feel that they are the trustees of this work, and to feel so, they must first have a sure basis of close harmony and mutual confidence.

If just and equal treatment is denied to certain nationals, it would have the significance of a certain reflection on their quality and status. Their faith in the justice and righteousness which are to be the guiding spirit of the future international intercourse between the Members of the League may be shaken, and such a frame of mind, I am afraid, would be most detrimental to that harmony and co-operation, upon which foundation alone can the League now contemplated be securely built. It was solely and purely from our desire to see the League established on a sound and firm basis of good-will, justice, and reason that we have been compelled to make our proposal. We will not, however, press for the adoption of our proposal at this moment.

In closing, I feel it my duty to declare clearly on this occasion that the Japanese Government and people feel poignant regret at the failure of the Commission to approve of their just demand for laying down a principle aiming at the adjustment of this long standing grievance, a demand that is based upon a deep-rooted national conviction. They will continue in their insistence for the adoption of this principle by the League in future.

Source

U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States: The Paris Peace Conference*, 13 vols. (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1943), 3:289–291.

Marcus Garvey (1887–1940)

Garvey was born in the British colony of Jamaica, the youngest of a family of eleven children. At age 14 he (2408) began work in a print shop and quickly became a labor activist, helping to establish a Printers' Union, which organized a strike in 1907, demanding social reform, and established a newspaper, *The Watchman*. Garvey traveled extensively to raise funding for these projects. His visits to Central and South America convinced him that around the world black people were invariably the victims of particularly pronounced discrimination. Returning to Jamaica, Garvey unavailingly urged the Jamaican government to work to improve conditions of West Indian workers in Central America. His travels also impelled him to contemplate establishing an organization that would promote the welfare of blacks throughout the world. Visiting England in 1912 to seek financial support for this undertaking, he began to study the African past, especially the history of colonial exploitation of that continent's black peoples. He was also much influenced by *Up From Slavery*, the autobiography of the African-American leader Booker T. Washington, who founded the American civil rights organization the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in 1909 and whose autobiography urged blacks not simply to wait until circumstances improved but to adopt policies of active self-help.

Garvey himself immigrated to New York and in 1914 established the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), together with a coordinating body, the African Communities League. Pan-African organizations based in the United States, where the majority of their branches were located, they were intended to promote the welfare and independence of all blacks. This organization's most prominent goals were the ending of white colonialism in Africa and the establishment there of independent African-ruled states, to which African Americans and other descendants of enslaved Africans in the Caribbean, Latin America, and elsewhere could return. Garvey established a newspaper, *The Negro World*, to publicize his message. In 1920 the UNIA held its first convention in New York, mounting a spectacular parade in Harlem and attracting an audience of 25,000 to hear Garvey outline his plans for a future black African state. The convention elected Garvey provisional president of Africa, and within a few years UNIA had established a network of more than 1,100 branches across more than forty countries. During the 1920s Garvey unsuccessfully appealed to the League of Nations to transfer Germany's former colonies in East and South-West Africa to UNIA to form the nucleus of a new black nation-state. By the mid-1920s, however, UNIA was beset by financial difficulties, and Garvey faced fraud charges, which brought him a five-year jail

sentence. In 1927, after he had served half his term, President Calvin Coolidge commuted the remainder and ordered his deportation to Jamaica. After several unsuccessful efforts to launch a new political career in Jamaica, in 1935 Garvey moved to England, where he died in obscurity five years later. His efforts to promote black independence nonetheless represented a new international assertiveness on the part of blacks and African Americans, one reason for the revitalization during the 1920s of the long-dormant Pan-African Congress. In the United States, Garvey's activities also contributed to the Harlem Renaissance, the New York-based African-American cultural resurgence of the interwar years.

Ho Chi Minh (1890–1969)

Born Nguyễn Sinh Cung, a name that became Nguyễn Tất Thành when he was 10 years old, as a professional revolutionary Ho became a man of many aliases, including Nguyễn Ai Quốc and around ten others. Ho, the son of an Indochinese imperial court functionary who resigned his position and became a teacher to protest the emperor's acceptance of French overlordship, inherited his father's nationalist outlook. As a young man he took part in a series of tax revolts before going overseas in 1911. Ho lived first in Great Britain, where he trained as a pastry cook, and then from 1915 to 1923 in the French capital of Paris. In 1918, during World War I, Ho tried unsuccessfully to persuade the French government to grant independence to Vietnam, as the stated Allied war aims of the self-determination of nations required. Equally unavailing, the following year he also petitioned the Allied representatives attending the Paris Peace Conference to redress indigenous grievances and grant equal rights to all within French Indochina. After this rebuff, Ho joined the French Communist Party in 1919 and soon became a professional revolutionary, spending lengthy periods in Moscow and encouraging Communist and nationalist movements throughout much of Asia. Together with several other Indochinese militants, while living in Hong Kong in 1929 Ho founded the Indochinese (2409) Communist Party. In 1940 he returned to French Indochina, where he quickly became his country's leading nationalist political figure, spearheading a crusade to gain independence for Vietnam and unite the entire country under Communist control that would absorb all his energies until his death in 1969 and win him universal recognition as the Democratic Republic of Vietnam's first president, a position he held for life, and foremost founding father.

About The Documents

Each of these documents represents an appeal for racial equality and the ending of white imperialism, formal or informal. Two are taken from the official foreign policy record of the United States and were the product of formal diplomatic interchanges among states. In November 1918 V. K. Wellington Koo, the Chinese minister to the United States, called at the State Department in Washington, where he expounded to Breckinridge Long, third assistant secretary of state, the Chinese government's conviction that in order to restore his country's independence of action, the special territorial and other privileges granted to various foreign nations should be rescinded. Since the late nineteenth century, Western powers had extorted from the weak Chinese state a wide range of special rights, whereby in the major port cities their citizens lived in special enclaves under their own administration and were not subject to Chinese justice but enjoyed a legal status known as extraterritoriality, answering to courts run by their own authorities, while Western businesses often enjoyed special economic privileges. Certain Chinese cities and territories—including among others the German concession of Qingdao in Shandong province, which was captured by Japan in late 1914, British-run Hong Kong, and Macau—were under direct foreign administration, leased to other powers for lengthy periods of time, while Japan asserted special rights in the northeastern provinces of Manchuria. The Western powers also administered the Chinese customs service. Japan, a rising Asian power that was China's most formidable rival, had likewise won similar rights in China and during World War I sought to pressure China to take measures that would have eroded the privileges of Western states, effectively seeking to make China into a Japanese client. Chinese popular resentment of foreign privileges had been one of the forces impelling both the 1900 Boxer Rebellion and the 1911 Chinese Revolution. Since Secretary of State John Hay's "Open Door Notes" of 1899–1900, China had treated the United States as a special patron. Only after the United States declared war on Germany in 1917 did China follow suit. Shortly after the armistice of November 1918, with a major peace conference impending, Chinese officials appealed to the U.S. government to strengthen their still-fragile republic by supporting the abrogation of all foreign special privileges and the restoration of China's full territorial, political, and economic integrity. Eventually the United States, while expressing sympathy, declined to endorse China's request, which would have disadvantaged substantial numbers of its own citizens and businesses residing in that country. Perhaps seeking to give Koo some slight satisfaction, after listening to the Chinese request Long did, however, tell him that the United States has never recognized other countries' exclusive "spheres of influence" within China, a policy that in reality

was due as much to U.S. self-interest in maintaining equality of access as to concern for China's integrity.

Although Japan sought to erode China's independence, Japanese officials also found deeply irksome Western assumptions of superiority. After its military successes in the Russo-Japanese War, the Japanese government repudiated the extraterritorial privileges it had previously granted Westerners living in Japan. During World War I, Japan had been a somewhat uneasy partner of the Allied coalition and at the Paris Peace Conference was treated as a Great Power, one of the five leading Allied states. Japanese officials there were not, however, on the same terms of—admittedly sometimes extremely fraught—intimacy that representatives of the other “Big Five” powers (the United States, Great Britain, France, and Italy) enjoyed with each other. The Japanese government had instructed its delegation to demand that a clause mandating racial equality among all League of Nations members be included in that organization's covenant. After the peace conference's final rejection of even a compromise proposal on these lines, on 28 April 1919 Baron Makino Nobuaki, a former Japanese minister of foreign affairs and a member of the Japanese delegation attending the conference, rather eloquently stated his country's case. Both the United States and the “white” Dominions of the British Empire strongly opposed the (2410) Japanese request, fearing that it would permit unrestricted Japanese immigration into their territories, and the clause was not included in the League covenant. The episode nonetheless demonstrated the growing international impact of nationalist and anti-imperialist thinking. Makino made it clear, moreover, that in the future Japan would continue to work for international racial equality.

Even in the measured phrases of the formal diplomatic record, one can discern some of the passion impelling both China and Japan in their quest for parity with the West and the antforeign forces that would within a few years propel nationalist movements within both those countries to challenge the West. Despite the former's weakness, China and Japan were both sovereign states. President Woodrow Wilson's championing of democracy and national self-determination also inspired many unofficial groups seeking independence, some from the Central Powers, others within the empires of the Allies, with whom the United States was associated in the war. France had extensive colonial possessions in Indochina, where by the early twentieth century significant nationalist opposition to French rule had already developed, provoking fierce repression by the authorities. With several like-minded friends, the young Vietnamese nationalist Nguyễn Ai Quoc, working as a waiter in Paris, organized what he termed the Group of Annamite Patriots. In

1918 they asked the French government to grant full independence to Vietnam, a request that was simply ignored, leading its authors to recognize that the objective of ending French rule was not yet a practical possibility. In early 1919 the Group of Annamite Patriots therefore submitted a less ambitious petition to the authorities assembled at the Paris Peace Conference, requesting greater autonomy for Vietnam, representation for the “indigenous” Vietnamese population in their own government and in the French assembly, equal access to education, the release of political prisoners, and the restoration of free speech, freedom of assembly, association, and travel, and the rule of law. The petition also stated that ultimately the people of Vietnam hoped to attain the right of full national self-determination, but its authors had apparently decided that these aims were the most they could hope to achieve in 1919. In their support, they circumspectly invoked both the pledges of international justice and democracy that the wartime Allies had made and the revolutionary French tradition of liberty, justice, and international fraternity. The French government and the various delegations attending the conference both ignored this petition. The Big Four powers had no intention of destabilizing relations among themselves by opening such incendiary questions as the right of each to rule its own colonies as it pleased, particularly given the number of other pressing issues facing them at the peace conference. Their unresponsiveness, however, failed to dampen the nationalist fervor of the petition’s chief author, who would under the name Ho Chi Minh eventually become the founder of the independent Vietnamese state.

In the short run, Garvey’s appeals were no more successful than those of the Chinese, Japanese, and Vietnamese. He published his “Advice to the Peace Conference” as an editorial in *The Negro World* in the hope that it would influence international public opinion. It was not, therefore, a formal diplomatic document addressed to the peace conference, but rather rhetorical propaganda intended to publicize Garvey’s arguments. Garvey’s manifesto bitterly condemned the oppression to which European colonial powers—Germany, France, Italy, Portugal, and Britain, whom he collectively termed “the white man”—had subjected Africa. God, he argued, had deliberately divided the world into continents, Europe for “the white man,” Asia for “the yellow man,” and Africa for “the black man,” and each should respect this divinely appointed division and not seek to go beyond his own natural boundaries. Implicitly referring to the forthcoming peace conference’s intention to establish an institution that would prevent future wars, he warned that until Western colonial rule in Africa had ended, further conflicts would be inevitable, since the “Negro” would, if forced, be prepared to fight for his rights.

Whether advanced unofficially or formally, none of these requests had any direct influence on the outcome of the Paris Peace Conference. The leaders of the Big Four—U.S. President Woodrow Wilson, British Prime Minister David Lloyd George, French President Georges Clemenceau, and Italian Prime Minister Vittorio Orlando—politely ignored or rejected the Chinese and Japanese requests and may never even have seen Ho Chi Minh’s petition. Garvey’s editorial could not be considered an official document addressed to the peace (2411) conference. Some among the many American advisors working on peace plans for the U.S. State Department’s special “Inquiry” project, many of whom joined the American delegation at Paris, may have obtained a copy of Garvey’s article and other material on black demands. A few probably saw the Indochinese petition before it was filed away, and the appropriate State Department officials would have been familiar with the requests of the Chinese and Japanese governments. But, overall, the immediate impact of the demands set forth in these documents was virtually nonexistent. As Garvey suggested, there were distinct limits to the application of the liberal principles so eloquently affirmed by Wilson and the Allies. Yet, ultimately, Asians and Africans would not be prepared to compromise their demands or defer them indefinitely. The unresponsiveness those eminent representatives of the Western powers assembled at Paris in 1919 displayed to Asian and African appeals for equality and self-government illuminates the reasons why, from then onward, nationalist and independence forces turned for leadership to the new Soviet Union, a Communist state that—albeit sometimes ambiguously and on occasion even hypocritically—affirmed the principles of national self-determination, racial equality, and anti-imperialism.

Further Reading

Brooks, Barbara J. *Japan’s Imperial Diplomacy: Consuls, Treaty Ports, and War in China, 1895–1938*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000.

Craft, Stephen G. V. K. *Wellington Koo and the Emergence of Modern China*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2004.

Dickinson, Frederick R. *War and National Reinvention: Japan in the Great War, 1914–1919*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999.

Duiker, William J. *Ho Chi Minh*. New York: Hyperion, 2000.

Elleman, Bruce A. *Wilson and China: A Revised History of the Shandong Question*. Armonk, NY: Sharpe, 2002.

Macmillan, Margaret. *Paris, 1919: Six Months That Changed the World*. New York: Random House, 2002.

Marks, Sally. *The Ebbing of European Ascendancy: An International History of the World, 1914–1945*. New York: Arnold, 2002.

Quinn-Judge, Sophie. *Ho Chi Minh: The Missing Years, 1919–1941*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.

Shimazu, Naoko. *Japan, Race and Equality: The Racial Equality Proposal of 1919*. New York: Routledge, 1998.

Stein, Judith. *The World of Marcus Garvey: Race and Class in Modern Society*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986.

MLA

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "45. Challenges to Western Dominance." *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*, ABC-CLIO, 2005, pp. . *ABC-CLIO eBook Collection*, legacy.abc-clio.com/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2284.

Chicago Manual of Style

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "45. Challenges to Western Dominance." In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005. <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2284>.

APA

Roberts, P. M., S. C. Tucker (2005). 45. Challenges to Western Dominance. In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia* (pp.). Retrieved from <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2284>

Essay 46.

The War's Impact on International Radicalism

Soviet Competition with the West: The Formation of the Third Communist International

The challenge to the norms and procedures of the existing international system, mounted by the Soviets from the time the Bolsheviks seized power in November 1917, continued unabated even after the signing of the armistice one year later. In spring 1918 the remaining Allies—Britain, France, the United States, and Japan—dispatched troops to Russian territory, to northern Russia and Siberia, most arriving through the ports of Archangel, Murmansk, and Vladivostok. Their stated purposes were to protect Allied supplies in Russia from falling into German hands, and—initially in response to a request in 1917 from the Russian provisional government—to help the Czech Legion, former Russian prisoners-of-war who had declared for the Allies, to keep the strategically important Trans-Siberian railway line running smoothly. In practice, most had a variety of other objectives. By early 1918 civil war had begun in Russia, as noncommunist “White” Russian forces, many of them from the former tsarist army, battled the Bolshevik Red armies for control. Japan, which had already asserted special rights in northeast China’s adjoining Manchurian provinces, hoped the fluid situation would give it the opportunity to expand its sphere of influence by acquiring all or part of Russian Siberia. Britain and the United States hoped the presence of their own troops would restrain Japanese ambitions. With France, they also sought to affect the outcome of the Russian Civil War. Although supposedly neutral toward the conflict, French, British, and U.S. forces assisted and cooperated with White Russian forces, especially those of Admiral Aleksandr Vasiliyevich Kolchak (1874–1920), who broke with the Bolsheviks over the disadvantageous Brest Litovsk peace settlement of February 1918 and by the end of that year had become supreme leader of an anti-Bolshevik socialist government based in Omsk, Siberia.

(2412)

Once an armistice had been signed with Germany, and especially after the Russian Civil War turned in favor of the Red armies, Allied intervention increasingly became an exercise in futility, antagonizing Russia’s de facto rulers and much of the international left while failing to accomplish either its overt or covert objectives. Between summer 1919 and early 1920—when the Bolsheviks captured and executed the increasingly authoritarian and

beleaguered Kolchak—Western military forces were withdrawn from Russia, though some Japanese units remained until 1923.

When the Paris Peace Conference assembled in the first days of 1919, Soviet representatives were not invited, and many thousands of Allied troops were still present on Russian soil, circumstances that exacerbated the existing rivalry between radical Communist internationalism as expounded by Russia's Bolshevik president, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, and the liberal internationalism eloquently expounded by U.S. President Woodrow Wilson. Each sought to appeal to liberals and the left not just in his own country but around the world, offering a messianic vision of the possibility of progressive international change. Once a Soviet Communist government was established, it quickly attracted foreign would-be revolutionaries and admirers to Russia, many of whom hoped to emulate the lessons of the Bolshevik seizure of power in their own countries. The disorder and uncertainty that prevailed once the war had formally ended seemed to provide favorable conditions for such upheavals. In 1919 serious labor unrest afflicted most of the Allied countries, while returning soldiers of defeated and impoverished powers often faced unemployment and uncertain future prospects. Throughout central, eastern, and southeastern Europe new or modified national groupings waited for the decisions of the Paris Peace Conference to define their boundaries and in some cases resorted to military action to ensure that their borders were as extensive as possible. In new or expanded states and defeated nations alike, the precise nature of their future governments often still remained unclear. In January 1919 the Spartacists, German radical socialists, launched a bloody but unsuccessful coup in Berlin. Two months later, the Communist Béla Kun established a short-lived Soviet government in Hungary. To many would-be nationalists in Western colonies in Asia and Africa, one great attraction of the anti-imperialist Soviet ideology was its promise of eventual freedom from foreign domination. Moreover, the fact that the Russian Communists had managed to establish the world's first radical socialist government endowed them with the glamour [sic] of both success and novelty.

In March 1919, while the peace conference was in session, a cosmopolitan group of foreign socialist sympathizers in Moscow announced the foundation of the Third International, or Comintern, an international Communist organization intended to facilitate proletarian revolution on Soviet lines around the world and to overturn both capitalism and imperialism. Leon Trotsky, the Bolshevik government's military commissar, a dedicated ideologue and also a ruthless general who commanded the Soviet armies that eventually triumphed in the Russian Civil War, largely drafted its first manifesto. Despite its

supposedly transnational character, the body always remained firmly under Soviet control, taking its orders from Moscow and on occasion disciplining dissenters in other national Communist parties who showed themselves insufficiently amenable to Soviet ideological and political direction. Between the wars, Comintern agents were active around the world, seeking to promote international revolution by collaborating with, encouraging, instructing and educating, and when appropriate financing local leftists in virtually every part of the world. Their network quickly spread through the developed industrial countries of Europe and North America, the agrarian regions of eastern Europe, Latin America, China, Japan, and Western imperial possessions in Asia and Africa. Communists and noncommunist potential revolutionaries from all these areas often spent lengthy periods in Russia, receiving ideological indoctrination and often, too, practical education in such skills as engineering. From the late 1920s onward, when the pragmatic and ruthless Josef Stalin won supreme power in Russia, the Comintern increasingly subordinated the cause of international revolution to the promotion of the diplomatic and strategic interests of the Soviet Union. After Nazi Germany declared war on Soviet Russia in June 1941, the Comintern became inactive, and on Stalin's orders it was formally dissolved in 1943.

The May Fourth Movement, 1919

On 4 May 1919, infuriated Chinese students demonstrated in Beijing against the Allied decision at the (2413) Paris Peace Conference to allow Japan to assume formal control of the German concessions in Shandong, China, which it had effectively taken over during the First World War. After students physically attacked the Japanese ambassador and the homes of government officials, Beijing's governor suppressed the demonstration and arrested its leaders, but the seeds of dissent had effectively been sown. The May Fourth Movement marked the beginning of a wave of nationalist sentiment among Chinese young people that eventually led many of them to reject the Nationalist government, on the grounds that it was too willing to acquiesce in Western domination, and enroll in the ranks of the Chinese Communist Party, founded two years later. It was also symptomatic of growing Asian nationalist resentment of all foreign domination, which later in the twentieth century would help to end not just the formal European colonial empires but also the system of special privileges that citizens and businesses of major Western powers enjoyed in such countries as China.

“Manifesto of the Communist International to the Proletarians of the World,” March 1919

The moment of the last decisive battle came later than the apostles of social revolution had expected and hoped for. Yet it has come. We, the communists of today, representing the revolutionary proletariat of various countries in Europe, America and Asia, and assembled in “soviet-governed” Moscow, feel it incumbent upon us to continue and bring to completion the task outlined in the programme of seventy-two years ago. It is our object to summarize the revolutionary experience of the working classes, to purge the movement from the decomposing admixtures of opportunism and “social-patriotism,” to unite the efforts of all truly revolutionary parties of the world’s proletariat, thus facilitating and hastening the victory of the communistic revolution throughout the world. . . .

The state control over economic life, which elicited the strongest protest from capitalistic liberalism, has now become an accomplished fact. At present, there is no going back not only to free competition, but even to the oligarchy of trusts, syndicates and other economic octopuses. The issue lies between the imperialistic state and the state of the victorious proletariat, as to which of them shall henceforth be the steward of state-controlled production.

In other words: shall all labouring humanity become tributary slaves to the triumphant clique which, under the firm of “The League of Nations” and assisted by an “international” army and an “international” navy, will plunder and oppress some, throw tasty morsels to others and everywhere and on all occasions, forge fetters for the proletariat, with the sole aim of maintaining and perpetuating its own supremacy? Or shall the working classes of Europe and of other advanced countries take possession of the dilapidated, tottering structure of the world’s economy and ensure its regeneration on socialist principles?

Nothing short of a dictatorship of the proletariat can reduce the duration of the present crisis. That dictatorship should not look back upon the past, nor take into account any hereditary privileges or rights of ownership, being solely guided by the necessity to succour the starving masses; it should, for that purpose, mobilize all forces and use all available means, introduce compulsory labour and labour discipline, thus to cure, within a few years, the gaping wounds inflicted by the war, and lift mankind to a new, hitherto unprecedented height. . . .

While they wrong and oppress small and weak nations in consigning them to hunger and humiliation, the allied imperialists talk a great deal (just as much, in

fact, as the imperialists of the central empires did some time ago) of the nations' right of self-determination, a right which has now been trodden under foot in Europe and in all other parts of the world.

The proletarian revolution alone is capable of ensuring to the small peoples a free and independent existence. It will liberate the productive forces of all countries from the clutches of national states; it will unite the nations in the closest possible economic cooperation based on a common economic scheme, it will enable even the smallest and least numerous of nations to direct the affairs of its own national culture without the interference of any other state, and without any prejudice to the united and centralized economic body of Europe and of the world. . . .

No emancipation of the colonies is possible unless the working classes of the mother-country are emancipated. The workmen and peasants not only in Annam, Algiers, Bengal, but also in Persia and Armenia, will (2414) achieve their independence only in the hour when the working men of England and France throw over [British Prime Minister David] Lloyd-George and [French President Georges] Clemenceau and take power into their own hands. In more advanced colonies, the struggle is not only being conducted under the banner of national emancipation, but it assumes, to a smaller or greater extent, the character of a purely social struggle. If capitalistic Europe forcibly involved the most backward parts of the world into the Maelstrom of capitalist interrelations, socialistic Europe is prepared to assist the emancipated colonies by its technics, by its organization, by its moral and intellectual influence, so as to facilitate their transition to properly-organized socialistic economy.

Colonial slaves of Africa and Asia! When the hour of the dictatorship of the proletariat in Europe strikes, the hour of your liberation shall have come.

The whole of the bourgeois world accuses the communists of having destroyed freedom and political democracy. This is not true. In acceding to power, the proletariat merely recognizes the utter impossibility of applying the methods of bourgeois democracy, and creates the conditions and forms of a new and a higher democracy, that of the working classes. The whole course of capitalistic development, particularly in its last imperialistic period, had been sapping at the roots of political democracy; not only did it divide the nations into two hostile classes, but it also doomed to economic vegetation and political impotency the numerous proletarian and petty-bourgeois strata, as well as the most hapless lower strata of the proletariat itself. . . .

In this realm of destruction, where not only the means of production and of transport, but the very institutions of political democracy are but a heap of bloodstained ruins, the proletariat is called upon to create its own apparatus for maintaining the cohesion of the working masses and ensuring the possibility of their revolutionary interference in the subsequent development of mankind. That apparatus is provided by workers' councils (Soviets). The old parties, the old professional organizations (trade unions), as represented by their governing bodies, have proved utterly incapable not only of solving, but even of understanding, the problems set before them by the new era. The proletariat has created a new type of political organization, an apparatus wide enough to embrace the working masses irrespective of profession, and of their degree of political maturity, an apparatus pliant enough and capable of constant renovation and expansion to such an extent as to draw within its sphere new strata of the population and gather within its fold those of the urban and rural workers as are most akin to the proletariat. This unique organization of labor, having for its object the self-government, the social struggle and the ultimate accession to power of the working classes, has been tried in a number of countries and is the most essential achievement and the most powerful weapon of the proletariat in modern times. . . .

Civil war is being foisted upon the working classes by their deadly foes. The working classes cannot refrain from returning blow for blow, unless they forego their own interests and sacrifice their future—which is the future of mankind.

While they never artificially foster civil war, the communist parties strive to shorten its duration whenever it inexorably breaks out; they endeavour to reduce the number of its victims and, first of all, to ensure the victory of the proletariat. Hence the necessity of the timely disarmament of the middle classes, the arming of the working classes, the creation of a communistic army to defend the rule of the proletariat and the unhindered carrying out of the constructive programme of socialism. Thus the Red Army of Soviet Russia came into being. It is a bulwark for the conquests of the working classes against any assaults both from without and from within. The Soviet army is an integral part of the Soviet state. . . .

Bourgeois order has been sufficiently castigated by socialist critics. The object of the international communist party is to overthrow that organization and to replace it by the socialist state. We call upon all the working men and women of all countries to rally round the communist banner already floating over many a victorious battlefield.

Proletarians of all countries! In the struggle against imperialistic barbarism, against monarchy, against the privileged classes, against the bourgeois state and bourgeois property, against national oppression and the tyranny of classes in any shape or form—unite!

Proletarians of all classes, round the banner of workmen's councils, round the banner of the revolutionary struggle for power and the dictatorship of the proletariat, round the banner of the Third International—unite!

(2415)

Source

Robert V. Daniels, *A Documentary History of Communism and the World: From Revolution to Collapse*, 3rd ed. (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1994), 24–27. Used by permission of University Press of New England.

Deng Yingchao Remembers the May Fourth Movement

When the May Fourth movement took place in 1919, I was only sixteen years old, a student at the Tianjin Women's Normal College. . . . On May 4, 1919 students in Beijing held a demonstration asking the government to refuse to sign the Versailles Peace Treaty and to punish the traitors at home. In their indignation, they burned the house at Zhaojialou and beat up Lu Zhongxiang, then Chinese envoy to Japan. The following day, when the news reached Tianjin, it aroused the indignation of students there who staged their own demonstration on May 7th. They began by organizing such patriotic societies as the Tianjin Student Union, the Tianjin Women's Patriotic Society, and the Tianjin Association of National Salvation. We had no political theory to guide us at that time, only our strong patriotic enthusiasm. In addition to the Beijing students' requests, we demanded, "Abrogate the Twenty-One Demands!" "Boycott Japanese Goods!" and "Buy Chinese-made goods!" Furthermore, we emphatically refused to become slaves to foreign powers.

Despite the fact that it was a patriotic students' demonstration, the Northern warlord government of China resorted to force to quell the protest. The police dispersed the march with rifles fixed with bayonets and with hoses; later they resorted to rifle butts and even to arrests. However, the political awareness awakened a new spirit in us during our struggle with the government. New European ideas and culture had poured into China after World War I, and the success of the 1917 October Revolution in Russia introduced Marxism-

Leninism to China. . . . We did not yet know that to achieve our revolutionary goal, we intellectuals should unite with workers and peasants. We just had some vague idea that Lenin, the leader of the Russian revolution, wanted to liberate the oppressed workers and peasants.

What we did know intuitively was that alone we students did not have enough strength to save China from foreign powers. To awaken our competitors, we organized many speakers' committees to spread propaganda among the people. I became head of the speakers' group in the Tianjin Women's Patriotic Society and in the Tianjin Students' Union. Frequently we gave speeches off campus. At first, we women did not dare give speeches on the street due to the feudal attitudes that then existed in China. So the female students went instead to places where people had gathered for an exhibition or a show, while the male students gave speeches in the streets to passersby. There were always a lot of listeners. We told them why we should be united to save our country; that traitors in the government must be punished; and that people should have the right to freedom of assembly and association. We talked about the suffering of the Korean people after their country was conquered [by Japan]; and we publicly pledged our protests against the Northern warlord government that persecutes progressive students. Usually tears streamed down our cheeks when we gave our speeches and our listeners were often visibly moved.

In addition to making speeches we also visited homes in out-of-the-way places and slum areas. We went door to door to make our pleas, and some families gave us a warm welcome while others just slammed the door. However, nothing could discourage us. One day during summer vacation, we went to the suburbs to give speeches. On our way back to the city, we got caught in a downpour. Everybody was soaking wet, just like a drowned chicken! The next day, however, everyone was ready to go again.

We delivered handbills and published newspapers to spread our patriotic enthusiasm even further. The Student Union newspaper, for example, was run by the Tianjin Student Union and each issue sold more than twenty thousand copies—a considerable number at the time! It was originally published every three days; however, later it was increased to every day. Its editor-in-chief was [Deng Yingchao's future husband] Zhou Enlai. The Women's Patriotic Society also published a weekly. Both papers reported foreign and national current events, student movements across the country, student editorials, progressive articles, and cultural and art news.

The reactionary Northern warlord government, however, turned a deaf ear to us. They ultimately bowed to Japanese power, shielded the traitors, and (2416)

tried to suppress the student movement. At that time people were denied expressing their patriotic views. So what we then struggled most urgently for was freedom of assembly and association; the right to express one's political views; and freedom of the press. United under these common goals, we struggled bravely.

Various associations for national salvation in Tianjin decided to organize a general mass meeting of the residents of China on October 10, 1919 [the eighth anniversary of the 1911 Chinese Revolution]. The purpose was to demand that the officials who betrayed China be punished and to call on local residents to boycott all Japanese goods. A march was scheduled at the conclusion of the meeting. Prior to the meeting, however, news spread that Yang Yide, the chief of the police department, was going to disband the meeting and if necessary use force to stop the march. We were not frightened, but got ready to fight back if fighting broke out. During the meeting, female students stood at the periphery of the group so that we could be the first to escape if the meeting were broken up by the police. We chose strong bamboo poles to carry our banners since they could be used as weapons if needed.

Shortly after we began the meeting, a group of policemen arrived, surrounded the group, and instantly pointed their rifles at us. Our meeting continued as if nothing had happened. It was not until it was time to assemble for the march that conflict occurred. The police refused to let us pass. So finally we just charged at them, shouting: "Policemen should be patriotic, too!" "Don't strike patriotic students!" The police hit with their rifle butts and many students were beaten. Some even broke their glasses. We fought back with our bamboo poles. Then some students knocked off the policemen's hats so that when they bent down to retrieve them, it gave us a means of escape.

Just at that moment, the speakers from the Tianjin Student Union arrived in the back of a truck. With them helping on the outside, we broke through the encirclement and the march began! We marched around the city until daybreak the next day. It was not until we had lodged protests against Yang Yide for his savage treatment of the students that we finally ended the demonstration. Yang's ruthlessness had so aroused our indignation, that we women broke with tradition and the next day appeared on the streets proclaiming Yang Yide's cruelty to all who passed by.

After the October 10th incident, the situation worsened. In November, the Tianjin Association for National Salvation was closed down and twenty-four leaders were arrested. Soon the Tianjin Student Union was also disbanded. But we continued our progressive activities secretly and found a room in a student's

home in the concession area to use as our office. A concession area was a track of land in a Chinese port or city leased to an imperialist power and put under its colonial rule.

In December of that year another confrontation occurred. That day the students gathered around the office building of the provincial government to present a petition to Governor Cao Rui, asking for the release of the arrested students and for the various national salvation associations to be allowed to resume operations. However, not only did he refuse to receive us, but he had the gates locked and posted armed guards. Our representatives, Zhou Enlai, Guo Longzhen (a woman), and Yu Fangzhou, managed to get in from a hole under the door. They were beaten once they were inside. The students became more indignant and refused to leave. At midnight, the armed guards drove the students away by brutal force, hitting students with bayonets and rifle butts and spraying them with columns of water. Many students were wounded and some had to be sent to the hospital. In this way we saw clearly the ferocious face of the reactionary government and that freedom and democratic rights could not be gained without a fierce struggle.

In the following year, we shifted our priority to rescuing the arrested students. We struggled to win over public sentiment, fought against illegal arrests, and asked for public trial of our representatives. It was not until that summer, however, that all twenty-eight of those who had been arrested were finally released.

During the movement, not only were we suppressed by the reactionary government, but were suppressed by the college authorities as well. They ordered students not to leave the campus to take part in any progressive activities. On May 7, 1920, a group of us from the Women's Normal College planned to attend a meeting commemorating the May 7th Incident, the day the Japanese government sent an ultimatum to the Chinese government urging it to sign the Twenty-One Demands. When we were ready to leave, we discovered college authorities were refusing to let (2417) us. A confrontation ensued and resulted in our eventually forcing open the gate and attending the meeting.

When we returned, much to our surprise, a notice had been posted that all the students who had attended the meeting—a total of two hundred—were expelled! We decided to leave the college as soon as possible. Our dedication to our patriotic duty was so strong that we were ready to sacrifice anything for the goal of national independence! Without any rest or supper we spent the night packing our luggage. When we were ready to leave en masse, luggage in hand, we again discovered that the gate had been locked. In addition to this,

they had cut off our communication with the outside world by locking up the telephone room. This time the confrontation lasted through the night and into the morning of the next day when all two hundred of us left the college. One week later, public pressure forced them to reinstate us, and we immediately returned to school.

The women's liberation movement was greatly enhanced by the May Fourth Movement; this became an important part of the movement. And slogans such as "sexual equality," "freedom of marriage," "coeducational universities," "social contacts for women," and "job opportunities for women," were all put forward. In Tianjin we merged the men's students union with the women's. Fearing that public opinion would be against it, some of the women were hesitant at first. However, the male and female activists among us took the lead and we worked together bravely to overcome all obstacles. In our work, we were equal and we respected each other. Everyone worked wholeheartedly for the goal of saving China, and we competed with each other in our efforts. Women students, particularly the more progressive ones, worked especially hard for we knew we were pioneers among Chinese women to show that women are not inferior to men. Inspired by the new ideals, the progressive men students broke down the tradition of sexual discrimination and treated us with respect. For example, each department of the student union had one male and one female in charge. In addition, women had equal say in decision making. The men and women's student union in Beijing admired us for our brilliant work and merged afterwards.

At this time cultural movements were developing rapidly and students were receptive to publications which promoted new ideas. In Beijing, for example, there were *New Youth*, *Young China*, and *New Tide* magazines. In Tianjin, the Student Union every week would invite a progressive professor (such as Li Dazhao) to give us an academic lecture on new literary ideas such as how to write in vernacular Chinese rather than in classical stereotyped writings. Today these things are commonplace, but then it was very new and important. As more scientific subjects and new ideas poured into China, we felt an urgency to learn, discuss, study, and understand them. Thus by the end of that summer, a small well-organized group—the Awakening Society—was established by twenty of the more progressive student activists. I was the youngest in the Society. Although I often heard other members talking about such things as socialism or anarchism, I was too young to understand them. At that time we did not have definite political convictions, nor did we know much about Communism. We just had a vague idea that the principle of distribution in the most advantageous society was "from each according to his ability, to each

according to his needs.” We knew only that a revolution led by Lenin in Russia had been successful, and that the aim of that revolution was to emancipate the majority of the people who were oppressed, and to establish a classless society. How we longed for such a society! But at that time we could not learn about such a society because we could scarcely find any copy of Lenin’s ideas or information about the October Revolution.

The Awakening Society existed for only a few months. We lost some members when they were arrested in the incident over the petition to the governor. Others graduated and left Tianjin. Eventually the Society ceased to exist. However, the majority of us eventually joined the Chinese Socialist Youth League established in 1920, or the Communist party established in 1921.

Source

Reprinted with permission of The Free Press, a division of Simon & Schuster Adult Publishing Group, from *Chinese Civilization: A Sourcebook*, 2nd edition, revised and expanded, edited by Patricia Buckley Ebrey. Copyright © 1993 by Patricia Buckley Ebrey, all rights reserved.

About The Documents

The manifesto of the Third Communist International was an official document, written in a style of revolutionary rhetoric that later became very familiar, because as standard practice all similar official Communist (2418) pronouncements soon employed such language and invocations of Marxist theory. It also represented an act of conscious defiance of the Allied nations meeting at Paris, who had deliberately excluded the Soviet Union from their decisions, and had also acquiesced in the independence of some formerly Russian provinces, including Finland and the Baltic states, and the cession of other Russian territories to Romania, Poland, and other nations.

The Comintern’s manifesto announced the Soviet intention to spread Communist revolution throughout the world and to overthrow capitalist governments and “bourgeois democracy” wherever they existed and replace them with the “dictatorship of the proletariat.” Condemning the decisions then under deliberation at Paris, the manifesto argued that the peace settlement imposed by the “allied imperialists” was one whereby, despite its overt rhetoric on national self-determination, large and strong powers oppressed and humiliated small and weak ones and imposed imperial rule on them. The only means to remedy this situation was, it contended, working-class revolution in both the “mother-countr[ies] and their colonies, followed by close economic

cooperation to facilitate the economic development of those nations which previously experienced only international exploitation and expropriation.” By dividing the population into the mutually antagonistic bourgeoisie and working-class proletariat, capitalism, the manifesto argued, precluded genuine democracy. The only institutions capable of organizing the forces of the proletariat and associated urban and rural elements would be those resembling the Soviet workers’ councils established in Russia, together with a powerful army to defend the rights the proletariat had won for itself. Not only, therefore, was the manifesto intended to inspire, though relatively brief it also provided a basic model for revolutionaries elsewhere who wished to emulate Soviet achievements.

Deng Yingchao’s recollections of the impact of the 1919 May Fourth Movement were very different in nature, representing the experiences of one young female Chinese student as remembered several decades later. Born in 1903, Deng died in 1992, by which time she had become a significant and revered Chinese Communist revolutionary figure, particularly prominent in Chinese women’s organizations. In 1925 she married a young man who likewise attained eminence within the Chinese Communist Party, Zhou Enlai, subsequently China’s long-time premier and second only to Mao Zedong among the first generation of Chinese Communist leaders. Deng’s recollections of her 16-year-old self and of the Chinese political situation are both interesting and enlightening, especially when she describes how shy the young women students initially were of making public speeches condemning the Paris peace settlement’s contemptuous disregard for China’s integrity. Interestingly, she emphasized that for students such as herself, patriotic resentment of China’s disadvantaged position and the desire to promote their country’s national welfare preceded and underpinned their conversion to radicalism, an attitude undoubtedly typical of many of those Asian nationalists who eventually turned to Communism, perceiving campaigns for both radical socialism and independence as complementary and mutually reinforcing. Deng’s recollections are vivid and convincing. To a modern audience, her portrayal of the growth of feminism among the young women involved in nationalist protests, even as they still possessed little concrete knowledge of Socialism, anarchism, or Communism, is perhaps particularly interesting.

One must, however, entertain one caveat. By the time she produced these memoirs, Deng was an eminent figure in the Chinese party hierarchy. Her husband died in 1975, and during her years of widowhood she was apparently often quite garrulous and frank, almost to an embarrassing extent, when talking with Western friends. Eighty or more years old when she produced this

memoir, Deng had little to gain by holding her tongue, and as the widow of the revered Zhou Enlai she was probably virtually sacrosanct. This memoir may well, therefore, represent her spontaneous recollections of her very early revolutionary days, and certainly its freshness suggests this. Even so, this memoir was written for the journal *Women in China*, published in English in 1989 by a state-sponsored press, albeit at a time when liberalization was well under way in China. When assessing this memoir's value as a historical source, one must at least bear in mind—even if one ultimately chooses to dismiss it—the possibility that Deng herself or some party functionary may have subjected certain aspects to some degree of censorship, so that this and other pieces included in the journal presented to the outside world the approved Chinese (2419) Communist Party version of its own past history and that of Chinese women.

Further Reading

Elleman, Bruce A. *Diplomacy and Deception: The Secret History of Sino-Soviet Diplomatic Relations, 1917–1927*. Armonk, NY: Sharpe, 1997.

Jacobson, Jon. *When the Soviet Union Entered World Politics*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994.

Lan, Hua R., and Vanessa L. Fong, eds. *Women in Republican China: A Sourcebook*. Armonk, NY: Sharpe, 1999.

Levine, Marilyn A. *The Found Generation: Chinese Communists in Europe during the Twenties*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1993.

Lin, Yü-sheng. *The Crisis of Chinese Consciousness: Radical Antitraditionalism in the May Fourth Era*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1979.

Rees, Tim, and Andrew Thorpe, eds. *International Communism and the Communist International, 1919–43*. Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1998.

Schwarcz, Vera. *The Chinese Enlightenment: Intellectuals and the Legacy of the May Fourth Movement of 1919*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986.

Spence, Jonathan. *The Gate of Heavenly Peace: The Chinese and Their Revolution, 1895–1980*. New York: Viking, 1981.

Steiner, Zara. *The Lights That Failed: European International History, 1919–1933*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005.

Wang, Zheng. *Women in the Chinese Enlightenment: Oral and Textual Histories*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.

Wilbur, C. Martin, and Julie Lien-ying How. *Missionaries of Revolution: Soviet Advisers and Nationalist China, 1920–1927*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989.

MLA

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "46. The War's Impact on International Radicalism." *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*, ABC-CLIO, 2005, pp. . *ABC-CLIO eBook Collection*, legacy.abc-clio.com/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2294.

Chicago Manual of Style

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "46. The War's Impact on International Radicalism." In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005. <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2294>.

APA

Roberts, P. M., S. C. Tucker (2005). 46. The War's Impact on International Radicalism. In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia* (pp.). Retrieved from <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2294>

Essay 47. Walter Lippmann on World War I and the International Role of the United States

World War I and the Idea of an Atlantic World

World War I was the first occasion on which the United States intervened decisively in a major European war, but by no means the last. In December 1941 the United States once more entered a world conflict, World War II, waging massive campaigns in both Europe and Asia. After this second conflict the United States remained heavily engaged in European affairs, the centerpiece of its strategy the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) alliance with most of the western European nations.

Even before World War I, some Americans argued that the United States shared a common interest with Great Britain and France in safeguarding an “Atlantic community” of powers who were part of the same civilization and had a joint strategic goal of keeping the Atlantic open to their own ships’ navigation. This outlook drew heavily upon the naval writings of U.S. Admiral Alfred T. Mahan (1840–1914), an influential naval theorist who suggested that throughout the nineteenth century U.S. national security had ultimately depended upon the protection of the British fleet and that in their mutual interests the two countries should therefore harmonize their defense policies. Mahan’s thinking exerted considerable influence upon both former U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt and his younger cousin Franklin D. Roosevelt, a future president who was assistant secretary of the navy throughout World War I. Often, such views were underpinned by popular Social Darwinist ideas of the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon or English-speaking nations current in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the belief disseminated by numerous influential historians and political theorists that the Anglo-Saxon race, in effect the British and Americans, was uniquely capable of self-government, had evolved the best and most democratic political institutions to date, and shared a common legal, political, and institutional heritage. When World War I began in 1914, many of those Americans who were most pro-Allied and interventionist in outlook—for example, the two Roosevelts, Theodore Roosevelt’s former secretary of state Elihu Root, and Franklin Roosevelt’s future secretary of war Henry L. Stimson—were apparently much influenced by this Anglo-American or Atlanticist perspective.

Walter Lippmann, "The Defense of the Atlantic World," *The New Republic*, 17 February 1917

We argued last week that it was dangerous and misleading to believe that the United States was taking up arms as the champion of neutral rights under international law. It is no less misleading to believe that we are taking up arms in defense of our arms alone. If America enters the war on any such flimsy basis as that, it will fight a sterile war, and peace will leave us without the least assurance that we have accomplished (2420) anything. The fact is that the Germans have understood America's position in the war far better than we ourselves have understood it, and if we are to deal with them effectively, if we are to fight them well, it is of the first importance that we should understand the business as they feel it. It is a bad general who does not imagine himself in the enemy's place. It is a weak nation that would dribble into war not knowing why, or how, or whither.

All along the Germans have seen two great truths: first, that British command of the sea has become absolute, and has abolished the neutral rights which interfere with it; second, that America's policy has been to protest feebly and without effect against Britain while Germany has been held by threat of war from using the submarine fully to relieve that pressure. The Germans have pointed out quite accurately that the result of this policy has been to close the road to Germany and hold open the road to Britain and France. The German highway we have allowed the Allies to bar, the Allied highway we were ready to keep open at the risk of war. We have not merely been committed theoretically to selling munitions and supplies to any one who can come and fetch them. We have in fact permitted the Allies to cut off Germany, we have been in fact prepared for war to deliver munitions and foodstuffs to the Allies. Stripped of all its technicalities this is the issue, and Germans have not been slow to recognize it.

A number of things have obscured the issue. The first and most spectacular is that no American lives have been lost by the action of the Allies, and consequently their illegalities have never seemed monstrous to most of us. Nevertheless inhumanity is not the real difference. No American lives would have been lost if we had acquiesced in Germany's policy as we have in Britain's. American lives would almost certainly have been lost had we refused to agree to Great Britain's "blockade" as we have to Germany's "war-zone" decree. If Britain said that we must put into a certain port we have put into it, if Britain said we must not use certain areas of the North Sea we have not used them, if Britain said we could do only a certain amount of trade with Holland, that is all the trade we have done. Nor is there any reason for regarding the

submarine war as more deadly than the blockade of Germany. It is well to remember that the German people are suffering anguish as a result of it, that their children's vitality is being sapped, that there is an alarming increase of tuberculosis within the German Empire. The blockade and the submarine are both terrible weapons, and the blockade is the more effective of the two. In choosing between them we are not choosing between legality and illegality, nor even perhaps in the last analysis between cruelty and mercy.

No one can say that this statement of the case does not give Germany her due. It errs if anything in giving her the extreme benefit of every doubt. But when her case has been made with all due allowances we are more than ever sure that this nation does right in accepting the blockade and defying the submarine. It does right because the war against Britain, France, and Belgium is a war against the civilization of which we are a part. To be "fair" in such a war would be a betrayal. We would not help Germany to victory. We cannot stand idle as long as there is the least chance of her winning one. If Germany's cause were the better one, this policy would be as outrageous as the Germans believe it is. It is because we cannot permit a German triumph that we have accepted the closure of the seas to Germany and the opening of them to the Allies. That is the true justification of our policy, and the only one which will bear criticism.

It has been obscured for us also by a number of things here at home. We are an inveterately legalistic people, and have veiled our real intentions behind a mass of technicalities. The reason for this legalism just now is to be found in something besides our intellectual habits. We have wanted to assist the Allies and hamper Germany, but we have wanted also to keep out of war. Our government therefore has been driven to stretch technicalities to the breaking point. We have clothed the most unneutral purposes in the language of neutrality. But we have never had any right to expect that we could go on forever without facing the consequences. Having started on the road of assistance to the Allies we have to follow it through. So when we talk about American honor being involved we mean just this: that since we have created an unneutral policy we cannot now abandon it because it is dangerous. Our honor is involved only because in the last thirty months we have made a choice which requires us to keep open the seas that lead to the western Allies. Had our judgment of the issues of the war been favorable to (2421) Germany, we would with honor have followed a different policy. Had Britain, for example, been the aggressor, and the violator of Belgium, we could with perfect honor have broken the blockade and acquiesced in the submarine war.

This basic truth has been clouded for us by something more than our legalism. The radical pro-Allies especially along the eastern seaboard have raised the

absurd legend that the policy of the administration was either pro-German or at least neutral in effect. Fastening all their attention on the dramatic patience of the President, they often seemed to forget entirely the drastic effects of his inactivity in regard to the blockade. They never seemed able to realize that the decision not to break the strategic encirclement of Germany is one of the great strategic facts of the war. It may indeed be the most decisive victory the Allies have won, and it has earned for us the dangerous hostility of the German people.

Only by a clear grasp of the situation and its gigantic consequences can we steer our course now or in the future. We have chosen to render the Allies definite assistance, negatively by allowing them to close the seas to Germany, positively by insisting that the seas be kept open to them. They must be kept open. This means that to frighten ships away is as much an overt act as to sink them. It means that to sink Norwegian and Dutch ships is as intolerable as to sink American ships. It means that our fundamental interest in this crisis is not a complicated system of rights but a definite and practical and tangible end. The world's highway shall not be closed to the western Allies if America has power to prevent it.

We do not hesitate to say that this should be American policy even though submarines were capable of successful, humane "cruiser warfare." We do not hesitate to say—we have believed it and said it since the beginning of the war—that if the Allied fleet were in danger of destruction, if Germany had a chance of securing command of the seas, our navy ought to be joined to the British in order to prevent it. The safety of the Atlantic highway is something for which America should fight.

Why? Because on the two shores of the Atlantic Ocean there has grown up a profound web of interest which joins together the western world. Britain, France, Italy, even Spain, Belgium, Holland, the Scandinavian nations, and Pan-America are in the main one community in their deepest needs and their deepest purposes. They have a common interest in the ocean which unites them. They are to-day more inextricably bound together than most even as yet realize. But if that community were destroyed we should know what we had lost. We should understand then the meaning of the unfortified Canadian frontier, of the common protection given Latin-America by the British and American fleets.

It is the crime of Germany that she is trying to make hideous the highways by which the Atlantic Powers live. That is what has raised us against her in this war. Had she stood on the defensive against France and Britain, had she limited

the war to the Balkans and the eastern front where it originated, and clearly thrown in her lot with the western nations, she would have had their neutrality and probably their sympathy. But when she carried the war to the Atlantic by violating Belgium, by invading France, by striking against Britain, and by attempting to disrupt us, neutrality of spirit or action was out of the question. And now that she is seeking to cut the vital highways of our world we can no longer stand by. We cannot betray the Atlantic community by submitting. If not civilization, at least our civilization is at stake.

A victory on the high seas would be a triumph of that class which aims to make Germany the leader of the East against the West, the leader ultimately of a German-Russian-Japanese coalition against the Atlantic world. It would be utter folly not to fight now to make its hopes a failure by showing that in the face of such a threat the western community is a unit.

It would be a mistake to suppose, however, that we are dealing with a single-minded Germany. We wage war on Germany as long as she commits her destiny to those who would separate her from the western world. By rights Germany should be a powerful and loyal member of the Atlantic world, and she will be if this war is effectively fought and wisely ended. Our aim must be not to conquer Germany as Rome conquered Carthage, but to win Germany as Lincoln strove to win the South, to win her for union with our civilization by the discrediting of those classes who are alone our enemies. It is no paradox and no sentimentality to say that we must fight Germany not to destroy her but to force her and lure her back to the civilization (2422) to which she belongs. She is a rebel nation as long as she wages offensive war against the western world.

We do not believe that the bulk of the German people or even the better part of her civilian leaders honestly hope to overthrow us. They are gambling we believe on the prospect of an early peace. But if by any chance the submarine should succeed, the party of von Tirpitz would be invincible. We cannot therefore take any chances of allowing the campaign to succeed. It must be made to fail in two ways: by demonstrating that the sea can be kept open, and by enlisting our strength on the side of the Allies. That would be a German failure indeed because it would be clear then that the assault on the West had merely doubled the power of the West.

These, we believe, are the main causes why we are being drawn into the war, the main reasons why we should enter it, and the main objects we should pursue. There could be no greater error than that voiced by [Idaho Republican] Senator [William E.] Borah when he said, "It ought to be distinctly understood

that we are interested alone in protecting our neutral rights as a neutral nation, and that what we have done and what we may do is for that purpose and no other.” A few moments reflection will show that the issue never has been one of neutral rights, that to fight for them alone would be to isolate ourselves from our natural Allies and leave us exposed after the war, and finally that no form of action can be devised which will vindicate all neutral rights, or even those which Germany alone has violated. If we put the matter on the basis of neutral rights we shall never know whether we have vindicated them or not, and our participation in the war would be as futile as a duel of honor.

What we must fight for is the common interest of the western world, for the integrity of the Atlantic Powers. We must recognize that we are in fact one great community and act as a member of it. Our entrance into it would weight it immeasurably in favor of liberalism, and make the organization of a league for peace an immediately practical object of statesmanship. By showing that we are ready now, as well as in the theoretical future, to defend the western world, the cornerstone of federation would be laid. We would not and could not fight for a bad settlement. The real danger to a decent peace has always been that the western nations would become so dependent on Russia and Japan that they must pay any price for their loyalty. That danger is almost certainly obviated by our participation. For when the peace conference begins some time toward the end of 1917, as it almost certainly will, the final arbitrament between liberalism and reaction will be made by the relative power of each. If the liberal forces have the most strength left it is they who will decide the reorganization of the world.

Source

Walter Lippmann, *Early Writings* (New York: Liveright, 1970), 69–75.

The Defects of the Treaty of Versailles: Walter Lippmann to Newton D. Baker, 9 June 1919

For several weeks I’ve wanted to write to you and always I’ve hesitated because I could not quite find the words to express my disappointment at the outcome in Paris.

One can look at the matter either from the moral point of view and compare the result with our legal obligations contracted in the armistice and the pledges of honor given to the world by the President in our name; or one can look at the matter coldly from the point of view of its probable workableness in the kind of world left by the war.

I know that to you the promises made by the President were the major reality which underlay the whole conflict. How in our consciences are we to square the results with the promises? We said we would restore the French boundaries of 1871, we have gone far beyond those boundaries to the Saar and have set up a regime over a population of Germans which is humanly intolerable. You know enough of modern industrialism to know that a plebiscite in a coal valley where the employer is a government vitally interested in the result of the plebiscite is bound to lead to the profoundest disorders and resentment. And this occurs in a territory which was expressly excluded under the armistice from being considered open to political transfer. You know that I had something to do with the preparation of the memoranda on which the fourteen points were based, and I know that we expressly selected the formula “the wrong done to France in 1871” in order to exclude (2423) France’s claims to the Saar Valley which had already been revealed at that time in certain of the secret documents published by the Bolsheviki.

We said that we would give to Poland territory inhabited by “indisputably” Polish populations. We have put at least two million Germans directly under Polish rule, and in the case of Danzig we have put them not under neutral rule but indirectly under Polish though the city is indisputably German. And as a result we have severed from the main body of the German Republic the people of East Prussia.

In the matter of Schleswig-Holstein we have overreached ourselves in the desire to diminish German territory so much that we are confronted with the biting irony of the Danish people who decline a substantial part of the aggrandizement offered to them.

Upon German Austria we have forced separatism, denying to that people the essential of independence that is their right to voluntary union with people of the same language and nationality. We have done this for purely military and political reasons.

In Bohemia [Czechoslovakia] we have denied to probably two million Germans any right to be consulted about their allegiance. In the Tyrol for purely strategic reasons we have placed under Italian sovereignty several thousand more Germans.

All this we have done at the conclusion of a war which had its origin at least partially in the violation of national principles. In the places of Germany, Austria, and Russia as the empires based on the subjugation of a league of peoples we have set up France, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Italy at least

partially on that basis. Whereas in 1914 Italy, France and Poland were agitated by irredentism, they now become the nations against whom the irredentist feeling of Europe converges. We have done this after the solemnest kind of assurances that we would not do it.

We have made a League of Nations and from it we have excluded the German Republic though we have disarmed it and left it without any means of defense. Nothing is clearer to me from reading the President's speeches than that he intended that Germany democratized should become a member of the League. I remember in August in London Sir William Tyrrell, head of the Political Intelligence, saying that the League should be formed by the Allies before the conclusion of the war. This view was proposed to the President and in the last speech he made before the armistice, the great speech of September 27th, he expressly stated that a League formed then would be no League because it was merely an alliance of belligerent powers. The exclusion of Germany from the League not only denies her the securities which the League may give to its members, but it also denies her as long as she is excluded that economic equality which was promised in all the President's speeches and explicitly in the Fourteen Points.

The method of fixing the reparations without specifying an amount, and permitting the most drastic kind of interference in the internal life of Germany, is surely one of the most dangerous engines of intrigue that could have been devised. So far as I can see no expert economist even pretends that the practical result can be the payment of very substantial sums, and it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that while the ostensible purpose was to satisfy vague and exaggerated popular demands in England and France for indemnities, the real purpose was to put into the hands of France and England the ultimate control of all phases of German life. Whether this was the purpose or not we already begin to see the consequences. The separatist movement in the Rhineland is an intrigue, hardly denied, which derives all its vitality from the fact that the French generals and politicians promised escape from the reparations in payment for the secession.

I presume that you hardly believe that this is either a just or workable peace, and I suppose that you keep your faith in the future by hoping that the League of Nations can modify the terms and work out a genuine settlement. I can't share that belief. From what I know of American diplomacy even when inspired by the best of motives, I cannot believe that it will be effective in the myriad details of European diplomacy as they result from this Treaty. Why should anyone believe that where Wilson has failed General [Leonard] Wood or Senator [Warren G.] Harding [two of the potential Republican presidential

candidates] or whoever it is that follows him will succeed? It seems to me to stand the world on its head to assume that a timid legal document can master and control the appetites and the national wills before which this Treaty puts such immense prizes.

(2424)

Of course even with all these doubts I should be willing to try the experiment, provided we abandon all idea of a special French alliance and remove from the Covenant all those guarantees which in any way bind us in advance to support the status quo. For these agreements simply insure a willful policy against the consequences of its acts. Their effect is to quiet the apprehensions of that body of public opinion in France and England which might be depended upon to resist an aggressive bold policy. France, so far as her diplomacy and her militarism go, is dreaming once again her old dream of Louis XIV and Napoleon, and we shall simply encourage that dream by guaranteeing France and her satellite states in Eastern Europe.

I've run on at great length, but I feel that I must say this to you so that you may understand why it is that *The New Republic* has become so critical of the President's foreign policy. I can find no excuses in the fact that he had a difficult task in Paris. No one supposed that he would have an easy one. A good deal of the difficulty he owes to his own neglect in failing during the war to secure an abrogation of the Secret Treaties and specific acceptance of his program. Some of the difficulty he owes to his failure to surround himself with men to whom he could really delegate part of the task. Some of it he owes to the lack of popular support here. The absence of that support is traceable to the intolerance and suppression of criticism in which he so weakly acquiesced.

It's a very dark moment, and the prospect of war and revolution throughout Europe is appalling. The responsibility resting upon the men who commit the American people to detailed participation is simply enormous.

Source

John Morton Blum, ed., *Public Philosopher: Selected Letters of Walter Lippmann* (New York: Ticknor & Fields, 1984), 117–119. Walter Lippmann Press, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Press.

Walter Lippmann (1889–1974)

One of the most influential publicists of the Atlanticist viewpoint was Walter Lippmann, a young editor at the respected new weekly journal *The New Republic*. By 1914 Lippmann, the Harvard-educated intellectual son of two well-to-do German Jewish parents, was generally considered brilliant and had already published two well-received books on the broad political issues and dilemmas facing the early twentieth-century United States as it adjusted to its evolution from a small-scale, decentralized agrarian state into a predominantly urban, mass society. After a youthful flirtation with socialism, which he later rejected, Lippmann supported Theodore Roosevelt's third-party presidential campaign on the Progressive ticket in 1912. Two years later Lippmann became a founding editor of *The New Republic*, a self-consciously liberal periodical that sought to define new parameters for American reform. It was financed by Willard D. Straight, a young New York banker and former diplomat who was a strong proponent of the Mahanist view that U.S. security depended on a close alliance with the British fleet, and by his wife, Dorothy Whitney Straight, a wealthy heiress with a strong commitment to social reform. The chief editor was Herbert Croly, a leading progressive intellectual whose book *The Promise of American Life* (1909) became a seminal text for reformist Americans who sought to modernize their country to meet new challenges. Journalism became Lippmann's lifelong career, and by the 1930s he was the most influential and widely syndicated newspaper columnist and political commentator in the United States, writing regularly for *The New York Herald Tribune*.

Lippmann subsequently confessed that before August 1914, his chief interests had lain in American domestic rather than foreign affairs, priorities the war reversed for good. Initially, Lippmann and Croly were close to Theodore Roosevelt, but during 1916 they gravitated toward President Woodrow Wilson, whom they endorsed editorially in that year's election. The president apparently read their journal attentively. Once the United States entered the war, Lippmann soon joined the "Inquiry," a group of intellectuals, journalists, and academics organized by Colonel Edward M. House, Wilson's close advisor, and based in the State Department, its mandate to develop plans for the peace settlement. Lippmann was one of the more influential members, and his memoranda apparently influenced some aspects of the president's January 1918 "Fourteen Points" speech. He also continued to write extensively for *The New Republic*, on occasion criticizing the domestic repression that characterized the U.S. war experience. In 1918 Lippmann visited France and England, as he had already done several times during the years of (2425) U.S. neutrality. In 1919 Lippmann attended the Paris Peace Conference as a junior member of the U.S. delegation. The compromises of liberal principles the Allies obliged Wilson to make when drafting the peace settlement and the League of Nations left

Lippmann deeply disillusioned, and he publicly condemned the Treaty of Versailles, urging that his country should not ratify the document. Although Lippmann's counsel was by no means decisive in its action, the U.S. Senate subsequently rejected the treaty.

Despite his disillusionment, Lippmann did not lose all interest in foreign affairs. During the 1930s he was one of the advocates of a strong U.S. position against totalitarianism, including the rise of fascist Germany, and he largely supported the efforts of President Franklin D. Roosevelt to implement anti-German and anti-Japanese policies and assist Great Britain against Hitler. Toward the end of World War II Lippmann once more set forth, in *U.S. War Aims* (1944), his thesis that U.S. security had always depended upon the protection of the British fleet and the maintenance of a favorable balance of power in Europe. In the early Cold War years, Lippmann supported American economic assistance for European recovery through the Marshall Plan and also supported the establishment of NATO. He sounded a cautionary note, however, warning that U.S. Cold War strategy to contain communism was dangerously open-ended, making little attempt to differentiate between vital and expendable interests but pledging itself to oppose communism wherever it might appear. Lippmann urged his countrymen to reach a balance between U.S. military resources and commitments. In 1950 this led him to oppose U.S. involvement in the Korean War, which he considered an imprudent overextension of his country's forces in an area of peripheral strategic value. During the Vietnam War Lippmann ultimately openly condemned U.S. intervention, arguing that besides being morally unjustified, it represented a dangerous diversion of men and equipment to a nonessential country, thereby distracting American policy makers from the pursuit of more salient strategic interests in Europe. The evolution of Lippmann's views over his lifetime, which largely coincided with those years of the twentieth century in which the extension of U.S. power and influence reached its height, aptly illustrated some of the dilemmas generated by and implicit in his country's greatly expanded international role.

About The Documents

Lippmann's unsigned editorial "The Defense of the Atlantic World," published shortly after President Woodrow Wilson had broken relations with Germany but before the United States had entered the war, set forth a view of U.S. intervention in World War I as strategically justified and even inevitable. Even though Lippmann later accepted Wilson's interpretation of the war as one "to make the world safe for democracy," his editorial attempted to base U.S.

intervention in World War I primarily on the grounds of the defense of his country's fundamental strategic interests. It was intended to convince the influential readers of *The New Republic* in the United States and beyond that American national interests mandated intervention in the war. Lippmann was franker than most U.S. officials dared be in admitting that whatever their stated rationale, American neutrality policies had effectively advantaged the Allies over the Central Powers, an outcome he claimed was desirable because it promoted his own country's interests.

For most of the period of neutrality, *The New Republic's* editors attempted to maintain a relatively evenhanded attitude toward the Allied and Central Powers, an attitude Lippmann considered politically advisable but one not entirely in accord with his own strong pro-Allied sympathies. His Atlanticist views may have owed something to his contacts not just with Straight and Theodore Roosevelt but also with the editors of a comparable British journal, *The Round Table*, founded in 1911 to promote close cooperation within the British Empire. Personnel from the two periodicals each admired the other's attainments and met repeatedly during the war; each journal also assisted the other to expand its subscriptions on the other side of the Atlantic. In addition, Lippmann may have been influenced by *The New Republic's* contacts with Norman Angell, the well-known prewar British peace advocate who subsequently became a dedicated supporter of the creation of a league of nations.

Although Lippmann sought to analyze World War I in terms of U.S. strategic interests, like many American liberals he was probably still decidedly less realistic and hardheaded than he believed himself to be.

(2426)

Even in February 1917 he urged that the future peace settlement not impose overly harsh Carthaginian terms upon Germany but should rather be one of reconciliation with the German people, as opposed to their leaders, enabling the Allies to "lure her back to the civilization to which she belongs." One major reason for the enthusiastic support Lippmann and other American and European liberals gave Wilson was their belief that he would ensure such an outcome to the war. The settlement that emerged from the Paris Peace Conference, especially the Treaty of Versailles, left many such liberals, including several who had been part of the various national delegations attending the conference, greatly disillusioned. Among these were not just Lippmann but the economist and British Treasury expert John Maynard Keynes, whose book *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* (1919) gave a

scathing account of the deliberations of the Allied statesmen; Herbert Hoover, head of the American Relief Association and a future U.S. president; Jan Christiaan Smuts, the much-respected future prime minister of South Africa; and Harold Nicolson, a junior British diplomat. All felt that the Allies had imposed overly harsh peace terms on Germany, which bore within them the seeds of future conflict.

Pragmatic supporters of the League of Nations tended to argue that despite major flaws, the treaty and peace settlement were a compromise that represented the best terms Wilson had been able to extract from the other Allied Powers assembled at Paris, but Lippmann refused to accept this viewpoint. Returning to New York, in *The New Republic* Lippmann publicly attacked the treaty as a betrayal of the principles President Woodrow Wilson had so eloquently enunciated in his wartime speeches. In correspondence with Secretary of War Newton D. Baker, a close friend and fellow progressive, Lippmann stated his objections less formally. Several territorial provisions of the treaty, he charged, directly contravened the principle of national self-determination Wilson had enunciated. In particular, Germany had been deprived of several areas of territory where ethnic Germans were in the majority, which the peace settlement had nonetheless consigned to Poland or Czechoslovakia, while the German-speaking rump Austrian state—all that remained of the Austro-Hungarian Empire—had been forbidden to unite with Germany, as most of its population desired. Together with the supposedly temporary French administration of the coal-rich Saar Basin, these decisions were liable to ignite future irredentist military conflicts intended to right these grievances. Lippmann condemned the exclusion of Germany from the League of Nations, which now represented essentially a club of victor powers and, he charged, also contravened Wilson's Fourteen Points pledges that Germany would enjoy "economic equality" with other states. Like many others, he criticized the burden of reparations or indemnities imposed on Germany, massive sums that he held could never be collected and that had been imposed primarily to satisfy the vengeful British and French populations but were likely to be manipulated by the victors so as to affect German political decisions. The only terms on which he would now support U.S. membership in the League of Nations would be if its covenant were stripped of the obligations imposed on member states to guarantee the status quo the Treaty of Versailles had imposed.

Lippmann showed little sympathy for the difficulties Wilson had faced at Paris, where he had been forced to deal not only with Allied leaders who were tough bargainers but also with a Republican-dominated U.S. Congress, many of whose most senior figures had always been less than supportive of Wilson's

liberal peace aims. Wilson had only limited room for maneuver, and on both fronts he had to make major concessions. Lippmann, however, argued that during the war itself the president should have forced the Allies to abrogate the secret treaties they had negotiated with each other and accept the Fourteen Points as the basis of a postwar settlement. Domestically, he argued, the president had only himself to blame for the absence of stronger support, since in Lippmann's opinion the internal repression the Wilson administration had sanctioned had gravely weakened liberal political forces in the United States.

In retrospect, many of Lippmann's criticisms seem somewhat exaggerated. Although Wilson had proclaimed an ambitious program of international reform designed to recast the existing system, at Paris he had to deal not just with sometimes uncompromising Allied leaders, many of whom had never formally accepted his objectives, but equally with intransigent representatives of smaller and sometimes new nations, that in several cases, Romania, Italy, Poland, and (2427) Greece, for example, were stubbornly determined to acquire as much territory as they could, almost regardless of whether or not their national claims to such lands could fairly be justified on ethnic or historical grounds. The physical presence of military forces on the ground sometimes proved the final arbiter of such demands, constraints the United States could only have altered by force of arms, which Congress was unlikely to authorize. By the standards of the peace terms German leaders had hoped to impose on other European countries, those of Versailles were relatively moderate. Although the loss of territory to Poland and Czechoslovakia became a source of controversy during the 1930s, a plebiscite ultimately returned the Saar to Germany. Germany did eventually enter the League of Nations, though after Adolf Hitler came to power he withdrew his country from the organization. In recent decades historians have suggested that had Germany been willing to pay, the burden of German reparations, especially after the reductions granted by the 1924 Dawes Plan and the 1929 Young Plan, would not have been excessive. Such assessments rather dodge the question of the political near-impossibility of extracting long-term payments from a resentful German population determined to regard these as a symbol of their wartime losses. In practical terms, reparations or war indemnities are usually best collected quickly, within a few years of the ending of a war, when their payment can be justified as a consequence of defeat. Even so, political pragmatism meant that eventually reparations were likely to be reduced and might well prove less onerous than was supposed.

In later years, Lippmann took a more tolerant and generous view of Wilson's achievements at Paris, the product in all probability of his many subsequent

years of close study and scrutiny of international affairs and a matured sense of appreciation of the many limitations that circumscribed the president's freedom of action. In the Cold War years, Lippmann himself would express alarm over the pretensions of those Americans who appeared to consider their country internationally omnipotent, and he would suggest that a certain prudent moderation in its objectives and commitments would best serve his country's interests. The fierce criticisms of Wilson and the Paris settlement that Lippmann and other American liberals expressed immediately after Versailles perhaps reflected the almost messianic expectations of a new and regenerated world order that the president's eloquent wartime addresses had produced among progressive forces and the left, hopes that would have required near superhuman abilities to fulfill. For the most part, Americans had entered the war trusting in Wilson's rhetoric that their country would not only emerge victorious but would remake the world according to American models. They perhaps failed to appreciate that U.S. power, though great, was by no means unlimited. Lippmann's profound disillusionment illustrates the measure of his previous faith that the world could be remade according to the principles Wilson had expressed—beliefs that had probably always been somewhat exaggerated, given that when negotiating peace Wilson would at best be only one of several obstinate heads of government, each determined to fight stubbornly for what he considered the paramount interests of his own country. Ironically, Wilson—and American progressives—discovered that when national advantage clashed with liberal principles, as in the case of Italy's disputed claims to Fiume, popular sentiment in any country involved often fiercely supported the particularist interests of that individual state rather than higher supranational ideals. As Lippmann eventually came to recognize, while seeking to remake the world the United States could only work within, not outside, the existing international system, seeking to promote gradual and incremental change.

Further Reading

Bucklin, Steven J. *Realism and American Foreign Policy: Wilsonians and the Kennan-Morgenthau Thesis*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2001.

Fromkin, David. *In the Time of the Americans: The Generation That Changed America's Role in the World*. New York: Knopf, 1995.

Kloppenber, James T. *Uncertain Victory: Social Democracy and Progressivism in American and European Thought, 1870–1920*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986.

———. *The Virtues of Liberalism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Knock, Thomas J. *To End All Wars: Woodrow Wilson and the Quest for a New World Order*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992.

Levy, David W. *Herbert Croly of the New Republic: The Life and Thought of an American Progressive*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985.

Seideman, David. *The New Republic: A Voice of Modern Liberalism*. New York: Praeger, 1986.

(2428)

Steel, Ronald. *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1980.

Sumida, Jon Tetsuo. *Inventing Grand Strategy and Teaching Command: The Classic Works of Alfred Thayer Mahan*. Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, and Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997.

Thompson, John A. *Reformers and War: American Progressive Publicists and the First World War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

Tilchin, William N. *Theodore Roosevelt and the British Empire: A Study in Presidential Statecraft*. New York: St. Martin's, 1997.

MLA

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "47. Walter Lippmann on World War I and the International Role of the United States." *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*, ABC-CLIO, 2005, pp. . *ABC-CLIO eBook Collection*, legacy.abc-clio.com/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2300.

Chicago Manual of Style

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "47. Walter Lippmann on World War I and the International Role of the United States." In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005. <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2300>.

APA

Roberts, P. M., S. C. Tucker (2005). 47. Walter Lippmann on World War I and the International Role of the United States. In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia* (pp.). Retrieved from <http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2300>

Essay 48. A Postwar German Intellectual Triumph

The Cultural Legacy of World War I

Although the Allies won the war, it has often been claimed that the war led to the shattering of established Victorian intellectual, artistic, and cultural ideals and their replacement by the culture of modernism, which in its irrationality and fragmentation was essentially that which had already developed in pre-1914 Germany. When the war began, Germany was recognized as the intellectual leader of the Western world. In many ways, German learning, philosophy, culture, and science challenged many of the basic assumptions of the British intellectual tradition. Britain tended to epitomize the optimistic late-nineteenth-century belief in progress, rationality, liberalism, and the growing extension of democracy, reason, justice, and the rule of law, essentially a faith that the world was steadily improving and would continue along this path. It was in England that the Whig tradition of history exemplified in the works of Lord Macaulay and Thomas Carlyle emerged and flourished, its basic thrust that British and European history over the previous centuries represented a gradual evolution in the direction of ever greater political liberalism, equality, and democracy, fueled by industrial and material progress. Even the work of the British biologist Charles Darwin on evolution, which to many replaced religious faith in the world as a well-ordered system designed by a benevolent and omnipotent God with what the poet Alfred, Lord Tennyson, described as a system of “nature, red in tooth and claw,” could from another perspective be perceived as describing a rational and highly logical process whereby those organisms best suited to their environment were permitted to survive, while those less fit were eliminated. A reassuring stability, even predictability, was the fundamental hallmark of the British and indeed the American intellectual world, together with a sense that all aspects of the world ultimately formed a coherent and harmonious whole. Underlying this was a faith in objectivity and empiricism as the most effective intellectual tools to interpret the world.

In many areas, especially science, technology, and philosophy, Germany was by 1900 internationally in first place, and in the intellectual and cultural sphere many around the world looked to Germany for leadership and direction. Germany took the initiative in developing new industries, including chemicals, dyestuffs, electrical and optical products and applications, and machine tools. German scholars and academic institutions were considered models of rigorous intellectual training and application. According to the British historian Sir John Seeley, “As a rule, good books are written in German.” In the nineteenth century, German universities pioneered the development of the doctorate of

philosophy as a standard academic qualification. In 1895 half of all historians in the United States had spent some time studying in Germany. German social welfare policies, trade unions, socialist parties, its women's movement, and even self-improvement programs based on healthy diet, exercise, the recovery of folk culture, and a return to plain country living all generated much admiration and often emulation in other countries.

Such advances notwithstanding, by the early twentieth century German cultural pessimism profoundly challenged the comforting British intellectual synthesis, presenting as an alternative the vision of a world of irrational forces in which sometimes senseless action reigned supreme, individuals and nations were driven by unpredictable and often destructive urges, and dissonance and fragmentation prevailed. In advanced science, the work of Max Planck, Albert Einstein, Robert Bosch, Wilhelm Röntgen, and others not only led the world but often challenged existing paradigms of Newtonian gravity and the relationship between time and space. In Vienna, the psychological explorations of Sigmund Freud cast into doubt the concept of individual human beings as rational, sensible, (2429) and decent, suggesting that many if not most were at the mercy of poorly understood internal drives, especially those for sex and toward death, that undercut cherished beliefs in free will and even in the very existence of morality. Although even Wilhelmine Germany was far from tolerant, homosexuals there were far less liable to attract gratuitous persecution than was the case in Britain or the United States. German culture also displayed a certain avid fascination with pure action and the will to power, as exemplified in the published writings of the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, who emphasized the power of the will and urged a Dionysiac emphasis on the dramatic and spectacular gesture for the sake of the sensation involved, regardless of the long-term consequences. Richard Wagner's music glorified the urges of passion and the quest for destruction; his huge opera cycle *The Ring* ended in devastation, with the immolation of the gods themselves. German architecture epitomized the modern, with clean, basic lines and rather brutal structures, while German art dealers took the lead in popularizing experimental modernist styles, such as cubism and dadaism, that broke with the attempts of Western art over many centuries to depict the world as accurately and convincingly as possible. Meanwhile, German historians such as Jacob Burckhardt and Nietzsche drew on the philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer to question the very possibility of attaining historical objectivity or truth, arguing that history had no meaning or message but was merely a reflection of the preoccupations of those writing it, possessing no greater intrinsic accuracy than poetry or music.

For many in every belligerent country and beyond, the experience of four years of brutal and degrading war validated the German rebellion against rationalism and the view of history and culture as a tale of meaningless action and pure sensation, undertaken simply for the sake of the feelings themselves. Random slaughter in the trenches, the exposure of unprotected men to massed artillery and machine guns at Verdun, the Somme, and numerous other engagements, the apparently purposeless nature of many of the wartime military offensives, and even the macabre battlefield dismemberment by shellfire of men and animals all challenged the optimistic view that human history and knowledge were a tale of coherent trends and purposeful endeavors. The works of such postwar literary modernists as T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, James Joyce, Ford Madox Ford, and Virginia Woolf presented a fragmented, incoherent world of dissonant images, shifting perspectives, and disintegrated personalities, its overall effect similar to that conveyed by cubist art.

Metaphors drawn from World War I, “no-man’s-land” and “going over the top,” for instance, resounded through the twentieth century and beyond. Though Britain, France, and the United States appealed to such solid virtues as patriotism, duty, valor, honor, and the defense of civilization and religion to motivate their armies, the actual experience of World War I, as the literary critic Paul Fussell pointed out, gave an ironic gloss to such concepts. Public discourse itself changed, and the use of high rhetorical flights of fancy such as were still found in the 1914 war sonnets of the British poet Rupert Brooke was greatly restrained, since “anxiety without end, without purpose, without reward, and without meaning is woven into the fabric of contemporary life.” According to Samuel Hynes, another cultural historian of World War I, in Britain a great and impassable gulf divided what were at least retrospectively considered the idyllic, halcyon pre-1914 days from the postwar era. As Woolf wrote in the late 1920s: “Everything was different.” Politics above all, perhaps, as totalitarian ideologies of both left and right, fascism and communism alike, questioned the fundamental assumptions of liberal capitalist democracy and glorified the unbridled power of the state, the charismatic leader, the will to power, and the group spirit, finding release and fulfillment in grandiloquent mass public spectacles and violent action. World War I and its aftermath effectively demonstrated the social, cultural, and political validity of the broad pre-1914 German intellectual approach.

Source

Sir John Seeley quoted in Modris Eksteins, “The Cultural Legacy of the Great War,” in *The Great War and the Twentieth Century*, eds. Jay Winter, Geoffrey Parker, and Mary R. Habeck (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000),

338; Rupert Brooke quoted in Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 320; Virginia Woolf quoted in Samuel Hynes, *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture* (London: Bodley Head, 1990), 468.

(2430)

Randolph S. Bourne, "American Use for German Ideals," 4 September 1915

In all the intensity of feeling aroused by the war, we have somehow let escape us the consideration that the German ideals are the only broad and seizing ones that have lived in the world in our generation. Mad and barbarous as they may seem to minds accustomed to much thinner and nicer fare, one must have withdrawn far within a provincial Anglo-Saxon shell not to feel the thrill of their sheer heroic power. We have heard so much of the German industrialism and militarism that we have overlooked the reservoir bursting with spiritual energy that twentieth-century Germany has become. The bubbling intellectual and economic energy of present-day Italy is German; [Friedrich] Nietzsche has raged through Italian thought, and when it was not Nietzsche it was [Georg Wilhelm Friedrich] Hegel. British political thought for forty years has come straight from German sources. What is the new social politics of liberalism but a German collectivism, half-heartedly grafted on a raw stock of individualist "liberty"? Our own progressivism has been a filter through the British strain, diluted with evangelical Christianity. Our educational framework has been German, though unintelligently so. Architecture and art-forms in England and Scandinavia are strikingly German. Town-planning methods and ideals have been lifted bodily. The French seem to have been driven by repulsion into sadly spiteful degenerations of taste in architecture and art-forms. Scarcely a country has been untouched by the German influence. No other country, except Russia, has been so flooding its influence over the twentieth-century world.

Surely the final test of a vital and fecund civilization, a civilization that has arrived, is the creation of novel and indigenous art-forms, that express with creative fidelity the spirit of the time. And mainly in Germany has there flowered in these first years of the century an original art—that shown in public buildings and domestic architecture of clean, massive and soaring lines, sculpture of militaristic solidity like the Leipzig and Bismarck monuments, endless variety of decorative and graphic art, printing and household design, civic art as embodied in the laying-out of cities and squares and parks. All this development has been of social art. Music and painting, the private cultivations, have been relatively feeble. Into social, public, reproducible forms has gone

this burst of the daring German genius. And everywhere, as in the great ages of creative art, the styles are those in which form grows out of function, so that the work of factories and water-towers and railroad bridges suggests the motives of design. Steel and cement set the lines for wholly novel forms. The world sneers at this art. The world would. But the surge of German art-spirit, with its creation of novel forms, means one thing—that German ideals have a sure spiritual fecundity.

Our American mind has missed the significance of these social forms. We are not used to thinking in terms of the impersonal. The cosmic heroisms of the German ideal fall, too, strangely on our ears. We are not accustomed to gloat over history. It comes to us as a shock to find a people who believe in national spirits which are heroic, and through the German spirit, in a world-spirit; for “the world-spirit,” says one of their professor-warriors, “speaks to-day through Germany.” We have no analogy for the fact that “the ideal of organization, the thought of a tremendously valuable whole, uniting its free members for effective work, labors in the subconsciousness of millions of Germans, labors even where it does not come to the light of philosophic discussion.”

Yet it is scarcely strange that the Germans should expect that a pioneer people like ourselves, of vast and restless energy, should sympathize with a pulsating ideal of organized energy which sinned through excess rather than defect, a true pioneer of twentieth-century civilization, which strove, as a German has put it, “not for world-dominion, but for a rational organization of the world on the basis of voluntary cooperation, through the welding of a federal union of nations akin in interests and civilization.”

The outstanding fact is that native American opinion did not take the side of the German ideal. When we were challenged we went with hearty unanimity against this ideal, the most fertile and potent before our eyes. Whether because we relapsed atavistically to our British roots, or because the incalculable energies of the German ideal really daunted us, we preferred to range our sympathy with the nations that were living on their funded nineteenth-century spiritual capital, rather than breaking new paths and creating new forms (2431) for a new time. Believing the Germans to be in error, we did not even feel a weakness for the tragic and heroic error as against the safe and fuddling plausibility.

I do not say that we did wrong in repudiating the German ideals. I only want to know what our repudiation means. It seemed intuitive rather than deliberate. It seemed to mean that we sensed in the German ideals tastes and endeavors profoundly alien to our own. And although it becomes more and more evident

that, whatever the outcome of the war, all the opposing countries will be forced to adopt German organization, German collectivism, and have indeed shattered already most of the threads of their old easy individualism, we have taken the occasion rather to repudiate that modest collectivism which was raising its head here in the shape of the progressive movement in national politics.

We must not let ourselves forget that such an attitude implies a rejection of the most overwhelming and fecund group of ideas and forms in the modern world, ideas which draw all nations after them in imitation, while the nations pour out their lifeblood to crush the generator. Such a renunciation imposes upon us huge responsibility. We cannot seriously think merely of spewing everything German out of our mouths. To refuse the patient German science, the collectivist art, the valor of the German ideals, would be simply to expatriate ourselves from the modern world. They will not halt for any paltry distaste of ours. By taking sides against Germany we have committed ourselves to the arduous task of setting up ideals more worthy than hers to win the allegiance of our generation and time.

In this severe enterprise we shall get little help from the Allies whose cause we find to be that of “civilization.” Both England and France are fighting to conserve, rather than to create. Our ideal we can only find in our still pioneer, still struggling American spirit. It will not be found in any purported defence of present “democracy,” “civilization,” “humanity.” The horrors of peace in industrial plutocracies will always make such terms very nebulous. It will have to be in terms of values which secure all the vital fruits of the German ideals, without the tragic costs. It must be just as daring, just as modern, just as realistic. It must set the same social ends, the realization of the individual through the beloved community. It must replace a negative ideal of freedom as the mere removal of barriers by a freedom of expansion which consists, to quote the German, “in making the outward social forms adequate to the measure of the fullness of the national spirit.”

Our ideal must be just as creative, just as social as the German, but pragmatically truer and juster. For we find in the German ideal, rousing and heroic as it is, the fatal flaw that has shattered the world’s sympathies. The German “does his best in creating a highly organized community for the purpose of furthering in society the historic development of eternal values.” Here is the vitiating touch—not in the ideals, but in their direction and animus. For if your enterprise is to be the working out of ideas, your success clearly depends upon living in a world where such ideas can be worked out. If they are set for you and the impulsion is all from behind, you take the truly colossal risk of assuming the perfect congeniality of the universe with your historic ideas.

Let there be the smallest perversity in your world, the smallest kink on your historic path, and your ideal becomes a gigantic engine that has broken loose and lies threshing about in endless havoc. To work out a rigid ideal, the resistance you meet must be of the kind that transfigures both you and the resister. Belgium was not transfigured. If resistance is tough, your march becomes like the ruthless hewing-through of might.

It has been the tragedy of the German spirit that it has had to dwell in a perverse universe, so that what from within looked always like the most beneficent working-out of a world-idea seemed from without like the very running-amuck of voracious power. German ideals have, in fact, been floated on the stream of a great will, which has been no more a part of their detailed embodiments than the current is a part of the river craft. The German ideals, embodied in the German forms, are those of a peace-state. They can be conceived of as existing perfectly and indefinitely without this war. The German has confused the current with the rich and precious freight it was bearing. He often suggests a wistful desire to be tolerant. Ideals are tolerant. But, with his will, he is tragically unable to secure mutual understanding. His idea, with its terrific historic momentum, goes on grinding itself out, heedless of the world-situations in which it finds itself.

(2432)

Our American contribution will then be not to crush the craft but to change the direction of the current. For the will, to substitute a great desire! Our ideals will not be pushes, but goals. For the expression of eternal values we will have the realizing of social ends through intelligent experimentation. To envisage the good life that we desire for our community and society, and to work towards it with all the intelligence and skill and resources we have—this must be our ideal. Whatever the German has that is life-enhancing—and a nation that lives so habitually at a maximum of energy must have more than we—that we must have, but it must come as the fruit of our intense desire and our intelligence in adapting means to ends, not as an imposed historic value. Our future must be the most intense focussing of our aesthetic and scientific possibilities. In the pragmatism of [John] Dewey and [William] James and the social philosophy of [Josiah] Royce, we have the intellectual tools for such an enterprise, ethical, social, political. We already see this spirit, barred from politics, making its way in educational and civic movements and in the thought of a younger generation. To set up such an American ideal would be to meet in overflowing measure the responsibility we put ourselves under in rejecting the German. To work out a democratic socialized life by deliberately applying intelligence and taste to the command of human and natural resources would be to set before the world an

ideal far more fecund than that with which the Germans have challenged us. It would be beneficent and healing. Its power would really be to unite the world.

Source

The New Republic 4 (4 September 1915): 117–119, reprinted in Randolph S. Bourne, *War and the Intellectuals: Essays by Randolph S. Bourne, 1915–1919* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 48–52.

Randolph S. Bourne (1886–1918)

Bourne, a leading figure in early-twentieth-century Bohemian intellectual circles centered on New York City's Greenwich Village, came from an elite American family in Bloomfield, New Jersey, and could trace his ancestors back to the first generation of white settlement in the United States. Afflicted with curvature of the spine, he was small and hunchbacked and also had a disfigured face, difficulties that failed to deter him from becoming proficient at skating, hiking, tennis, and climbing. In 1903 Bourne began undergraduate studies at Princeton University, but family financial difficulties compelled him to withdraw, and he spent six years in a wide variety of jobs, working in factories and as a casual piano player and saving money to resume his education. In 1909 he enrolled at Columbia University, where he was greatly influenced by the pragmatic philosopher John Dewey, the historians James Harvey Robinson and Charles Beard, and the anthropologist James Boas and was generally considered a brilliant and unconventional student and writer. Bourne soon gravitated to the revolt against rationalism and the heavy hand of the past, greatly admiring the writings of the American pragmatist William James and the French philosopher Henri Bergson as well as the teachings of Nietzsche.

After graduation from Columbia, Bourne went to work for *The New Republic*, a liberal New York journal founded in 1914 with the purpose of giving intellectual guidance and commentary on the transformation of the United States from a small-scale, predominantly agrarian nation to an industrial, urban mass society. Bourne wrote numerous articles for this publication but during 1915 and 1916 grew increasingly unhappy with its editors' pro-Allied leanings, which led him to leave the magazine shortly before the United States entered World War I. Most leftist critics of the war condemned it as the product of capitalism and imperialism, but Bourne's reservations were rather different in emphasis. He deplored its impact on intellectual life, especially the conformity and repression of dissent generated by war. Bourne characterized particularly harshly those intellectuals and academics, such as his former *New Republic* colleagues, who believed that war would enable them, in the interest of the

general good, to control and manage state actions and affect the outcome of the war and the subsequent peace settlement, beliefs he considered mere pleasant self-deceptions to rationalize a desire for political inclusion and an unhealthy appetite for power and control, psychological and social needs such individuals could fulfill by supporting war. Throughout the war Bourne continued to write extensively on a wide variety of topics, publishing more than 300 articles during his career. The fact that his criticism of the war focused primarily on fellow intellectuals rather than the Wilson administration's (2433) policies meant that he largely escaped government repression, though his attacks on official restrictions of civil liberties helped to persuade its major sponsor to withdraw financial support from the *Seven Arts Magazine*, where Bourne was a major contributor. On 22 December 1918 Bourne died in the worldwide influenza epidemic that flared up almost immediately after the armistice had been signed. For the American left of the Vietnam War era, the combination of his uncompromising defense of intellectual freedom and the vitality of his writings and thinking with a lively and notoriously hospitable personality, physical handicaps, and early death made Bourne into something of a romantic cult figure.

About The Document

Bourne's article appeared in *The New Republic* almost exactly one year after the war had begun. The journal's editors were predominantly pro-Allied in outlook and also came under some pressure from Willard D. Straight, their financial backer, to express such views in print. *The New Republic* nonetheless published Bourne's stimulating and provocative piece on German intellectual superiority, a tribute not just to the journal's catholicity but also to the writer's undoubted abilities. Bourne suggested that the United States had little to learn from Allied thinking but much to learn from "German ideals" and culture, since in his view these had by 1915 led the world intellectually for several decades and possessed far greater energy, vitality, and freshness than those of the Allies. The latter, by contrast, especially the British, "were living on their funded nineteenth-century spiritual capital, rather than breaking new paths and creating new forms for a new time." Influenced by his admiration for Nietzsche, Bourne argued that German thinking sought to "create," whereas Britain and France aimed merely "to conserve." Germany, he contended, had also developed a collectivist ideology and outlook suited to the demands of modern mass societies, and in their efforts to win the war all the belligerent states would be forced to adopt similar policies. He argued that Americans, themselves a pioneer people, should find congenial the energy, scope, and vision apparent in German thinking, even if "the cosmic heroisms of the

German ideal” and such concepts as a “world-spirit” were somewhat alien to their country’s traditions.

Bourne ultimately admitted that the German outlook, however “rousing and heroic,” was nonetheless vitiated by one “fatal flaw,” its attempt to impose German ideals upon an often antagonistic outside world, if necessary by violence. The challenge before the United States, he suggested, was to develop more truly American ideals, which took what was best in German thinking but adapted this to suit the norms of its own more tolerant and less coercive society. The American objective should be “[t]o work out a democratic socialized life by deliberately applying intelligence and taste to the command of human and natural resources.” The United States should emulate pioneering German accomplishments in social reform and the development of a collectivist society without subscribing to Wilhelmine Germany’s expansionist militarist ideals, thereby ultimately improving on the original model. Somewhat ironically, given Bourne’s concept of his country’s potential role, in the later twentieth century and after many critics would charge that the United States had itself become an oppressive international power, determined to impose its own political, economic, social, and cultural norms upon the rest of an often reluctant world.

One might also question Bourne’s prediction that Americans would virtually inevitably be forced to accept German intellectual, social, and cultural values. Almost paradoxically, the United States was also the one significant belligerent state where the experience of fighting World War I was relatively brief and its long-term political and social effects far less profound or wrenching than was the case for every European power. To a degree unique in any major combatant nation, in the United States the optimistic beliefs in progress and rationality that had characterized the pre-1914 Western world survived the conflict almost unscathed and until at least well into the 1960s would continue to inform the prevailing American intellectual approach to domestic politics and international affairs.

Further Reading

Blake, Nelson Casey. *Beloved Community: The Cultural Criticism of Randolph Bourne, Van Wyck Brooks, Waldo Frank & Lewis Mumford*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990.

Clayton, Bruce. *Forgotten Prophet: The Life of Randolph Bourne*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1984.

(2434)

Eksteins, Modris. *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age*. London: Bantam, 1989.

Fussell, Paul. *The Great War and Modern Memory*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1975.

Hynes, Samuel. *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture*. London: Bodley Head, 1990.

Roshwald, Aviel, and Richard Stites, eds. *European Culture in the Great War: The Arts, Entertainment, and Propaganda*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Sherry, Vincent. *The Great War and the Language of Modernism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Shi, David E. *Facing Facts: Realism in American Thought and Culture, 1850–1920*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.

Stromberg, Roland N. *Redemption by War: The Intellectuals and 1914*. Lawrence: Regents Press of Kansas, 1982.

Vaughan, Leslie J. *Randolph Bourne and the Politics of Cultural Radicalism*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1997.

(2435)

MLA

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "48. A Postwar German Intellectual Triumph." *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*, ABC-CLIO, 2005, pp. . *ABC-CLIO eBook Collection*, legacy.abc-clio.com/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2306.

Chicago Manual of Style

Roberts, Priscilla Mary, Spencer C. Tucker. "48. A Postwar German Intellectual Triumph." In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005. <http://legacy.abc-clio.com/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2306>.

clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1
E.2306.

APA

Roberts, P. M., S. C. Tucker (2005). 48. A Postwar German Intellectual
Triumph. In *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia* (pp.). Retrieved from
[http://legacy.abc-
clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1
E.2306](http://legacy.abc-clio.com.eproxy.lib.hku.hk/reader.aspx?isbn=9781851098804&id=WW1SCH1E.2306)