THE IMPACT OF TOTAL WAR

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The Battle of the Marne proved that no one Great Power could finish off another at a single blow with the war technology of 1914. Yet the alternative of an immediate compromise peace remained unthinkable to all but a handful of European pacifists. The French had foreign troops on their soil; the Germans had tasted gain. After the Marne, the war could neither be won quickly nor ended quickly.

Those Europeans who thought about warfare before 1914 had been certain that advanced European societies could not support long wars. In a sense they were right. The societies could not support a long war *unchanged*, but they had to endure one anyway. The First World War became total war, or what the German General Erich Ludendorff later called "totalitarian war."[1] It left no aspect of European civilization untouched. It utterly transformed European governments, economies, and societies. "Everywhere in the world was heard the sound of things breaking," wrote a regretful liberal, the British author and diplo-

[1]Erich von Ludendorff, *The Nation at War*, trans. A. S. Rappoport (London, 1936), p. 9.

mat John Buchan. The war, said Trotsky, "was a furious pogrom of human culture."[2]

Total war worked its effects on several levels. Materially, total war demanded the marshaling of unprecedented quantities of young men, steel and explosives for them to hurl at one another, and a steady stream of basic supplies to support both. In political terms, since the material effort required allocating people and resources away from their accustomed uses, the state had to take on extensive new powers. All of this imposed such unequal burdens on the populations that the belligerent states had to find new ways to persuade people to accept sacrifices. They had to organize opinion too. Such concentration of energy and thought required nothing less than an unannounced revolution.

ADJUSTING TO A WAR OF ATTRITION

After the Marne, each side proceeded to wear the other down. A war of attrition among advanced industrial societies was something altogether outside historic experience, and in 1914 it remained to be seen how fully their large populations and vast productive capacity could be devoted to mutual destruction without leaving cities hungry and factories dark.

Every belligerent's advance planning for war had proved hopelessly inadequate. The British Army had expected to mobilize 100,000 men in the event of a European war; during the war they mobilized 3 million. France eventually called up 8 million men, or 62.7 percent of all males between eighteen and forty (about 20 percent of the total population). State budgets underwent the same sort of distortion. The French prewar budgets had amounted to about 5 billion francs per year by 1913. The French budget in 1918 was 190 billion francs. After the war, debt service alone—the interest paid to those who had bought war bonds—amounted to 7 billion francs. By that time, the purchasing power of the franc was only about one-sixth of what it had been before the war. With such fundamental matters as human employment and the value of money distorted beyond recognition, governments found their prewar precedents useless.

After the first two months of war, therefore, the belligerent governments were forced to begin the painful process of throwing away their prewar rule books, along with the preconceptions that lay behind them. The French, for example, had expected the civilian economy to more or less hold its breath while everyone who could carry a rifle was sent to meet the more numerous Germans in one decisive battle. They even closed down war plants in order to send their workers to the front. By the end of 1914, the unexpected rate of battlefield consumption and the prospect of a long war forced them to reopen the plants and to allocate

[2]John Buchan, *The King's Grace* (London, 1935), p. 161; Leon Trotsky, *Terrorism and Communism* (New York, 1921), p. 17.

men (and women) between the battle front and what began to be called the home front. The challenge of total war went beyond merely marshaling unprecedented quantities of people, money, and supplies. Whole civilian populations had to be kept fed, clothed, productive, and docile. Civilian production and consumption would have to be as minutely regulated as the army itself. A whole new range of human organization had to be conceived and put into operation.

Some of the belligerent states rose to this challenge. Others did not. Those that did not were states already divided by social and ethnic conflict, especially the multinational empires: Austria-Hungary, the Ottoman Empire, Tsarist Russia. Bureaucratic tradition, autocratic authority, large population and geographic size did not give these states the advantages one might have expected in a more traditional war. Success in the First World War depended more on industrial productivity—the ability to turn out masses of war matériel—and on the kind of internal cohesion and integration that equipped populations to endure the strains and accept the unequal privations of total war. While the empires showed that their authoritarian power was hollow, Great Britain rose best to the challenge, followed by republican France. In all fairness, it should be observed that Britain did not endure battles on its own soil. And it might be fairer still to call Britain least unsuccessful rather than most successful, for Britain never fully recovered from the effects of the First World War.

WAR GOVERNMENTS: A COMPARATIVE LOOK

No belligerent state established the full reach of war government at one stroke. There was too much to be unlearned, and too many piecemeal expedients to be tried and rejected. No two belligerent states adapted in the same way, for the challenge laid bare their very different qualities and capacities.

Great Britain

When the war began, Britain had been governed for eight years by the Liberal party. The Liberals had won the election of 1906 on a platform of free trade, and their commitment to a minimum of state interference in economic and social matters had been only slightly breached by the "peoples' budget" of 1909, with its income and inheritance taxes, and by the National Insurance Act of 1911. A more orthodox viewpoint was that of a laissez-faire liberal like Lord Runciman, a great shipowner and head of the Board of Trade, who said in 1914, "No government action can overcome economic laws, and any interference with those laws must end in disaster."[3] Harrods department store launched a popular slogan by placing a newspaper ad reading "Business as usual." Prime Minister

[3]A. J. P. Taylor, *English History, 1914–45* (Oxford, 1965), p. 15.

Herbert Asquith, a cautious man whose initiative had much diminished after eight years in office, left the various ministries to run things as they wished. The result was that Britain sent the largest volunteer army in modern history to France supported by uncoordinated administration at home.

The British government backed into wartime controls pragmatically, under the pressure of circumstances, without any clear decision of principle. Some resources had to be placed at once under government control. Britain's private railway companies were run by a government committee and guaranteed profits at the same rate as in 1913. Sugar, most of which had come from Germany and Austria before the war, was now traded exclusively by the government. Commodities that were left to free-market operations went up in price. The government then began surreptitiously to influence the wheat market, went on to direct control of food products, and by 1918 instituted food rationing.

Rent controls were imposed in Glasgow in 1915, where labor unrest was high, and gradually spread to the rest of the kingdom. In South Wales, where labor–management conflicts seemed insoluble, the government nationalized the coal mines for the duration of the war, guaranteeing prewar level of profits to the owners. The freetrader Reginald McKenna, Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1915, quietly introduced the "McKenna Duties" on automobiles, moving pictures, clocks, and other "luxury" imports—the first violation of the "holy writ of free trade" since repeal of the Corn Laws (grain tariff) in 1846—primarily to save shipping space and foreign exchange rather than to return Britain to protectionism.

The most pressing emergency was the production of a flood of munitions. Rumors that the campaign in France was being hampered by a shortage of shells shook confidence in the Liberal cabinet's capacity to run the war. Asquith sought to create a broader nonpartisan regime in May 1915 by bringing into the cabinet several Conservatives and the leader of the Labour party, Arthur Henderson—the first Labour parliamentarian to hold ministerial office in Britain. The major innovation of the new government was the creation in July 1915 of a Ministry of Munitions, under David Lloyd George.

Lloyd George, a native of the nonconformist radical mining country of South Wales, which has produced a number of dramatic political figures in modern British history, was the most striking British leader between Benjamin Disraeli and Winston Churchill. He brought his mercurial temperament, a boundless energy, a zest for political infighting, and a complete absence of any preconceived notions to an agency that would eventually extend its tentacles into every cranny of the economy. He was, as George Dangerfield said, a "one-man Welsh revolution."[4]

[4]George Dangerfield, *The Strange Death of Liberal England* (London, 1935), p. 19.

The business of spending millions of pounds quickly to get private industry to produce war matériel led, necessarily, to control of profits, allocation of manpower and resources, and increasing regulation of the whole economy. Lloyd George did not hold back. In sheer size, his office grew from what had been the Army Contracts Office with 20 clerks in 1914 to a vast bureaucracy in 1918 of 65,000 clerks overseeing the work of 3 million men and women employed in munitions plants. The Ministry of Munitions made more important innovations than size, however. Lloyd George pushed through the Munitions of War Act in May 1915. It empowered the ministry to take over war plants directly in cases where the manufacturer refused the government's terms, which were: to limit profits, to resolve all labor disputes by arbitration, and to tie workers to essential jobs by forbidding the employment of any without a "leaving certificate" from the last employer. In practice if not in principle, the Ministry of Munitions moved the British government into as nearly total a planned and managed economy as technology could provide.

Conscription, the draft, was the government's major step into regulating private life—and death. Sufficient volunteers were available in the patriotic surge of 1914 and 1915, and indeed the British Army of 1 million men was the largest volunteer force in modern history. But volunteer service was both inequitable and insufficient for a situation in which a skilled worker might be more urgently needed in his factory than at the front. In January 1916, the government adopted compulsory military service. There was widespread opposition to this great leap in governmental power, even among fervent supporters of the war. The government provided for hearings, therefore, for those who objected on grounds of conscience. Eventually there were about 16,000 "conscientious objectors," all but about 1500 of whom accepted some form of alternate national service.

Compulsory military service opened up more jobs for women. There were already over 2 million poor women in the labor force. It was the independent wage-earning middle-class woman who created a real wartime breach with Victorian practice, and who sent the female labor force up to 3 million.

Lloyd George eventually replaced the cautious Asquith as prime minister in December 1916. Britain had found its war leader. This Welsh nonconformist from the radical wing of the Liberal party, who had bitterly opposed the Boer War and who had made England's greatest peacetime assault on the propertyholder's pocketbook with the peoples' budget of 1909, presided over Britain's evolution into a wartime omnicompetent state. In retrospect, it was a remarkably successful unplanned experiment in planning. Britain paid for more of the war effort by taxation (the income tax went up to an unprecedented 30 percent of income) than any other belligerent, and less by inflation. The sacrifices of war were probably borne less inequitably in Britain than in any other belligerent nation.

France

War government evolved in France in a similarly piecemeal fashion. As noted earlier, munitions plants had been closed down at the beginning of the war and their workers sent to the front in the expectation of a short conflict. Only after the Marne did it become apparent that one must fight and manufacture at the same time. France had a long tradition of compulsory military service; extending that principle to the home front was the first recognition of the necessities of total war.

The regulation of commodities followed more slowly. In October 1915, the government assumed authority to requisition grain at fixed prices, an authority extended in 1916 to sugar, eggs, and milk. In 1917, the Ministry of Food Supply was created, and finally, in June 1918, ration cards were issued for bread and sugar. Even agriculturally rich France had been forced to adopt the same kind of regulations as the food-importing island of Britain.

French war production suffered under special disabilities. The early German successes had cut off the richest industrial parts of the country. The ten occupied northern and eastern departments included nine of the seventeen French departments with over 40 percent of the population in industry. In those occupied parts, three-quarters of French coal and four-fifths of French iron and steel had been produced. That vast German bite into French wealth had two effects: it made a compromise peace all but inconceivable, and it made war government and supply that much more difficult. The French could not stop fighting, and yet they could not win without help.

In several respects, war government in France developed less successfully than in England. One problem was financing the war. Whereas the British had had an income tax since 1842, the French still bitterly opposed it. (Lloyd George had decisively defeated the House of Lords between 1909 and 1911 when they opposed funding social services with graduated income taxation.) The French parliament, dominated by small-town, small-property interests, had rejected income taxes in favor of sales taxes and government borrowing since the late nineteenth century. As a result, the French government managed to pay only one-fifth of the costs of war from 1914 to 1918 by taxation. To raise the rest, it sold war bonds and printed currency, two steps that prepared grave postwar economic burdens for the French: a crushing load of debt owed to French middle-class bondholders, and runaway inflation.

Civil–military relations also proved more troublesome in France than in England. There was never any doubt about civilian control in England, and when war government found its leader, it was in the person of a civilian and a radical democrat as well, Lloyd George. The French Army, as befits a major land power, had a stronger and more autonomous military tradition. Under the republic, the officer corps, strongly marked by conservative and even monarchist sympathies, had main-

tained a tacit agreement with the republican government that they would leave each other alone. This worked fairly well, except when the Army tried to conceal a flagrant legal miscarriage, as in the Dreyfus Affair at the turn of the century. Even Frenchmen of impeccable republican convictions felt in 1914 that civilians should stand aside while the Army fought the war. When the commander in chief, General Joffre, assumed almost feudal authority over national defense in the fall of 1914, it was understood that national defense was something separate from the rest of the nation and that the emergency would soon be over. When, after the First Battle of the Marne, it became apparent that the war could be waged only by mobilizing the entire nation, the question of who was the ultimate authority became a thorny one.

That question was finally decided in favor of a civilian authority, in keeping with the French republican tradition. But not before a damaging sequence of squabbles had taken place the first three years of the war. The French parliament gradually reasserted its right to oversee the conduct of the war, through the army committees of the Senate and Chamber, and at the end of 1916, weary of Joffre's inability to break out of the post-Marne stalemate, a majority of deputies forced the government to sack him. The decline of military independence was accentuated when Joffre's successor, the ebullient General Robert Nivelle, failed to gain any ground with his widely heralded mass attack in May 1917. The Army mutinies that followed seemed to threaten collapse.

French war government finally found its leader at the end of 1917 in Georges Clemenceau. "War is too important to be left to generals," he said. Like Lloyd George, he not only was a civilian; he came from the left of center politically. A crusty old atheist democrat, trained as a doctor, Clemenceau had been a permanent one-man opposition in parliament for most of his life. He had already emerged as a tough administrator in his first prime ministry, from 1906 to 1909, when he used the Army to smash strikes. Now, in 1917, he brought that combination of surly toughness and left-wing nationalism in the French Jacobin tradition to the administration of the war. When asked in the parliament what his new government's program would be, he replied with four words instead of the usual long policy speech: "Je fais la guerre!" (I make war!) Despite that claim, Clemenceau's war government was more political than technical. He cracked down on defeatists, jailing or silencing those who dared speak for a compromise peace while Germans were still on French soil. Under the mantle of his authority, France moved into total war government, like the other belligerents.

Germany

German war government, by contrast with that in Britain and France, was consolidated under military authority. Germany's lack of self-sufficiency in food and in some strategic materials made organization

especially urgent. The General Staff became the dominant force in war government, in keeping with the traditional autonomy of the German military under the sole command of the kaiser.

Two popular military heroes emerged as virtual dictators of the German war effort: General Paul von Hindenburg, as chief of the General Staff, and General Erich Ludendorff, as quartermaster-general (the traditional Prussian title of the deputy chief of staff). Hindenburg, a Junker aristocrat, and Ludendorff, one of the few commoners to reach the top of the Prussian officer corps, had become popular idols by winning the one outstanding victory of the first years of the war: the rout of the Russians in the battles of Tannenberg and the Masurian Lakes in the fall of 1914. After the bloody stalemate of Verdun in 1916 had discredited General Falkenhayn, Hindenburg and Ludendorff were put in charge by the kaiser on August 29, 1916. They emerged by 1918 more powerful than the kaiser himself.

What Ludendorff called "war socialism" (*Kriegssozialismus*) was already underway in 1916. Since the Schlieffen Plan had promised a quick knock-out blow of France and then Russia, there had been no prewar plans for organizing the economy and society for a long struggle. The German Army had about six months' supply of essential materials in 1914. Production was disrupted as skilled workers were called away to the Army. Faced with a long war and inadequate resources, Germany moved more completely than the other belligerents into organizing the home front.

The first major war agency drew on advanced business methods. Walther Rathenau, head of the German General Electric Company *(AEG, Allgemeine Elektrizitäts Gesellschaft)* was called to reorganize the Raw Materials Section of the Army staff. A prophet of technocracy as well as a successful businessman, Rathenau now had a chance to apply on a national scale his ideas of reconciling private ownership of business with economic planning. Rathenau grouped the companies in each branch of production into War Raw Materials Corporations, not unlike the cartels that some industries—coal, steel—had formed on their own before the war. Each corporation then bought raw materials and allocated them to the most efficient producers for the most necessary products. In practice, large concerns were likely to be favored over small ones (which did not displease an apostle of industrial efficiency like Rathenau), and, in the urgency of the moment, there was no way to limit exorbitant war profits. From the purely technical point of view, however, the German war machine was very effectively supplied when Rathenau handed over this agency to his successor, an army officer, in 1915.

The War Food Administration, founded in May 1916 under popular pressure, was far less successful. It did operate under extremely difficult conditions, for Germany had produced only 80 percent of its food supply before the war, and food production declined still further during the war because of shortages of farm workers, horses, and nitrogen for

fertilizer. Hungry city dwellers demanded measures to compel peasants to relinquish their hoards or to stop the black market. In the winter of 1916/17, potatoes gave way to turnips as the stock food of the poor. The average caloric intake of Germans dropped to almost 1000 calories per day. Eventually, 750,000 Germans died of hunger. Scarcity of food and city–country antagonisms served to sharpen the sense of class cleavage and of inequitable burdens in wartime Germany.

When Hindenburg and Ludendorff took charge in August 1916 they adopted a system of total personnel mobilization. The Auxiliary Service Law of December 2, 1916, obliged all males between the ages of seventeen and sixty to work in the war economy. One motive, of course, was maximum production; another motive was to control the rising murmurs of discontent and the powerful leverage that the war was giving to labor. The guiding spirit of this project was General Wilhelm Groener, a military technocrat who had excelled in the organization of the railroads. Groener insisted that labor unions be brought into the regional boards that regulated employment. Although this innovation was highly distasteful to conservative industrialists, it permitted Groener to use the unions to help keep social peace while giving them for the first time a legitimate share in government regulation.

After the "turnip winter," the German government tried to reconcile the civilian population to its bitter sufferings. Much effort went into patriotic propaganda devices like the gigantic wooden statues of Field Marshal Hindenburg around which war bond rallies were held. But the gratification of military conquests on the stalemated western front was denied the German propagandists. Nor did it help much any more to talk openly about territorial gains in the Low Countries and Eastern Europe, and that vision of a German-dominated *Mitteleuropa* (Middle Europe) to which most German business and military leaders still clung. An increasing number of Germans wanted to be assured that they were suffering for something more than the privileges and advantages of a few. They were attracted to the possibilities of a German democracy and to "peace without annexations or contributions," a concept to which the new democratic regime in Russia after March 1917 gave much publicity.

Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg tried to revive flagging spirits by getting Kaiser Wilhelm to promise an end to the hated three-class voting system in Prussia after the war. That step only angered Hindenburg and Ludendorff and did little to head off a growing movement in the German parliament for a statement rejecting any war aims of annexation on behalf of the German people. On July 14, 1917, Hindenburg and Ludendorff persuaded the kaiser to replace Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg with a colorless bureaucrat who had never held high public office, Georg Michaelis. The decline of the civilian cabinet in the face of growing military authority was now obvious. Although the moderate parliamentary left (Social Democrats, Progressive party, Catholic Center) presented its "Peace Resolution" on July 19, 1917, this appeal for a

"peace of understanding and reconciliation among peoples" had no effect on a government now wholly dominated by the annexationist German General Staff.

By 1918, Germany had moved far not only toward a fully militarized war government but toward a highly bureaucratized war economy in which expert civil servants allocated resources and men and manipulated economic life, not always to the pleasure of industrialists and labor unions.

Russia

Imperial Russia, a genuine Great Power under the conditions of 1815, was soon overwhelmed by the demands of twentieth-century total war. Such a war quickly revealed the disadvantages of being both backward and autocratic. Faced with crippling shortages of matériel from the beginning, the only possible Russian strategy was to swamp the enemy with sheer numbers. But only one soldier in four even had a rifle; the others were told to pick one up from the dead.[5] The shortage of Russian artillery shells was largely responsible for German advances in 1915, and for Brusilov's failure to hold the gains of his offensive into Austrian Galicia in the summer of 1916. Under these embittering conditions, to mobilize masses of men meant to radicalize them.

[5]Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia* (Oxford, 1963), p. 464.

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Tsar Nicholas II, holding an icon, blesses Russian troops in 1915. Nicholas was the only European monarch who felt he had to assume direct military command himself.

All the belligerents faced shortages, of course. In the Russian case, however, the creaking bureaucracy was incapable of taking steps toward more effective administration. Nicholas assumed personal command of the armed forces, for which he had neither training nor capacity. Domestic policies were left under the control of the tsarina, an ignorant, high-strung German princess, and the Orthodox monk Rasputin, a peasant visionary given to gargantuan excesses. The tsarina became dependent on Rasputin because she was convinced he could heal her hemophiliac son. Nicholas II and his coterie, unable to rule on their own, would not permit new strata to rule either.

Under such conditions, war agencies emerged parallel to the government or against it, rather than within it. The government itself lapsed into paralysis. While the military went its own way, well-meaning public figures tried to regulate the home front. The Union of Zemstvos and Towns, for example, a body of local government officials intended to look after refugees, assumed larger functions. Leading industrialists had to persuade the regime to let them form military–industrial committees.

It was impossible to mobilize allegiance in a country whose leaders still refused even to grant the vote to its middle class. The Duma (parliament) had been elected on a narrower and narrower franchise since its hopeful beginnings in 1905, and only 9500 of Moscow's 1.5 million residents could vote for their city council by 1914. The aged bureaucrat who served as prime minister, the seventy-five-year-old Ivan Goremykin,

was incapable of grasping the necessity for internal concessions. "First of all," he told the Council of Ministers on September 2, 1915, "we must conclude the war instead of occupying oneself with reforms. There will be enough time for that after we chase out the Germans."[6] Such benighted government meant that discontent festered among privileged Russians and the educated as well as among workers, soldiers, and peasants. It was a group of aristocrats, including a royal prince, who murdered Rasputin. The conservatives and constitutional monarchists who dominated the Duma found themselves forced to oppose the tsar even to obtain effective administration of the war.

Austria-Hungary

The Habsburg Empire suffered more than any other belligerent from ethnic centrifugal forces. Of each one hundred soldiers mobilized by Austria-Hungary in August 1914, twenty-five spoke German as their mother tongue; twenty-three spoke Magyar (Hungarian); thirteen spoke Czech; nine, Serbo-Croat; eight, Polish; eight, Ukrainian; seven, Romanian; five, Slovak; three, Slovene; and one, Italian. As wartime propaganda heightened national self-consciousness and spread the idea of self-determination, the national minorities became restless. Britain, France, and even Germany could conciliate their populations with promises of expanded suffrage and a more democratic society, or by the integration of labor unions into government agencies, but the Habsburgs could not make concessions to ethnic separatists without dissolving the empire altogether.

The outpouring of dynastic loyalty in July and August 1914 had never been unanimous, and it proved ephemeral. The adversities of a long, general war—so unlike the short, local war for which Austrian leaders had hoped—soon awakened the ethnic animosities that had preoccupied Austro-Hungarian politics since the late nineteenth century. Wartime passions only heightened the intransigence with which the dominant German and Magyar peoples had blocked any further linguistic or political decentralization in favor of Poles, Czechs, Romanians, or South Slavs. As a result, the General Staff could no longer send troops to any front with the assurance that Slavic soldiers, for example, would fight resolutely against Russians or Serbs.

Such ethnic complications only added to the troubles of a war government already hindered by dualism. The two halves of the Austro-Hungarian Empire competed for food and blocked the formation of efficient unitary wartime agencies. Nor was the traditional Habsburg bureaucracy an asset to war government. The new agencies thrown together pragmatically by the British, French, and Germans faced fewer

[6]Michael Cherniavsky, ed., *Prologue to Revolution. Notes of A. N. Iakhontov on the Secret Meetings of the Council of Ministers, 1915* (New York, 1967), pp. 6*n*, 226.

entrenched rivalries. The Habsburg state was too decentralized to wage war effectively but not decentralized enough to satisfy its populations.

Low industrial productivity was another liability for the Habsburg lands. One unit had only enough uniforms for its soldiers in the front line; the men in reserve wore just underwear.[7] Unscrupulous contractors outfitted the Army with paper-soled boots. The allied blockade cut off essential imports. The reduction of the flour allowance in Vienna from 200 grams per day to 160 provoked a general strike in January 1918.

The Habsburg case shows how ineffective political autocracy was in waging total war. Since there was no way to mobilize public opinion without raising the nationalities issue, the Austrian prime minister, Count Karl Stürgkh, attempted to govern without it. Although the Hungarian parliament met during the war, the Austrian *Reichsrat* did not, for fear of giving a platform to dissident Social Democrats, Czechs, and Poles. The *Reichsrat* building was converted into a military hospital. The Austrian parliament was finally convened in May 1917, after the young Social Democrat intellectual Friedrich Adler had assassinated Count Stürgkh in October 1916 with a cry of "Down with Absolutism! We want peace!" But it was too late. Separatist feelings had ripened beyond the point where Austria-Hungary could resolve the dilemma of finding popular support for war government by any means short of dissolving the empire itself.

When the old Emperor Franz Josef died at the age of eighty-seven in November 1916 after a reign of sixty-eight years, the last link holding these disparate peoples together snapped. His great-nephew and heir, Karl, understood that the war would destroy his dynasty. At the very end of 1916 he put out secret peace feelers through President Woodrow Wilson, the pope, and other possible mediators. The new Habsburg emperor's known wish for a compromise peace cost him the loyalty of the last of his faithful peoples, the ethnic Germans. They now looked to Berlin to carry the war on to the triumph of Germandom throughout central Europe. The Austro-Hungarian Empire withered from within before it was decisively beaten from without.

Italy

Unlike the other major belligerents who had entered the war in patriotic exaltation in August 1914, the Italian government entered the war late (May 1915) in a spirit of bargain rather than of crusade. King Victor Emmanuel III, Prime Minister Antonio Salandra, and Foreign Minister Sidney Sonnino joined the Entente side in the belief that war would be both short and advantageous. A noisy minority of nationalists, including futurist painter Filippo Marinetti, young syndicalist revolutionary Benito Mussolini, and poet Gabriele d'Annunzio, had demonstrated for

[7]C. A. Macartney, *The Hapsburg Empire, 1790–1918* (New York, 1969), p. 830.

war on the streets of Rome. They were convinced that violence would energize an Italy that seemed to slumber since the nineteenth-century battles for unification. "Friends, it is no longer time for talk but for action," d'Annunzio shouted to a crowd of 100,000 from a hotel balcony in Rome on May 12, 1915. "If it is a crime to incite citizens to violence, I shall boast of this crime."[8] The majority of Italians were never enthusiastic about the war, however. The two largest mass organizations in Italy, the Socialist party and the Catholic Church, opposed it. So did Italy's leading prewar centrist political leader, Giovanni Giolitti. There was no honeymoon period of national unity in Italy to mask the impact of war.

Italy organized to meet the demands of total war less successfully than the other Entente states, Britain and France. For one thing, Italy was no match industrially for the northern and western Great Powers. Shortages were especially difficult to deal with in a country whose south had never been well integrated into the national economy and society. No less than 38 percent of Italians were still illiterate in 1914, making efficient war government difficult to organize. Without effective governmental controls, the powerful distortions of war production and consumption affected Italians both harshly and with extreme inequity. Inflation reduced the real wages of workers in the war plants of Turin and Milan 27 percent by 1917. When campaigns went badly in the rough eastern Alps where the Italian armies fought the Austrians, Italian regional and social animosities turned into hard anger.

THE SOCIAL IMPACT

No European society could attempt to channel all its resources into total war without undergoing profound change. At first glance, the intense common effort seemed likely to make European societies more uniform and egalitarian. Death itself was the greatest leveler. Every belligerent had some form of compulsory military service, and the European aristocracies probably lost a higher proportion of their sons in the hard-hit junior officer ranks than did the middle classes. Wartime scarcities made ostentation, idleness, and luxury bad form. In the euphoria of 1914 it was possible to believe that "warfare releases a devotion and an unconditional community of sacrifice"[9] that would transform each nation into a true family. The British Liberal leader Lloyd George rejoiced on September 19, 1914, that "all classes, high and low, are shedding themselves of selfishness. . . . It is bringing a new outlook to all classes. . . . 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."[10]

[8]Quoted in Christopher Seton-Watson, *Italy from Liberalism to Fascism* (London, 1967), p. 446.

[9]Max Weber quoted in Arthur B. Mitzman, *The Iron Cage* (New York, 1970), p. 211.

[10]David Lloyd George, *The Great War* (London, 1914), p. 14.

Clothing was a harbinger of a more homogeneous, simplified life style. During the war, dress became much more utilitarian and informal. Europeans would never again drape themselves in such a profusion of bustles, stays, trains, and plumes. Uniforms led the way. The bright blue and red prewar French infantry uniforms, which made such good targets for machine-gun fire in 1914, had not been changed during the first months of war because the General Staff was convinced that the war would be over before they could do so. Soon, however, every army was in utilitarian khaki. Meanwhile, women's skirts rose above the ankle for good.

The Status of Women

Women were integrated more fully into public life in the more advanced wartime regimes. Women undertook a variety of jobs previously held largely by men, such as clerical and secretarial work and teaching. They were also employed far more widely than before in industry. By 1918, 37.6 percent of the work force in the Krupp armaments firm in Germany was female. In England, the proportion of women workers rose strikingly in public transport (from 18,000 to 117,000 bus conductors and the like), banking (9500 to 63,700), and commerce (505,000 to 934,000).[11]

The war worked the most important changes among middle-class women. During and after the First World War, it became acceptable for young, employed, single middle-class women to have their own apartments, to go out without chaperones, and even to smoke in public. It was no longer imaginable to exclude women from the vote in Britain and in Germany after the war, and in 1919 Lady Astor was elected to the House of Commons, the first woman to be seated in a European parliament.[12]

The Status of Organized Labor

The war also led to decisive changes in the power and legal status of labor unions. The right of workers to organize went back only a half-century on the Continent (1869 in north Germany; 1884 in France); up to 1914, employers struggled to keep union organizers out of their plants, and armed force was commonly used against strikers. But the almost universal rallying of workers to their national flags in 1914 opened the way for wider acceptance of unions, just as it did for the inclusion of reformist socialist politicians in wartime governments. The French socialists Marcel Sembat and Jules Guesde entered the Viviani government in August 1914; Arthur Henderson joined the Asquith

[11]Hajo Holborn, *A History of Modern Germany*, vol. 3: *1840–1945* (New York, 1969), p. 461; Arthur Marwick, *Britain in the Century of Total War* (Boston, 1968), pp. 105ff. It was not until the Second World War that women were drafted for military service in Britain, however.

[12]Women had been permitted to join political parties and associations in Germany only since 1908.

Women workers in a German munitions factory during the First World War.

cabinet in May 1915; John Hodge and George Barnes joined the Lloyd George cabinet in December 1916.

It was less by the parliamentary route than by the bureaucratic route, however, that organized labor was integrated into the most highly organized war governments. Only a short war was possible without union cooperation. When it became necessary to cajole longer hours and higher productivity out of war workers and to prevent free movement of skilled workers away from vital jobs, it became essential to consult with union leaders.

A bargain was struck in Britain, France, and Germany between unions and government. In general, unions accepted a temporary cessation of strikes and less favorable work rules in exchange for a *de facto* integration into government processes. In Britain, these arrangements were worked out in a conference at the Treasury Department in March 1915. Labor consented in the "Treasury Agreement"[13] to the proposal that war workers relax union restrictions on work rules and renounce strikes for the duration of the war in favor of arbitration; in return, labor representatives were named to the National Labour Advisory Committee, and the government undertook to control the industrialists' profits. Trade union integration went furthest in the German military-bureaucratic

[13]The miners' unions rejected the Treasury Agreement; under the War Munitions Act of 1915, the mines were nationalized for the duration of the war.

"war socialism." General Groener, over some opposition from conservative industrialists, forced the inclusion of union representatives in labor committees at the factory level and in regional food and labor committees. This "reform from above" brought greatly increased prestige and membership to the German trade unions, which grew from 967,000 in 1916 to 1,107,000 in 1917. At the end of the war, in the Stinnes-Legien Agreement between representatives of industry and labor, the first German official collective bargaining arrangements were concluded. France, too, followed up its wartime experience by giving legal force to collective bargaining in 1920. Labor leaders found, however, that the integration of unions into war government was a two-edged sword. They had purchased a public role for unions at the cost of having to act more often as the managers of labor than as the adversaries of capital. Many of the rank and file had rejected this bargain by 1918.

Social Cleavage

In some ways, the war was a leveler—as for women and for labor. But in other ways, the long war sharpened social cleavages and conflicts. One such cleavage was caused by the unequal apportionment of the risk of death. Although total war meant total mobilization of human labor, not everyone was sent to the trenches. Skilled workers were more vitally needed in war plants. And some with connections managed to secure safe assignments at headquarters. It became clear after the war that two groups had paid the highest blood tax: unskilled young males and junior officers. French peasants made up a larger proportion of the war dead than of the general population. The casualty rate among British junior officers, often highly talented and motivated young men, was three times the overall casualty rate. Of the class of 1914 at Saint-Cyr, the French military academy, 63 percent did not survive the war. The survivors, whether mutilated or not, shared a blend of pride and bitterness that they had endured more than the lot of ordinary men. This "mystique of the trenches" created a resentful solidarity among front-line veterans, who felt a special mission to keep watch over the nations that they had saved.

The conflict of generations was also widened by the war. Veterans' disillusion fed on anger at the older generation that had sent them to the front. The villain of the greatest First World War novel, Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front,* was not the Allied enemy in the opposite trenches but the soldiers' earlier spiritual guides, such as the schoolteacher Kantorek, who had sent them off full of patriotic slogans.

> The first bombardment showed us our mistake, and under it the world as they had taught it to us broke in pieces.[14]

[14]Erich Maria Remarque, *All Quiet on the Western Front* (New York, 1966), p. 12.

THE ECONOMIC IMPACT

The malapportionment of wartime suffering was also felt in economic matters; at one end were those who profited from the war and at the other, those who suffered the very unequal effects of inflation.

War Profiteers

The possibilities for profit in war manufacture were enormous, and war profiteers were a public scandal. Fictional new rich, like Frederic Haverkamp, the manufacturer of shoddy boots in Jules Romains' *Verdun*, had numerous factual counterparts. It was rare, however, for governments to interfere with major firms, as happened when the German government prosecuted the Daimler motor car works for infringing war regulations.

More subtle was the way in which war government favored large, concentrated industries over smaller ones. On the Continent, especially, the cartelization of industry was substantially increased. In Germany, for example, Walther Rathenau's War Raw Materials Corporations allocated scarce materials to selected companies. Since the largest firms dominated these corporations, they were favored even beyond the natural stimulus of wartime boom profits. Non-essential firms, which tended to be small, were simply closed down when coal and other resources became too scarce. The war was also a stimulus toward grouping companies into larger firms. In 1916, the leading German chemical manufacturers pooled their resources to form the new combine that became the great postwar chemical giant, I. G. Farben.

The Effects of Inflation

Inflation worked the most pervasive economic and social effect of all. As war budgets rose to astronomical figures, war economies ran at white heat. Massive demand forced around-the-clock production of war matériel, causing shortages of many consumer goods. Virtually every able-bodied person was employed. This combination of high demand, scarcity, and full employment sent prices soaring, even in the least mismanaged war economies. No belligerent country avoided some degree of inflation. In Britain, a pound sterling bought in 1919 about a third of what it had bought in 1914.[15] French prices approximately doubled during the war, and worse inflation was yet to come in the 1920s. Inflation rates were even higher in the other belligerents; in Germany, as we shall see in Chapter 5, the mark simply ceased to have any value at all at the end of 1923.

The effects of inflation are unequal in that some suffer and some benefit. Skilled workers in strategic industries in Western Europe found that their wages just about kept up with prices, or even surged ahead of

[15]Taylor, p. 41.

them. The unskilled and workers in nonstrategic industries lagged behind. Such disparities in wages among different industries stirred new animosities. Only in Britain did most workers' wages seem to have kept ahead of prices, with the average wage doubling while prices increased only about 75 percent.[16] On the Continent, wages also rose, but wage earners had less real purchasing power at the end of the war than at the beginning. The French cost of living stood in 1917 at an index figure of 180 (100 in 1914), while wages stood at only 170. German workers slipped a bit in real purchasing power, with workers in war industries faring far better than workers in the civilian sector. Even those wage-earning families whose standard of living kept pace with inflation suffered constant short-term grievances as they shopped for ever more expensive food.

The bitterest sufferers from inflation were those members of the middle class dependent on fixed incomes. The incomes of old people on pensions, of the marginal middle class living on small dividends or interest, and of many professional people remained about the same while prices doubled or tripled. Although such people fell into genuine material poverty, their sense of status continued intact. These "new poor" clung to a shabby gentility by repairing old clothes, eking out the food budget with rhubarb grown in the back garden, and giving up everything but the outward show of respectability. The middle class, wrote the English poet Stephen Spender, resembled dancers suspended in midair after the ballroom floor had been knocked away, "miraculously able to pretend that they were still dancing."[17]

Inflation did not just lower these peoples' standard of living; it radically changed their relative position in society. A host of clerks, lesser civil servants, teachers, clergymen, and small shopkeepers now earned less than many skilled laborers. Some members of the marginal middle class found this indignity harder to endure than reduced comforts and amenities. "I go in the gallery [inexpensive seat] to the cinema," complained an English country doctor's wife. "My charwoman goes in the stalls [best seat]."[18]

To make matters still more bitter for the "new poor," some great fortunes were built during the wartime and postwar inflation. Those able to borrow could repay their debts in devalued currency earned by the borrowed funds. Some industrialists expanded their plants under the twin stimuli of war contracts and borrowed capital; shortly after the war, the German entrepreneur Hugo Stinnes built an immense business empire by taking advantage of inflation.

The animosities and social divisions bred by the First World War rested less on the amount of wartime suffering than on its unevenness.

[16]Arthur Marwick, *The Deluge* (London, 1965), p. 272.
[17]Stephen Spender, *World Within World* (London, 1951), p. 2.
[18]C. F. G. Masterman, *England After the War* (London, 1923), p. 105.

The cry of "no more war" quickly led to a cry for basic changes in the economic, social, and intellectual system that had produced such a war and had apportioned its burdens.

THE IMPACT ON INTERNAL ORDER

The patriotic fervor so widespread in 1914 suggested that war really did reduce internal conflict within belligerent nations, at least in the short run. That unified enthusiasm, however, was unable to survive long years of unequal privations and without hope of victory.

Strike Activity

One good measure of growing disaffection in the belligerent countries is strike figures. Strike activity had reached the highest levels in history throughout Europe in the years just before 1914. There had been over 1500 different work stoppages in France in 1910, the peak prewar year; more than 1 million British workmen had been on strike at some time or another in 1912; there had been more than 3000 work stoppages in Germany in 1910. Labor relations had been unusually tense in some areas in the summer of 1914, with a bitter transport strike in Dublin, the "Red Week" of early June 1914 in Italy, and widespread strikes in St. Petersburg in July. Then, abruptly, there were hardly any strikes at all during the first year of war enthusiasm. Ten work stoppages involving 4159 people occurred in St. Petersburg during the rest of 1914. Only 98 work stoppages took place in France throughout 1915, and only 137 in Germany.

The revival of strike activity in 1916 shows that social peace was already wearing thin. Work stoppages and the number of people on strike in France quadrupled in 1916, as compared with 1915. The first major internal disorder in wartime Germany was a three-day walkout of 50,000 Berlin workers in May 1916 to protest the arrest of the pacifist Karl Liebknecht during an illegal May Day demonstration. Two regions of intense labor militancy became active in Britain: the mining areas of South Wales, and the shipbuilding areas along the Clyde River in Scotland downstream from Glasgow, where religious nonconformity, a sense of ethnic distinctness from the English, and a tight-knit worker community provided inhospitable terrain for war government. The South Wales and Clydeside workers rejected the compromises of their union leadership and went out on strikes led by grass-roots organizers at the plant level—shop stewards.

Ireland, where bitter controversy over Home Rule had been overtaken by the war, erupted in open revolution. Leaders of the Irish independence movement, Sinn Fein, with some aid from Germany,

seized government buildings in Dublin on Easter day April 24, 1916. The British put down the Easter Rebellion in a week of bloody fighting and executed its leaders.

Liberal and Socialist War Critiques

Opposition to the war had been reduced in August 1914 to a few isolated dissenters. By 1916, organized oppositions began to work actively for a compromise peace.

Roughly speaking, there were two schools of opposition opinion in the belligerent countries: liberal and socialist. The liberal critique of the war rested on assumptions of nineteenth-century democratic internationalists like the Englishman John Bright (who had opposed the Crimean War in the 1850s), who had argued that wars resulted from the selfish ambitions of kings, aristocrats, and heads of states against the wishes of the peaceable mass of humanity. The liberal solution was twofold: the expansion of democratic control at home over foreign policy, and the replacement of "international anarchy"[19] with a system of international law. The main prewar monuments to this approach were the Hague conferences of 1899 and 1907, which drafted rules governing the conduct of warfare and the treatment of prisoners of war and set up the International Court of Arbitration.

Despite the blow given the liberals' assumptions by popular jingoism in 1914, the movement remained alive, especially in Britain. The Labour and Liberal politicians who had opposed war jointly formed the Union

[19]The phrase comes from G. Lowes Dickinson, a Cambridge political scientist and a prominent British pacifist.

In the Irish Easter Rebellion, April 1916, Irish nationalists attempted to set up an independent republic. The remains of this streetcar were used as a barricade in Dublin.

of Democratic Control in December 1914. Its members advocated an immediate negotiated peace, "open diplomacy" under watchful democratic eyes, and a "League of Nations"[20] to apply international law to the relations among sovereign states. In Germany, the coalition of Social Democratic, Progressive, and Center (Catholic) deputies in the *Reichstag* passed a resolution in July 1917 calling for a peace without annexations. They worked from assumptions similar to the British opposition, but with far less public impact.

The socialist critique of the war rested on Marxist theory, which attributes war to capitalist competition. It made no sense to Marxists to work for an end to the current war without also attempting to overthrow the economic system that, by their diagnosis, would cause others like it.

Marxist antiwar groups were stronger on the Continent than in Britain. The British Independent Labour party (ILP) of Ramsay MacDonald and Philip Snowden remained allied to Liberals in the Union of Democratic Control. In Germany, however, where the Social Democratic party (SPD) had unanimously voted for war credits in August 1914, eighteen dissidents left the party during 1916 and formed the Independent Socialist party (USPD) in March 1917, dedicated to an immediate negotiated peace and domestic revolution. It was more difficult for French socialists, on whose soil stood German troops, to break the *union sacrée* of 1914. Even so, by the time of the December 1916 national congress of the French Socialist party (SFIO), the party's pacifist wing had risen to almost equal strength with the faction devoted to supporting the war effort. Russian socialists had never taken part in war government, and a majority of Italian socialists opposed the war from the beginning.

These internationalist minorities naturally sought to restore their prewar foreign contacts. The old machinery of the socialist Second International,[21] however, was jammed by the antagonism between the prowar majorities of the French and German socialist parties. Socialists of neutral countries—Switzerland, Sweden, and, up to April 1915, Italy—worked together with Russian *émigrés* like Lenin in Switzerland and Trotsky in Paris to organize unofficial international socialist meetings. The first meeting of European socialists across the battle lines was the Zimmerwald Conference, in Switzerland, in September 1915. The group was small; one delegate commented wryly that all the internationalist socialists in Europe could be driven to the meeting place in four carriages.[22] Moreover, the delegates were irreconcilably divided between a majority (twenty-three votes) who wanted only to oppose annexationist war aims, and a minority (seven votes) who wanted to use the wartime tensions as a lever for revolution, or, as Lenin put it, to convert the war

[20]Another phrase coined by G. Lowes Dickinson.

[21]See Chapter 3, p. 77.

[22]Robert Wohl, *French Communism in the Making, 1914–24* (Stanford, Calif., 1966), p. 66.

into civil war. By the time the next conference met, at Kienthal in Switzerland in April 1916, the socialist antiwar movement had become far larger. Governments found it necessary to take notice and refuse passports to their citizens who planned to attend.

In 1917 war morale cracked wide open in all the belligerent countries. As the war approached its third anniversary without any sign of end, populations stirred restlessly. It was the year of the French Army mutinies, the "Peace Resolution" of the German *Reichstag*, the secret peace feelers of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, the climax of agitation in the shop stewards' movement in Clydeside in Scotland. The Russian Revolution of 1917 was only the greatest of a whole series of shocks to the old regimes of 1914.[23]

Police Power

War governments responded to opposition with extensions of the police power. Authoritarian regimes like that of Tsarist Russia had always depended on the use of force and fear. But now even the parliamentary regimes felt required to expand police powers and embark on state control of public opinion.

Emergency police powers were given wide scope in England in August 1914 by the Defence of the Realm Act (DORA). DORA authorized the public authorities to arrest and punish dissidents under martial law if necessary. It was under this act that the leaders of the Irish Easter Rebellion of 1916 were executed. DORA, subsequently extended in later acts, also empowered the British authorities to suspend newspapers and to intervene in such sacrosanct aspects of an Englishman's private life as the use of lights at home, food consumption, and bar hours.

Police powers tended to grow as the war dragged on and as opposition to it increased. This trend was especially marked in France, where public authority had been relatively lenient at the beginning. The sharp rise of strikes, the Army mutinies in May and June of 1917, and increasing talk of a negotiated peace raised doubts whether the French war effort could go on. The selection of the tough prewar strikebreaker Georges Clemenceau as prime minister on November 16, 1917, signified that a majority of French political leaders wanted to continue the war even at the cost of less internal liberty. Clemenceau carried out that mandate. He cracked down ruthlessly on anyone suspected of supporting a compromise peace. Eugene Malvy, who as Minister of the Interior since 1914 had been lenient on suspects, was charged with treason and sentenced to five years' exile. Former Prime Minister Joseph Caillaux, who had publicly advocated a compromise peace, was imprisoned for two years awaiting trial on treason charges. Left-wing editor and deputy Paul Meunier was kept in jail for two years awaiting trial until his case was dismissed

[23]See Chapter 5, pp. 127–143.

after the war. Others received long sentences, and some—notably Paul Bolo, editor of an antiwar newspaper believed to be receiving German subsidies—were executed. After the war, many of these rather indiscriminate treason charges turned out to be the result of war hysteria or calculated political opportunism. They revealed the extent to which the wartime suspension of civil liberties could be accepted, even in libertarian France.

Control of Public Opinion

Expanded police powers extended also to the control of information and opinion. Its negative form, the censorship of newspapers and personal mail, was already established practice. Governments normally invoked the extra powers given them in an emergency to prevent disclosure of military secrets and the airing of opinions judged dangerous for the war effort. Positive forms of opinion control were a more genuine innovation of the First World War. All the belligerent governments resorted to what the French historian Elie Halévy later called "the organization of enthusiasm." The governments' efforts to influence their citizens' opin-

This British recruiting poster tried to arouse shame in able-bodied men who did not volunteer for military service.

ions was one sign for Halévy that the First World War had inaugurated an "era of tyrannies."[24]

At the beginning, governments hardly needed to fan public feeling. In the East End of London, for example, women organized "white feather" patrols to brand young men still in civilian clothes with a symbol of cowardice. Later, governments had to stimulate flagging enthusiasm. Wartime posters achieved a new level of effectiveness. Two British masterpieces helped put public pressure on young men to volunteer, before the imposition of the draft in England. In one of these, War Minister General Horatio Kitchener pointed directly at the viewer over the slogan, "Britain needs you." In another, a little girl asks her father, "Daddy, what did you do in the Great War?"

Clemenceau freely used his power as French prime minister to draft journalists or defer them in exchange for favorable news coverage. The German General Staff used labor leaders to run an "enlightenment program" in war plants. Late in the war, the German right adopted a more sophisticated tactic: they formed a new mass party, the Fatherland party, backed by secret Army funds and devoted to propaganda for war discipline and eventual territorial expansion for Germany. By 1918, the Fatherland party was larger than the Social Democratic party. German conservative nationalists were skillfully appropriating the mass party techniques invented by the left.

THE INTELLECTUAL IMPACT

Four years of holocaust completely smashed the optimistic liberal-rationalist clichés of the average European of 1914. The most "advanced" quarter of the earth had redescended of its own volition into barbarism. Where was progress? where reason? The effect was to make the avant-garde criticisms and mockeries of pre-1914 Europe much more acceptable to the general population.

One can follow the loss of illusions and the emergence of a hard new anger in wartime poetry. Poets, like almost everyone else, had gone to war in 1914 believing in heroism. British poet Rupert Brooke exulted in the virile lessons of war:

> 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 weary,
> Leave the sick hearts that honor could not move,
> And half-men, and their dirty songs and dreary,
> And all the little emptiness of love.[25]

[24] Elie Halévy, *The Era of Tyrannies*, trans. R. K. Webb (Garden City, N.Y., 1965), p. 266.
[25] Rupert Brooke, "1914. Peace," in *The Poetical Works of Rupert Brooke*, ed. Geoffrey Keynes (London, 1946), p. 19.

In France, Charles Péguy, a curious socialist mystic, wrote in 1913:

> Blessed are they who died in great battles
> Stretched out on the ground in the face of God . . .
> Blessed are they who died in a just war
> Blessed is the wheat that is ripe and the wheat
> that is gathered in sheaves.[26]

Both Rupert Brooke and Charles Péguy were killed in 1914, so one can only imagine the hardening and embittering impact of trench warfare on them. The British poet Wilfred Owen, who was not killed until 1918, was transformed from a rather pallid romantic versifier into a powerful denouncer of those who had sent young men off to war. In "Dulce et decorum est" (1917) he mocked "the old lie" that it was good to die for one's country, after giving a searing description of a gassed soldier coughing out his lungs. Another poem paraphrased the story of Abraham, ready to sacrifice his son Isaac on God's command. Unlike the biblical Abraham, however, Wilfred Owen's Abraham ignores the angel who directs him to "slay the lamb of pride instead."

> But the old man would not, and slew his son
> And half the seed of Europe, one by one.[27]

The anger of these soldier-poets was directed not against the enemy but against the fathers. The real enemy was the old society that had made it hard to avoid war, and the old values that had held that war "sharpened" a man rather than debased him. The First World War produced a whole literature of repudiation. Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front,* as noted earlier, made the patriotic schoolteacher the real villain. *Eminent Victorians* (1918) by the British conscientious objector Lytton Strachey derided the whole preceding generation through belittling biographies of some of its leaders.

The war experience did not really produce new art forms or styles. It acted largely to make the harshest themes and the grimmest or most mocking forms of expression of prewar intellectual life seem more appropriate, and to foster experiments in opposition to the dominant values of contemporary Europe.

Prewar fascination with the absurd and the subconscious seemed much more timely after years of bloodletting. The dada movement elevated mockery to a minor art form with a series of shocking stunts designed to ridicule stuffy bourgeois culture. Dada (an ostentatiously meaningless name) was founded in Zurich in 1916 by the young Romanian poet Tristan Tzara and spread by the end of the war to Paris,

[26]Charles Péguy, "Blessed are . . . ," in *Basic Verities: Prose and Poetry,* trans. Ann Green and Julien Green (New York, 1943), pp. 275–77.

[27]Wilfred Owen, "Dulce et Decorum Est," and "The Parable of The Old Man and The Young," in *The Collected Poems of Wilfred Owen,* ed. C. Day Lewis (New York, 1964), pp. 42, 55. The title refers to a verse from an ode by the Latin poet Horace, which Owen had learned at school: it is fitting and proper to die for one's country.

Berlin, and New York. Dada artists enraged audiences by having ten poets read their work simultaneously to the sound of bells, or by displaying a perfect copy of the *Mona Lisa* improved with a moustache. Marcel Duchamp entered a toilet bowl labeled "fountain" in a sculpture exhibit in New York in 1917. Beyond promoting mere pranks by comfortably bourgeois intellectuals, dada announced a serious goal of liberation from conformity and from the false aura of awe surrounding past art. It advocated the "necessary destruction" of the old world. "After the carnage, we keep only the hope of a purified humanity."[28]

Wartime experiences also prepared the way for the more important surrealist movement of the 1920s. André Breton, a young medical student assigned during the war to a psychiatric hospital in France, had ample opportunity to discover in shellshock cases the power of the unconscious and the importance of Freud's work. Fascinated by magic and dreams, Breton abandoned medicine to devote himself to a literature that would liberate the unconscious genius from the restraints not merely of bourgeois art styles but of "any control exercised by reason."[29] "We live still under the reign of logic," declared Breton. He sought to set free the inner genius by such devices as "automatic writing," in which one sets down words in free association. Breton began with dada but moved beyond it toward the founding of surrealism when he experimented with automatic writing in *Les Champs Magnétiques* (*Magnetic Fields*, 1920).

The early part of the war deeply gratified the fascination with speed, violence, and the machine of the Italian painters Filippo Marinetti, Umberto Boccioni, and others of the prewar futurist movement. Marinetti was arrested while demonstrating in the streets of Rome in favor of Italian entry into the war during the spring of 1915.

Although the leaders of these movements quarreled among themselves, they shared a resolute "modernist" contempt for all academic styles in the arts, a hatred for bourgeois culture (more violent in word than in deed), and a commitment to the free expression of individual genius. All these feelings were given an additional dosage of violence and anger by the horrors of the wartime experience.

A mood of desolation and emptiness prevailed at the end of a war in which such enormous sacrifice had accomplished so little. "My senses are charred," Wilfred Owen wrote to his fellow British poet Siegfried Sassoon on October 10, 1918, shortly before Owen was killed. A soldier next to him had been shot in the head, and the corpse had soaked Owen with its blood. "I shall feel again as soon as I dare, but now I must not."[30] Beneath the surface playfulness of dada lay a similar feeling of emptiness. Far from being mere nonsense, the surrealist Breton's automatic

[28]Dada Manifesto (1918) in Maurice Nadeau, *Histoire du surréalisme* (Paris, 1964), Chapter 3.
[29]First Surrealist Manifesto (1924) in *Ibid.*
[30]Wilfred Owen, *Collected Letters* (Oxford, 1967), p. 581.

writing turned out to be a powerful evocation of desolation. The most famous single declaration of the spiritual emptiness felt by so many at the end of the war was T. S. Eliot's poem "The Hollow Men" (1925). We know now that its despair was the product of personal difficulties, but its closing lines were immediately seized on to speak for the postwar generation:

> This is the way the world ends
> This is the way the world ends
> This is the way the world ends
> Not with a bang but a whimper.[31]

It was not yet clear at the end of the First World War where such wartime angers would be focused. If these intellectuals drifted into politics, it was bound to be antibourgeois politics. In the end, Marinetti went over to Mussolini, his fellow advocate of war for Italy in 1915. The surrealists André Breton and Louis Aragon thought that the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia was opening the way for the liberation of creative genius. They joined the new French Communist party. The reactions of young intellectuals to wartime experience showed that however widely they disagreed among themselves, they were likely to join whatever postwar movement seemed to cut with the sharpest knife.

[31]T. S. Eliot, "The Hollow Men," in *The Complete Poems and Plays* (New York, 1952), p. 59.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

Gerd Hardach, *The First World War, 1914–1918** (1977), is the best account of war economies on both sides. Extensive treatment of the economic and social dimensions of the war in all the major belligerent countries may be found in the many volumes edited in the 1920s and 1930s for the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace by James T. Shotwell, *Economic and Social History of the World War.* These still provide the fullest information available in many instances.

Marc Ferro, *The Great War, 1914–1918** (1973), takes a fresh look at the war as a social phenomenon. The classic essay of Elie Halévy, *The Era of Tyrannies* (1965), is still indispensable for the political and intellectual legacy of war government. See also the stimulating articles assembled in Jack J. Roth, ed., *World War I: A Turning Point in Modern History** (1967), and René Albrecht-Carrié, ed., *The Meaning of the First World War* (1965).

The basic study of the politics of any of the war economies is Gerald D. Feldman, *Army, Industry, and Labor in Germany, 1914–1918* (1966), supplemented by his *Iron and Steel in the German Inflation, 1916–1923* (1977).

The social impact of the war in Britain is recounted anecdotally but interestingly in Arthur Marwick, *The Deluge** (1965), and *Britain in The Century of Total War* (1968). More analytical are the relevant parts of Samuel H. Beer, *Modern British Politics: Parties and Pressure Groups in the Collectivist Age** (1982), and Bentley B. Gilbert, *British Social Policy, 1914–1939* (1970).

The historical context of Italy's decision to enter the war is explored in John A. Thayer, *Italy and the Great War: Politics and Culture, 1870–1914* (1964), in addition to the Bosworth volume cited at the end of Chapter 2.

For the wartime Habsburg Empire, see the works cited at the end of Chapter 5.