

I

The Mood of 1914

A century after its outbreak, the First World War remains a subject of abiding interest. As (arguably) history's first "total" war, it enveloped a multitude of nations, nationalities, races, and religions; produced new and more deadly weapons of destruction; altered traditional gender patterns; strengthened the power of the state; and unleashed revolutionary forces in Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Russia. In the four years of its duration, 1914–1918, some nine million soldiers succumbed to the fighting; many more were wounded and disabled. The total number of civilians killed is unknown but very high, especially in eastern Europe. The memory of war, for both surviving combatants and their families, lingered. Hailed by President Woodrow Wilson as the war to end all wars, one that would restore international and domestic stability and punish its instigator, Germany, the Great War instead ushered in decades of economic and political chaos, ultimately leading to dictatorship in Mussolini's Italy, Stalin's Soviet Union, Hitler's Germany, and a half-dozen east European states.

Perhaps the term "First World War" is misleading, because previous conflicts such as the Seven Years' War (1756–1763, known to Americans as the French and Indian Wars) and the Napoleonic Wars were truly intercontinental in scope, involving military action in the various European nations' colonial empires. In that case, the claim of the conflict of 1914–1918 to represent the first world war rests on the more slender thread of Japanese participation and the Allied conquest of Germany's African colonies. It was, in fact, not so much the geographic breadth of the war that distinguished it from earlier struggles, but rather its social, economic, and cultural scope that marked it as the "Great War," as contemporaries (who did not know it would be followed by another massive conflict) labeled it.

One reason why the war proved so significant was because it did not conform to expectations. There had, of course, been extensive planning by military leaders throughout Europe before 1914 to prepare for a war; after all, such preparation was at the heart of their professional duty. Yet such efforts had focused on the intricate questions of quickly getting men into uniform and to the national frontier, as well as on strategic questions, such as the Germans' planned strike through Belgium (envisioned in the Schlieffen Plan of 1905) or the French Plan XVII to recover Alsace and Lorraine in a speedy thrust. Assuming that any war would be brief and decisive, military and government planners had given little thought to the equally vexing problems of mobilizing the domestic population for war. And so the various governments had to improvise; societies felt that improvisation all the more keenly, and as a result, the unanticipated social consequences of a seemingly endless total war were all the more profound. The lack of any prior comparable experience is one reason why the social history of the Great War proved so wrenching at the time and so fascinating in retrospect.

In 1914 as temperatures soared during one of the hottest summers on record in Europe, so too tempers flared. Lacking such conveniences as air-conditioning that twenty-first century Europeans take for granted, and sweltering in heavy conventional fashions, the peoples of Europe were put to the test by both the torrid climate and events. It is only in hindsight, however, that we can see they were poised on the brink of war, for at the time they appeared to be confronted with more immediate and pressing problems. Wherever one looked, nations appeared embroiled in internal conflicts of their own.

French politics throughout the nineteenth century had been notoriously contentious and unstable, as divisions persisted over the legacy of the Revolution, relations between the Catholic church and state, and the role of organized labor. On the eve of the war, nothing indicated that political life would grow any more settled. Bitter public debates broke out over electoral reform, taxation, and, above all, the introduction of longer terms of compulsory military service. Accordingly, France witnessed no fewer than six prime ministers in the two and one-half years preceding the war. Moreover, the assassination of the French Left's champion, Jean Jaurès, just days before the armies clashed in 1914, revealed that the Left's legitimacy still came into question.

In Russia, despite the apparent monolithic authority of the tsar, political life was both restricted and unsettled. The autocracy still grappled with the impact of military defeat at the hands of Japan and the revolution of 1905, and although the regime had acquired some trappings of parliamentary government, no consensus existed for liberalizing reforms or reaching political stability. Political debate was not limited to proponents of autocratic reaction and their liberal critics, for after the turn of the century no European nation boasted more rapid industrialization than Russia. The world would soon witness the power of Russian factory workers, but even on the eve of the war, when St. Petersburg laborers launched a massive strike during the visit of the French president, the changing features of the Russian political landscape came into focus. That such changes were unfolding in a nation noted for its unresponsive,

unwieldy bureaucracy and reactionary leadership provided further evidence of the growing polarization of Russian life.

The German domestic scene also betrayed signs of discord and discontent. Germany's narcissistic emperor, William II, fancied himself an authority on all aspects of foreign and domestic affairs. Nevertheless, he spent long stretches of time aboard the royal yacht, *Hohenzollern*, surrounded by an eccentric circle of sycophantic advisers and admirers. The nation's political system was wracked by ideological, religious, and regional divisions. In elections in 1912, the Socialists had won more seats than any other party, and the unease felt by Germany's propertied elites was only aggravated by this development and the growth of labor unrest. A small but boisterous clique of extreme nationalists, outraged by the Socialists' success and the parliamentary system's inertia, urged Germans to prepare themselves for battle against internal and external foes.

Celebrated as an exemplar of stability and consensus, even the British political system faced severe challenges, whether over the power and privileges of the House of Lords, the issue of female suffrage, Irish Home Rule, and the willingness and ability of British working men to bring the industrial system to its knees. Ulster intransigence, suffragette arson, and labor militancy all seemed to threaten the very ideal of peaceful compromise at the heart of British public life.

Although Italy would not enter the war until May 1915, it was no more united or prepared for conflict than its neighbors. A country in which over half the population still labored at agricultural pursuits in 1914, Italy lagged far behind its European counterparts in social programs and industrial legislation. Poor living conditions, low pay, and heavy taxation provoked further resentment toward the government among Italy's working and middle classes.

Whatever the issues specific to individual countries, however, Europe as a whole was vulnerable to the threat of war because of deep-seated economic, military, diplomatic, and political developments. Ironically, the very technology that brought the continent closer together—telegraph, telephone, steamship—helped in the end to tear it asunder. Eventually, long-term causes and short-term accidents combined to precipitate the war.

Tensions in Europe had been exacerbated by the imperial rivalries of the 1880s and 1890s, when the quest for raw materials, potential markets, military bases, possible destinations for the emigration of surplus populations, as well as for prestige, prompted the race for colonial possessions in Africa and the Far East. The psychological effect of the falling profits of the era—the so-called Great Depression (1873–1896)—renewed pressure from industrial and commercial interests in the various European countries for colonial acquisitions to ensure their nations' exclusive gain at their rivals' expense. Colonial expansion, contend contemporary critics and subsequent scholars, yielded only meager tangible returns, yet the imperial race aggravated the competitive nature of state relations and threatened the preceding decade's fragile diplomatic equilibrium.

It was partly the need to sort out differences between colonial rivals and minimize probable friction that prompted the emergence of long-standing alliance systems.

Certainly, the Triple Entente of England, France, and Russia served the dual purpose of protecting each country's colonial ambitions from those of its partners (tensions between Britain and France, for example, had escalated over the Fashoda incident of 1898), as well as precluding the easy hegemony of the competing alliance bloc—the Triple Alliance of Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy. Originally the advocates of alliance diplomacy presumed that such links afforded members a degree of flexibility and influence over the excesses of their partners; by 1914, however, the reverse was the case, for the alliances threatened to escalate any local conflict involving one pair of powers into a general European conflagration.

Moreover, diplomats found their room to maneuver constrained by military leaders who themselves were responding to the technological advances that had reshaped not just the conduct of war but also the very preparation for it. With mass armies of conscripts and unprecedented quantities of equipment and supplies, mobilization was bound to be protracted, subject to intricate timetables. Once the carefully coordinated mobilization of hundreds of thousands of men, horses, and weapons had begun, it was difficult to stop. Only a strong-willed diplomat, politician, or monarch would be willing to defy military advice and invite confusion by delaying war preparations in the hope of finding a peaceful solution in one of the periodic local crises that punctuated the pre-1914 period.

The most serious of these crises was triggered—literally—by the assassination in Sarajevo of the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife Sophie, on June 28, 1914. The assassin, Gavrilo Princip, a teenaged Serbian nationalist, shot the imperial couple as a gesture of defiance on behalf of the Serbs of Bosnia-Herzegovina, a province of mixed Serb, Croatian, and Muslim Slavic populations that had been annexed by Austria-Hungary. European opinion was shocked by this brazen act, but it did not regard it as likely to culminate in a continental conflict. Over the course of the next few weeks this impression proved illusory. First, the Austro-Hungarian government was persuaded that the government of neighboring Serbia had plotted the assassination in an attempt to seize Bosnia-Herzegovina. Diplomatic pressure to elicit from Serbia concessions or a confession of complicity inevitably entangled Slavic Serbia's protector, Russia, in the crisis. The second significant factor was that both Austria-Hungary and Russia were authoritarian monarchies facing domestic agitation for reform and in danger of fragmenting into their constituent nationalities. Repressed nationalism was the potentially explosive issue, above all, that needed just a spark to engulf the continent and bring the multi-national empires to the brink of disintegration. One seemingly attractive way of forestalling such an erosion of imperial authority was to achieve a quick and convincing triumph, diplomatic or military, over an irresolute rival.

Russia's proclivities on this score were reinforced by Tsar Nicholas II's determination not to yield, as he felt he had humiliatingly been forced to do in the past; Austria-Hungary's resolve was meanwhile strengthened by strong German pressure not to capitulate. The public and secret intricacies of the alliance system ensured that if Germany and Austria-Hungary went to war against Russia, France and possibly Britain would intervene. Yet Germany's military leaders, recognizing the difficulty of

simultaneously fighting a war on two fronts, had in the Schlieffen Plan sought to alleviate the difficulty by deciding on a rapid strike at France through Belgium, discounting the prospect that the violation of Belgium's neutrality would ensure British intervention.

On July 23, 1914, Austria-Hungary issued an ultimatum to Serbia that, if accepted, would have eroded the small country's sovereignty. Under the circumstances the Serb response was quite conciliatory but insufficient to preclude Austria-Hungary from declaring war on Serbia five days later. Russia responded by mobilizing, prompting Germany to do the same—and to declare war on Russia on August 1 and on France two days later. On August 4, after German troops had violated the Belgian frontier, Britain honored its treaty obligation to protect Belgian neutrality and entered the fray on the side of France and Russia, though strategic considerations for the safety of the English Channel had influenced the decision for war.

More than a concern for national honor brought Germany into the war, for a bitter economic and naval rivalry had pitted it against Britain for several decades. Germany's remarkable economic dynamism threatened Britain's industrial ascendancy, while Germany's ambitions for a colonial empire and fleet commensurate with its economic achievement deepened the antagonism between the two countries. A growing fear of encirclement by the modernizing French and Russian armies and of Socialist political gains and domestic tensions all influenced imperial Germany's elite in their decision to go to war.

By August 4 the Continent had plunged into an abyss. "The lamps are going out all over Europe," observed the British foreign secretary, Sir Edward Grey, on the evening of that long and somber day. "We shall not see them lit again in our lifetime." Grey's pessimistic assessment of the likely impact of the war was not, however, initially shared by all of his contemporaries. Some intellectuals anticipated the coming conflict as a spiritual release from the banalities of everyday life and as a transformation of the degeneracy inherent in modern culture through looking to a higher, common purpose. In part, these suppositions drew strength from the mistaken premise, shared by individuals in all countries, that the war would prove something of a sporting match, brief and glorious, possibly even concluded by Christmas. Indeed, the link between sport and war was not entirely fanciful; an English public-school education assumed that training in team sports served as excellent preparation for the exercise of command. Sporting organizations, such as football clubs, helped to attract war volunteers, and officers were known to lead men into battle kicking a football before them. In Germany, too, the *Turnvereine* (gymnastic associations) aimed to strengthen individuals and the body politic alike. The idea of war as the greatest game of all even became a staple of popular art. In Germany, such paintings or drawings depicted young, beautiful maidens handing flowers or beverages to soldiers departing by train to the front, or men, young and older, rushing to volunteer before they missed out on the adventure of a lifetime.

Some historians have suggested that fear of accelerating domestic disintegration and anarchy played a key role in persuading politicians to embrace the idea of war. On this reading, European leaders calculated that only the unifying pressure of war could hold their fissiparous societies together. Certainly, propaganda encouraged the

notion of a community solidified in its newfound resolve to achieve victory. One British poster appropriately entitled “Are you in this picture?” depicted Britons from all social classes waiting in a long line to enlist in the army. Both the German slogan *Burgfrieden* (the internal peace of a fortress under siege) and the corresponding French concept of *Union sacrée* (Sacred Union) urged citizens, under pressure from external enemies, to put aside their differences and rally around the flag.

Yet this image of spontaneous, frenzied unanimity is incomplete and in some ways misleading. In fact, many European statesmen questioned the likelihood of national unity in a time of crisis and worried lest the outbreak of war only aggravate social unrest. To be sure, they harbored grave misgivings—unfounded in 1914—about the potential threat of the socialist parties. So if some Europeans looked to the war optimistically, others viewed it through less rosy spectacles.

As the combatants’ lack of military preparation came to light time and again, the more guarded responses to the outbreak of hostilities gained credence. In underestimating the duration of the conflict, the opposing nations, each confident of victory, failed to take measures to ensure a steady supply of food for both military and civilian populations and to stockpile raw materials for weapons and munitions. The British presumption that they could continue to conduct “business as usual” typified the initial response throughout Europe. These inadequate preparations went unchallenged because Europeans looked in the wrong place for examples of what to expect once the shooting began. Their expectations of a brief conflict stemmed partly from the short, decisive campaigns of Prussia against Austria (1866) and France (1870–1871) or Japan against Russia (1904–1905) that suggested that one power could defeat another with relative ease. Instead, military planners should have taken their cue from the American Civil War, which dragged on for four years with staggering casualties.



War Comes to France

On the evening of August 4, 1789, the French National Assembly, by renouncing the estate system that had hitherto divided French society into three corporate orders, helped usher in the French Revolution. That momentous event, like the mobilization of the armies of the French Third Republic 125 years later, aroused apprehension as well as great anticipation. Similarly, the ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity espoused by the French Revolutionaries found resonance with their fellow citizens in 1914. The First World War, like the Revolution of 1789, initially seemed to foster a spirit of cooperation, brotherhood, and common endeavor. The mood evoked by the mobilization of French troops is expressed here by three observers. The first is Mildred Aldrich, an American journalist, author, and friend of Gertrude Stein. She settled in France in 1898, moving into a cottage called “Hilltop” in a village on the outskirts of Paris in 1914 from which she wrote about the war and her experiences. The second is Félix Klein, a chaplain who ministered

to the injured on and off the battlefield in France. Finally, one of the most penetrating analysts of the war was Marc Bloch. Born into a distinguished Jewish academic family (his father was a professor at the Sorbonne), Bloch was an ardent French patriot and a brilliant Medieval historian, who reflected on his military service as he convalesced from typhoid in 1915.

1. A Nation Suddenly United

July 30, 1914

It looks, after all, as if the Servian affair was to become a European affair, and that, what looked as if it might happen during the Balkan War is really coming to pass—a general European uprising. . . .

Well, it seems that the so-called “alarmists” were right. Germany has NOT been turning her nation into an army just to divert her population, nor spending her last mark on ships just to amuse herself, and keep Prince Henry busy.

I am sitting here this morning, as I suppose all France is doing, simply holding my breath to see what England is going to do. I imagine there is small doubt about it. I don’t see how she can do anything but fight. It is hard to realize that a big war is inevitable, but it looks like it. It was staved off, in spite of Germany’s perfidy, during the Balkan troubles. If it has to come now, just imagine what it is going to mean! It will be the bloodiest affair the world has ever seen—a war in the air, a war under the sea as well as on it, and carried out with the most effective man-slaughtering machines ever used in battle. . . .

France really deserves her revenge for the humiliation of 1870 and that beastly Treaty of Frankfort. I don’t deny that 1870 was the making of modern France, or that, since the Treaty of Frankfort, as a nation she has learned a lesson of patience that she sorely needed. But now that Germany is preparing—is really prepared to attack her again—well, the very hair on my head rises up at the idea. . . .

The tension here is terrible. Still, the faces of the men are stern, and every one is so calm—the silence is deadly. There is an absolute suspension of work in the fields. It is as if all France was holding its breath. . . .

August 2, 1914

Well, dear, what looked impossible is evidently coming to pass.

Early yesterday morning the garde champetre—who is the only thing in the way of a policeman that we have—marched up the road beating his drum. At every crossroad he stopped and read an order. I heard him at the foot of the hill, but I

1.1 From Mildred Aldrich, *Hilltop on the Marne: Being Letters Written June 3–September 8, 1914* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1915), 45–47, 49–54, 57–64.

waited for him to pass. At the top of the hill he stopped to paste a bill on the door of the carriage-house on Pere Abelard's farm. You can imagine me—in my long studio apron, with my head tied up in a muslin cap—running up the hill to join the group of poor women of the hamlet, to read the proclamation to the armies of land and sea—the order for the mobilization of the French military and naval forces—headed by its crossed French flags. It was the first experience in my life of a thing like that. I had a cold chill down my spine as I realized that it was not so easy as I had thought to separate myself from Life. We stood there together—a little group of women—and silently read it through—this command for the rising up of a Nation. No need for the men to read it. Each with his military papers in his pocket knew the moment he heard the drum what it meant, and knew equally well his place. I was a foreigner among them, but I forgot that, and if any of them remembered they made no sign. We did not say a word to one another. I silently returned to my garden and sat down. War again! This time war close by—not war about which one can read, as one reads it in the newspapers, as you will read it in the States, far away from it, but war right here—if the Germans can cross the frontier.

It came as a sort of shock, though I might have realized it yesterday when several of the men of the commune came to say *au revoir*, with the information that they were joining their regiments, but I felt as if some way other than cannon might be found out of the situation. War had not been declared—has not to-day. Still, things rarely go to this length and stop there. Judging by this morning's papers Germany really wants it. She could have, had she wished, held stupid Austria back from the throat of poor Serbia, not yet recovered from her two Balkan wars.

I imagine this letter will turn into a sort of diary, as it is difficult to say when I shall be able to get any mail matter off. All our communications with the outside world—except by road—were cut this morning by order of the War Bureau. Our railroad is the road to all the eastern frontiers—the trains to Belgium as well as to Metz and Strasbourg pass within sight of my garden. If you don't know what that means—just look on a map and you will realize that the army that advances, whether by road or by train, will pass by me.

During the mobilization, which will take weeks,—not only is France not ready, all the world knows that her fortified towns are mostly only fortified on the map,—civilians, the mails, and such things must make way for soldiers and war materials. I shall continue to write. It will make me feel in touch still; it will be something to do: besides, any time some one may go up to town by road and I thus have a chance to send it.

August 3, 1914

Well—war is declared.

I passed a rather restless night. I fancy every one in France did. All night I heard a murmur of voices, such an unusual thing here. It simply meant that the town was awake and, the night being warm, every one was out of doors.

All day to-day aeroplanes have been flying between Paris and the frontier. Everything that flies seems to go right over my roof. Early this morning I saw two machines meet, right over my garden, circle about each other as if signaling, and fly off together. I could not help feeling as if one chapter of Wells's "War in the Air" had come to pass. It did make me realize how rapidly the aeroplane had developed into a real weapon of war. I remember so well, no longer ago than Exposition year—that was 1900—that I was standing, one day, in the old Galerie des Machines, with a young engineer from Boston. Over our heads was a huge model of a flying machine. It had never flown, but it was the nearest thing to success that had been accomplished—and it expected to fly some time. So did Darius Green, and people were still skeptical. As he looked up at it, the engineer said: "Hang it all, that dashed old thing will fly one day, but I shall probably not live to see it."

He was only thirty at that time, and it was such a few years after that it did fly, and no time at all, once it rose in the air to stay there, before it crossed the Channel. It is wonderful to think that after centuries of effort the thing flew in my time—and that I am sitting in my garden to-day, watching it sail overhead, like a bird, looking so steady and so sure. I can see them for miles as they approach and for miles after they pass. Often they disappear from view, not because they have passed a horizon line, but simply because they have passed out of the range of my vision—? becoming smaller and smaller, until they seem no bigger than a tiny bird, so small that if I take my eyes off the speck in the sky I cannot find it again. It is awe-compelling to remember how these cars in the air change all military tactics. It will be almost impossible to make any big movement that may not be discovered by the opponent. . . .

August 10, 1914

It is a week since I wrote you—and what a week. We have had a sort of intermittent communication with the outside world since the 6th, when, after a week of deprivation, we began to get letters and an occasional newspaper, brought over from Meaux by a boy on a bicycle.

After we were certain, on the 4th of August, that war was being declared all around Germany and Austria, and that England was to back France and Russia, a sort of stupor settled on us all. Day after day Amelie would run to the mairie at Quincy to read the telegraphic bulletin—half a dozen lines of facts—that was all we knew from day to day. It is all we know now.

Day after day I sat in my garden watching the aeroplanes flying over my head, and wishing so hard that I knew what they knew. Often I would see five in the day, and one day ten. Day after day I watched the men of the commune on their way to

join their classe. There was hardly an hour of the day that I did not nod over the hedge to groups of stern, silent men, accompanied by their women, and leading the children by the hand, taking the short cut to the station which leads over the hill, right by my gate, to Couilly. It has been so thrilling that I find myself forgetting that it is tragic. It is so different from anything I ever saw before. Here is a nation—which two weeks ago was torn by political dissension—suddenly united, and with a spirit that I have never seen before.

I am old enough to remember well the days of our Civil War, when regiments of volunteers, with flying flags and bands of music, marched through our streets in Boston, on the way to the front. Crowds of stay-at-homes, throngs of women and children lined the sidewalks, shouting deliriously, and waving handkerchiefs, inspired by the marching soldiers, with guns on their shoulders, and the strains of martial music, varied with the then popular “The girl I left behind me,” or, “When this cruel war is over.” But this is quite different. There are no marching soldiers, no flying flags, no bands of music. It is the rising up of a Nation as one man—all classes shoulder to shoulder, with but one idea—“Lift up your hearts, and long live France.” I rather pity those who have not seen it.

Since the day when war was declared, and when the Chamber of Deputies—all party feeling forgotten—stood on its feet and listened to Paul Deschanel’s terse, remarkable speech, even here in this little commune, whose silence is broken only by the rumbling of the trains passing, in view of my garden, on the way to the frontier, and the footsteps of the groups on the way to the train, I have seen sights that have moved me as nothing I have ever met in life before has done. Day after day I have watched the men and their families pass silently, and an hour later have seen the women come back leading the children. One day I went to Couilly to see if it was yet possible for me to get to Paris. I happened to be in the station when a train was going out. Nothing goes over the line yet but men joining their regiments. They were packed in like sardines. There were no uniforms—just a crowd of men—men in blouses, men in patched jackets, well-dressed men—no distinction of class; and on the platform the women and children they were leaving. There was no laughter, none of the gayety [sic] with which one has so often reproached this race—but neither were there any tears. As the crowded train began to move, bare heads were thrust out of windows, hats were waved, and a great shout of “Vive la France” was answered by piping children’s voices, and the choked voices of women—“Vive l’Armée”; and when the train was out of sight the women took the children by the hand, and quietly climbed the hill.

Ever since the 4th of August all our crossroads have been guarded, all our railway gates closed, and also guarded—guarded by men whose only sign of being soldiers is a cap and a gun, men in blouses with a mobilization badge on their left arms, often in patched trousers and sabots, with stern faces and determined eyes, and one thought—“The country is in danger.”

There is a crossroad just above my house, which commands the valley on either side, and leads to a little hamlet on the route nationale from Couilly to Meaux, and is called “La Demi-Lune”—why “Half-Moon” I don’t know. It was there, on the

6th, that I saw, for the first time, an armed barricade. The gate at the railway crossing had been opened to let a cart pass, when an automobile dashed through Saint-Germain, which is on the other side of the track. The guard raised his bayonet in the air, to command the car to stop and show its papers, but it flew by him and dashed up the hill. The poor guard—it was his first experience of that sort—stood staring after the car; but the idea that he ought to fire at it did not occur to him until it was too late. By the time it occurred to him, and he could telephone to the Demi-Lune, it had passed that guard in the same way—and disappeared. It did not pass Meaux. It simply disappeared. It is still known as the “Phantom Car.” Within half an hour there was a barricade at the Demi-Lune mounted by armed men—too late, of course. However, it was not really fruitless—that barricade—as the very next day they caught three Germans there, disguised as Sisters of Charity—papers all in order—and who would have got by, after they were detected by a little boy’s calling attention to their ungloved hands, if it had not been for the number of armed old men on the barricade.

What makes things especially serious here, so near the frontier, and where the military movements must be made, is the presence of so many Germans, and the bitter feeling there is against them. On the night of August 2, just when the troops were beginning to move east, an attempt was made to blow up the railroad bridge at lie de Villenoy, between here and Meaux. The three Germans were caught with the dynamite on them—so the story goes—and are now in the barracks at Meaux. But the most absolute secrecy is preserved about all such things. Not only is all France under martial law: the censorship of the press is absolute. Every one has to carry his papers, and be provided with a passport for which he is liable to be asked in simply crossing a road.

Meaux is full of Germans. The biggest department shop there is a German enterprise. Even Couilly has a German or two, and we had one in our little hamlet. But they’ve got to get out. Our case is rather pathetic. He was a nice chap, employed in a big fur house in Paris. He came to France when he was fifteen, has never been back, consequently has never done his military service there. Oddly enough, for some reason, he never took out his naturalization papers, so never did his service here. He has no relatives in Germany—that is to say, none with whom he has kept up any correspondence, he says. He earns a good salary, and has always been one of the most generous men in the commune, but circumstances are against him. Even though he is an intimate friend of our mayor, the commune preferred to be rid of him. He begged not to be sent back to Germany, so he went sadly enough to a concentration camp, pretty well convinced that his career here was over. Still, the French do forget easily.

Couilly had two Germans. One of them—the barber—got out quick. The other did not. But he was quietly informed by some of his neighbors—with pistols in their hands—that his room was better than his company.

The barber occupied a shop in the one principal street in the village, which is, by the way, a comparatively rich place. He had a front shop, which was a cafe, with a well-fitted-up bar. The back, with a well-dressed window on the

street, full of toilette articles, was the barber and hairdressing-room, very neatly arranged, with modern set bowls and mirrors, cabinets full of towels, well-filled shelves of all the things that make such a place profitable. You should see it now. Its broken windows and doors stand open to the weather. The entire interior has been “efficiently” wrecked. It is as systematic a work of destruction as I have ever seen. Not a thing was stolen, but not an article was spared. All the bottles full of things to drink and all the glasses to drink out of are smashed, so are counters, tables, chairs, and shelving. In the barber shop there is a litter of broken porcelain, broken combs, and smashed-up chairs and boxes among a wreck of hair dyes, perfumes, brillantine, and torn towels, and an odor of aperitifs and cologne over it all.

Every one pretends not to know when it happened. They say, “It was found like that one morning.” Every one goes to look at it—no one enters, no one touches anything. They simply say with a smile of scorn, “Good—and so well done.”



2. We Shall Be without Fear

On August 3rd, Belgium is required—by an ultimatum—to facilitate the German operations over her territory; she refuses, and, in her turn, sees her neutrality violated. Then Germany officially declares War with France; England declares War with Germany; Austria declares War with Russia. From the Urals to the Atlantic, from the Balkans to the mountains of Scotland, with hundreds of vessels, with thousands of regiments, navies and armies are set in motion. In Serbia, in Belgium, in Russia, on the Algerian coast, towns are bombarded. And while on land the cannon already roar, the ironclads sail the seas, and the heavens are crossed by aeroplanes seeking news or carrying explosives.

Oh! that Saturday the 1st August, when the terrible seriousness of the situation was suddenly revealed to a people still but little anxious! That morning three whole classes, three hundred thousand men, receive individually the order for immediate departure. Heedless of all else, giving no backward glance leaving unfinished tasks begun, taking no precaution for the future, completely absorbed in the solemn present, they leave family, undertakings, business. *Veni, sequere me!* orders the Country, without further explanation, and, like those called in the Gospel, they follow; they go to the frontier, to battle, probably to die. The astonishing thing is that not one murmurs and many are enthusiastic; but the women weep, and the children they are leaving. In the streets, in the squares, in the shops to which they are already rushing for provisions, wives, mothers, sweethearts, make moan. At the stations, to which they have accompanied their men, they try, for their sake, to keep a brave front; but when they come back alone . . .

In the middle of the afternoon, at the summons of telegraph or telephone, all the town-halls, all the stations, simultaneously post up the order for general mobilization, which enjoins four millions of men, at the risk of their lives, to help the country in danger. And all answer: "Here we are!" and just consult their time-table to make sure of when they must start. . . .

Where, but a few weeks ago, could be found a more grievous spectacle than the first sittings of the new Chamber? And where, even in turning over the annals of many Parliaments, could be found a more admirable scene than that it offered on the 4th August; listening, silent as a tribunal of history, to the act of accusation drawn up, with proofs in hand, against those who had hurled twenty-five millions of men on to the fields of slaughter! And in this hot-bed of dissensions, quarrels, selfish desires, boundless ambitions, what trace remained of groups, of rivalries, of hates? Unanimous the respect with which the Presidential message was received; unanimous the adhesion to the Chief of the Government and his noble declaration: "It is the liberties of Europe that are being attacked of which France and her allies and friends are proud to be the defenders. . . . France did not wish for the war; since it is forced upon her, she will defend herself. We are without reproach, we shall be without fear. . . ."

And, without debate, with no dissentient voice, all the laws of national defence, with the heavy sacrifices they imply, are at once voted. The night of August 4th, just a hundred and twenty-five years ago, saw the end of Privileges; finer still this day of August 4th, 1914, which sees the end of our dissensions and our egotisms.

The fact is that we know ourselves no longer; barriers are falling on every side which, both in public and private life, divided us into hostile clans. A head committee is formed to guard the material and moral interests of the country without delay; to it the Government summons, side by side with those most technically competent, a representative of each party and the best known of its adversaries in the past—Briand, Delcassé, Millerand, de Mun, Ribot. In Belgium it is the same, or even better; the Catholic Government elects the chief Socialist Vandervelde as Minister of State to take his seat beside the venerable M. Woeste. With our friends no more than with ourselves, can political divisions reach the sublime level of patriotism. . . .

It is the same in private life, as I said. The relations between citizens are transformed. In the squares, in the streets, in the trains, outside the stations, on the thresholds of houses, each accosts the other, talks, gives news, exchanges impressions; each feels the same anxiety, the same hopes, the same wish to be useful, the same acceptance of the hardest sacrifices. Even the children say: "Papa is gone; he went to the War to prevent the Germans doing us harm."

The old proudly enumerate the sons, the nephews, the sons-in-law, the grandsons they have with the Colours; their own age prevents them from going, so they have enlisted in the Civic Guard. The women talk of the anxiety they are feeling for the dear absent ones, of the applications they have made to be admitted as hospital

nurses. They tell us familiarly of the precautions against famine they are taking, their fear that milk may fail for the quite little ones; above all, of the possible invasion.

For, next to the field of battle where the men they love are slain, what is most horrible for women in war is the idea of falling into the hands of the enemy soldiers; the thought that in the absence of husband, brother or son, the house may be invaded, the home outraged by victorious brutes.

A woman of the people, to whom I was speaking of the imminence of the War a few days ago, astonished me by her calmness, all the more because she was aware that her husband would go amongst the first. The explanation was not long delayed.

“Happily,” she said to me, “Serbia is far from here!”

When she understood that there was a question of a repetition—no doubt with better chances, but perhaps on the same site—the terrible duel of ‘70, she quickly changed her note: “Oh! Monsieur, the Prussians here!”

August 6th

They are not here yet. Neither from within nor without do things take the same turn as in the Summer of 1870.

While our mobilization goes on with the most irreproachable coolness, calmness and order, Germany, who wished to take us by surprise, in the execution of her principal plan comes up against a moral and material obstacle which was the last to be expected. Her famous sudden attack is transformed into a sudden check. By one action she turns against herself the human race and the first chances of the struggle. She begins the war by a crime against a people’s rights and by a military loss. The violation of Belgian neutrality and the attack upon Liège may bring about—O justice of history and Providence!—the fall of the German Empire; a fine opportunity for that great law which makes the crime bring forth its own punishment to manifest itself.



3. On The Way to the Front

One of the most beautiful memories the war has given me was the sight of Paris during the first days of mobilization. The city was quiet and somewhat solemn. The drop in traffic, the absence of buses, and the shortage of taxis made the streets almost silent. The sadness that was buried in our hearts showed only in the red and swollen eyes of many women. Out of the specter of war, the nation’s armies created a surge of democratic fervor. In Paris there remained only “those who were leaving”—the nobility—and those who were

not leaving, who seemed at that moment to recognize no obligation other than to pamper the soldiers of tomorrow. On the streets, in the stores and streetcars, strangers chatted freely; the unanimous goodwill, though often expressed in naive or awkward words and gestures, was nonetheless moving. The men for the most part were not hearty; they were resolute, and that was better. . . .

Very early on the morning of August 4, I left for Amiens. I went part of the long way between the avenue d'Orléans and the Gare de la Chapelle in a market gardener's wagon that a police constable had requisitioned for my use. Because I sat in the back, wedged between baskets of vegetables, the fresh and slightly acrid odor of cabbage and carrots will always bring back the emotions of that early-morning departure: my enthusiasm and the constriction that gripped my heart. At the Gare de la Chapelle, an aged, white-haired father made heroic but unavailing efforts to hold back his tears as he embraced an artillery officer. At Amiens I found an extraordinarily animated city, its streets predictably teeming with soldiers.



Russia: For the Tsar and Motherland

Russia's troops were the first to mobilize, but the process of preparing for war was no less chaotic as a result. The first selection, by an English clergyman, represents the view of a sympathetic, if sometimes bemused, foreign observer. W. Mansell Merry, a vicar of St. Michael's in Oxford, had accepted the invitation of the English church in St. Petersburg to serve as its chaplain during July and August 1914. Anticipating a restful summer abroad, Merry found himself engulfed in the maelstrom of war with little warning. The second extract is from the memoirs of a Russian general, Vasily Gurko, who commanded the 1st Cavalry Division at the outbreak of the war. An ardent proponent of military reform and a political moderate, Gurko was forced into exile following the October Revolution of 1917.

4. The View from St. Petersburg

It is a fact that the through-journey to England *via* Berlin is no longer guaranteed; it is also undeniably true that both the "*suisse*" and the "*dvórník*" [groundskeeper or porter] at my own lodgings have been "mobilized" for possible service—but what about all the other rumours that are busily circulating?

The Baltic is mined, we hear, and full of German ships; the English fleet has sailed westward under sealed orders; the Japanese have asked to be allowed to help us “to the last ship and man,” should we be drawn into hostilities; the Serbs have scored a victory over the Austrians in the first battle fought; and a German descent upon Hango is imminently expected. How much of all this is true? Unfortunately, the gentleman, from whom answers to all my questionings were to be forthcoming, is unable through pressure of business to return home for lunch, so curiosity has to go unappeased; his wife tells me that she and her husband have been at work on the telephone practically all night, with the gleanings of very little news that is definite as the result of their long and tiresome vigil. However, three facts are certain enough amid all the “mélange” of current gossip; that Russia realizes that no honourable escape is any longer open to her from the duty of championing her fellow-Slavs of Serbia against the aggressive designs of Austria, although even at this eleventh hour she is offering to stop mobilization if Vienna will acknowledge Serbian sovereignty; that, in the event of hostilities being forced upon her, the campaign will be the most popular on which she will have embarked since 1812; and that, with an almost pathetically confident positiveness, she is relying on the whole-hearted co-operation in her undertaking, not of France only—for that is a foregone conclusion—but of Great Britain as well, the traditional foe of tyrants and bullies, the defender of the down-trodden, the friend of humanity, liberty and justice. This evening my English host and I have engaged ourselves to dine with a mutual friend at his country-house at Párgolovo, a most picturesque little village of datchas some half an hour’s run from Petrograd by rail, and a very delightful and refreshing time do we spend alike in the enjoyment of the hospitalities of his comfortable bungalow, and in acquainting ourselves with the beautiful lake and woodland scenery of its surroundings. On the drive back to the station quite an exciting adventure befalls us. Our dróshky [carriage] is stopped in a dark and narrow lane by a huge crowd of “demonstrators,” all carrying thick sticks and singing the National Hymn at the top of voices whose huskiness is readily traceable to the last public-house! The multitude close in all round, and one of their number, who acts as spokesman, requests us to inform him of our nationality, enquiring, moreover, why, on our hearing the strains of the Russian Anthem, we had not straightway uncovered our heads. My comrade, who speaks Russian like a native, replies chaffingly that we have not as yet heard anything approximately resembling the patriotic melody in question. This for the moment non-plusses our interrogator, who, evidently, has but little sense of humour. But he soon returns to the charge. “If,” he shouts, “you do not tell us who you are and why you have kept your hats on, we shall upset you into the mud!” It is not always wise to rely too much on the sustained good temper of a Russian mob, so now the discretion of a soft answer is obviously the better part of valour. “Listen, all of you,” cries my friend, standing up in the carriage, “we are both of us Englishmen born and bred, and if you’ll start that hymn of yours again, and sing it properly, we’ll stop here with our hats in our

hands as long as ever you care to keep it up!" The effect of this little speech is electrical. The crowd breaks into uproarious cheering; their leader leans over and kisses again and again both the hands of the lately suspected stranger; the familiar hymn bursts out afresh—this time with considerable approach to recognisable tune—and we both join in it heartily, erect and bare-headed, until the roysterers have had their fill, and, with a final round of applause, send us galloping off into the gloom to catch our homeward train by the barest possible margin.

Friday, July 31st

All sorts of rumours reach us towards evening; that an English squadron is occupying the Belt; that twenty-nine Dreadnoughts are "hanging on to the tail" of the German fleet; that Germany and Austria are already anxious to make peace; with many other exciting and amusing "canards" of a similar breed. The weather has cleared towards sunset, and as we sit on deck, enjoying an after-dinner smoke, the broad, cobble-paved roadway that runs alongside down to the port is thronged and noisy with the tramp of ceaseless streams of reservists, naval and military; rarely, marching to the blaring, lilting strains of a brass band; more generally, trudging along, bundle on back or in hand, in sullen silence; the women-folk, many of them weeping as if their hearts would break, breathlessly struggling to keep pace with husbands, brothers, sons or lovers on either side, as company after company swings past. For two days past these sturdy sons of the soil have been collecting at their various depôts; some dazedly, ignorant of whys and wherefores, recognizing necessity perforce, and wondering why they should leave their farms so soon before harvest; others have deserted their burnt-up lands with a shrug—in many districts there will be no harvest in any case—and they bear the new caprice of fate with indifference. Shaggy, uncouth peasants, they herd sheepishly into the appointed rendezvous, and are there transformed into genial, swaggering soldiers, a little shy, perhaps, of their trim appearance, easily abashed by personal remarks, but restored to the verge of boastfulness by a hint as to the prowess they will doubtless exhibit against the Germans.

It seems that some gigantic hand
Behind the veils of sky
Was driving, herding all these men
Like cattle into a cattle-pen;
So few of them can understand,
So many of them must die.

A. Noyes

The swiftness and completeness of this feature of the Russian mobilization is, considering the enormous difficulties of transport, little short of a miracle.

5. Russia's Popular Mood

Among the population after the mobilisation, as far as we could gather, the distinguishing characteristic was a calm and general desire to fulfil their duty and to bring as much help as possible to the affairs of the nation. Therefore there were no specially noisy demonstrations in the streets or in public gatherings, but everywhere could be felt the heightened spirit and mind and the understanding that Russia and her Allies had taken up arms in a just cause. There was no appearance of any kind of chauvinism or aggressiveness, or any kind of hatred to the enemy; but, on the other hand, everybody spoke out their firm conviction that in this just cause victory must be on our side.



Germany: For the Kaiser and Fatherland

In an effort to unite Germans of differing political persuasions behind the war effort, Kaiser Wilhelm II announced, early in August 1914, that he no longer recognized parties, only Germans. While fleeing, the *Burgfrieden*, as it came to be called, initially brought nationalists, liberals, centrists, and socialists together under the banner of patriotism for the Fatherland. Some Germans, like seaman Richard Stumpf, a Catholic sailor, enthusiastically greeted the war, justifying it as retribution against a haughty British nation that sought to outshine and outpace Germany both economically and militarily. Stumpf served on the German battleship *Helgoland* for the duration of the war. Socialists, on the other hand, struggled with the idea of supporting a war led by individuals whom they viewed as manipulative and exploitative militarists, nationalists, and capitalists. In 1907, socialists from various European nations had assembled in Stuttgart, Germany, to discuss how they might respond to a general European conflict. The second extract details the policy on militarism and international conflict adopted at that congress that would ostensibly guide socialist leaders in the event of war. The third source demonstrates the quandary faced by the German Socialist Party upon the war's outbreak and its eventual decision to join in the *Burgfrieden*. The symbol of the SPD's readiness to support the war was its acceptance of the financial measures necessary to fund the war effort, the so-called war credits voted by the German legislature. The last voice in this section is that of a young law student, Franz Blumenfeld, whose enthusiasm for the war appears more tempered and resigned than that of Seaman Stumpf.

6. A Just War against England

August 2

We are anchored at Wilhelmshaven Roadstead. We are about to go on war patrol today—real war patrol. Thus I wrote in my notebook on August 2.

Two rumors circulated everywhere at the time. One of them was that America was about to dispatch two billion dollars and two squadrons to our aid and the other asserted that Japan would give us moral support by demanding compensation for the war from Russia. The future was to prove both rumors to be nonsense. We got no newspapers or information until 5:30 that evening when the Executive Officer called us together again and set our minds at ease.

“The political situation,” he began, “has deteriorated to such an extent that we must count on the outbreak of a war with England. All telegraphic communication with England has been cut off since four o’clock this afternoon. You must know what that means. Furthermore an English fishing boat was discovered cruising around Helgoland this afternoon. One of our cruisers the *Danzig* ordered it to leave. The boat refused and consequently *Danzig* took her into custody. It is certainly very suspicious that this Englishman was snooping around Helgoland. Hence you know now that we are facing a war with England.”

All of us breathed a sigh of relief. The very thing for which we had so long waited and hoped, the thing we had yearned for and feared, had come true. There was no doubt that the real cause was jealousy over our economic progress. Germany had grown great, strong and wealthy. The quality of German goods had deprived England of a large part of the world market. The reasons cited by the English that they wanted to protect Belgian neutrality are ridiculous. Would she also have declared war on France if it had violated the Belgian border? However I don’t wish to deal with events that occurred later. At that time Germany had not yet crossed the Belgian frontier.

I should like to add one more example to indicate how great the excitement was during those first days and how totally harmless incidents gave rise to the craziest rumors and suspicions. That evening while the starboard watch was busy painting camouflage, a great commotion arose suddenly and everyone ran to the top deck. There I heard that the *Oldenburg*, which lay next to us, had just fired five shots at English submarines. Some of the men insisted that they had seen and heard the shots quite distinctly. The next morning it turned out that none of our ships had fired. Twelve miles away, however, on the island of Wangerooge, a few blank shots had been fired!

At that time there was a general panic about spies. It was alleged that here alone eighteen of them had been captured and shot. I did not believe it. Then there was also the fear of enemy aircraft. The searchlights of some of the ships and of the coastal fortresses were continually playing in the air because of aircraft reports. The next day the newspaper announced that a bomb had even been dropped on the town hall. Later on this, too, was repudiated.

That same night while we stood at battle stations, we received a wireless message that our light cruiser the *Augsburg* had bombarded the Russian naval station at Libau, set it on fire and was now engaged in battle with [Russian] cruisers.

On the following day the official *Norddeutsch Zeitung* published the news that the French had already crossed the border. In addition, one of their planes had bombed the main railroad track near Nuremberg. As a result, the Kaiser had declared war on France. We had expected this news. It was inevitable. The center of our interest still focused on England's attitude. Would she merely rattle her saber again and sic the others on us? The next day relieved us of these fateful doubts.

At that time I often wondered whether there were any objective reasons for England's intervention. As far as I could tell, the governments, scientists and labor leaders of both sides had tried very hard to establish friendly relations between the two countries. How long ago was it that the English war fleet was received with great honor at Kiel harbor? A few days! We were to pay them a return visit at this very time.

Bitter thoughts rise to my mind whenever I recall that the cause of it all was probably envy and petty trade jealousy. But then the Kaiser had told us that they were Germans like us, of the same race and of the same blood. Blood is thicker than water. And the English?—My country right or wrong! The pursuit of Mammon has deprived that nation of its senses. Can they actually believe that they can conquer a Germany which stands united behind its Kaiser with their soldiers whom they pay ten shillings a week? Can they believe that?

It is my opinion that they do not know what they are facing. They do not know our army and navy. They probably expect a repetition of the Boer War. One can forgive the French for going to war with us, the victors of 1870. And the Russians? They are an apathetic, stupid mob who do as they are commanded. That poor shadow the Tsar may not even know that he has broken his promises. Perfidious England, however, has stabbed us in the back with pre-meditation! This war is actually a racial conflict of the Germanic race against the Slavs, of culture against barbarism. Many prominent Englishmen understood this and have said as much. . . .

It was our captain, Kapitän zur See Lübbert, who told us of the English declaration of war on the evening of August 4. "We shall show them what it means to attack us," he cried. "Look at our wonderful ships all around.

They shall all fight to the last man and so long as they remain afloat. Down with our enemies! Death and destruction to all those who break our peace. Join with me in giving three cheers to our Supreme War Lord! His Majesty the Kaiser!"



7. The Socialist Alternative

Wars between capitalist states, generally, result from their competitive struggle for world markets, for each state strives not only to assure for itself the markets it already possesses, but also to conquer new ones; in this the subjugation of foreign peoples and countries comes to play a leading role. Furthermore, these wars are caused by the incessant competition in armaments that characterizes militarism, the chief instrument of bourgeois class rule and of the economic and political subjugation of the working class.

Wars are promoted by national prejudices which are systematically cultivated among civilized peoples in the interest of the ruling classes for the purpose of diverting the proletarian masses from their own class problems as well as from their duties of international class solidarity.

Hence, wars are part of the very nature of capitalism; they will cease only when the capitalist economic order is abolished or when the number of sacrifices in men and money, required by the advance in military technique, and the indignation provoked by armaments drive the peoples to abolish this order.

For this reason, the working class, which provides most of the soldiers and makes most of the material sacrifices, is a natural opponent of war, for war contradicts its aim—the creation of an economic order on a socialist basis for the purpose of bringing about the solidarity of all peoples. . . .

If a war threatens to break out, it is the duty of the working class and of its parliamentary representatives in the countries involved, supported by the consolidating activity of the International [Socialist] Bureau, to exert every effort to prevent the outbreak of war by means they consider most effective, which naturally vary according to the accentuation of the class struggle and of the general political situation.

Should war break out none the less, it is their duty to intervene in favor of its speedy termination and to do all in their power to utilize the economic and political crisis caused by the war to rouse the peoples and thereby to hasten the abolition of capitalist class rule.

I.7 From Olga Hess Gankin and H.H. Fisher, eds., *The Bolsheviks and the World War: The Origin of the Third International* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1940), 57–59. Copyright © 1940 by the Board of the Trustees of the Leland Stanford Junior University, renewed 1968. All rights reserved. Used with the permission of Stanford University Press. www.sup.org.

8. German Socialists Support the War

In today's session of the Reichstag the Social-Democratic "Fraktion" 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 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.

L.8 From Ralph Haswell Lutz, ed., *Fall of the German Empire, 1914–1918*, 2 vols. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1932), 2:6–7. Copyright © 1940 by the Board of the Trustees of the Leland Stanford Junior University, renewed 1960. All rights reserved. Used with the permission of Stanford University Press. www.sup.org.

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.



9. Thoughts on Mobilization

Freiburg, August 1st, 1914

If there is mobilization now, I must join up, and I would rather do so here, where there would be a chance of going to the Front quite soon, than in Travemünde, Hamburg or Bahrenfeld, where we should probably be used only to defend the Kiel Canal. And I can't think of anything more hateful than to be forced to sit at home doing nothing when there is war and fighting out there.

You must not imagine that I write this in a fit of war-fever; on the contrary, I am quite calm and am absolutely unable to share the enthusiasm with which some people here are longing to go to war. I can't yet believe that that will happen. It seems to me impossible, and I feel sure that things will go no further than mobilization. But if it does start then you will understand that I can't stop anywhere here. I know too that you are a dear, good, sensible little Mother, and would not wish that your sons should show cowardice in the face of great danger and stay prudently behind.



Britain and the Empire Mobilize

The broad spectrum of popular reactions to the prospect and then the outbreak of war, ranging from apathy to apprehension to resignation to enthusiasm was no less prevalent within Britain and its empire than in the rest of Europe. In the British case, however, the situation was complicated by two concerns: first, the initial uncertainty whether the island nation would in fact intervene in a struggle between rivals on the Continent; and second, if it did fight, whether it could persuade a sufficient number of volunteers to join the armed services, given that it had not enacted a compulsory military draft. The first selection below is by Basil Thomson, who as the head of the London Metropolitan Police's Criminal Investigation Department (CID), was charged with monitoring threats to domestic stability and security, including those from foreign spies. If confusion,

ill-preparedness, and susceptibility to rumor seem the dominant themes from Thomson's perspective, others were confident that such energies could be channeled to positive ends, as in Coulson Kernahan's account of the vibrant collective patriotism that could be stimulated by a shrewdly managed recruiting meeting. A new sense of unity and cohesion, forged in the process of mobilization and superseding the class prejudices of the prewar era, is likewise a theme of the third selection by Donald Hankey. He was the son of the highly influential secretary to Britain's War Cabinet, Maurice Hankey, and like so many young men from a privileged position, served and died in combat.

Even in the war's earliest days the repercussions were felt across the oceans. Frederick G. Scott, a Canadian clergyman whose poems testified to the consciousness of both a common imperial endeavor and a nascent sense of Canadian nationality, could not remain aloof, and was drawn inexorably to the events in France. For the author of the fifth extract, the war came to him. It is a rarity, a firsthand written account in a predominantly oral culture. J.G. Mullen (probably a pseudonym) was a junior clerk in the Cameroons whose world was turned upside down by the announcement of hostilities. His recollections, published in 1916 in *The Gold Coast Leader* newspaper, detail the arrogance and arbitrary brutality of colonial rule and the inevitable movement of refugees, in West Africa no less than in Belgium or Eastern Europe.

10. Popular Hysteria

I think that we all had at the back of our minds a feeling that a European War on the great scale was so unthinkable that a way would be found at the eleventh hour for avoiding it. A staff officer in whose judgment I believed remarked that if this were so he would emigrate, because he knew that the day was only postponed until Germany felt herself better prepared for the inevitable war. There were, in fact, no illusions at the War Office. . . .

Who now remembers those first feverish days of the War: the crowds about the recruiting stations, the recruits marching through the streets in mufti, the drafts going to the station without bands the flower of our manhood, of whom so many were never to return soldiers almost camping in Victoria Street, the flaring posters, the foolish cry "Business as Usual"; the unseemly rush to the Stores for food until, under the lash of the newspapers, people grew ashamed of their selfishness; the silence in the 'buses, until any loud noise, like a motor back-fire, started a Zeppelin scare? Who now remembers the foolish prognostications of experts how the War would result in unemployment and a revolution would follow; the assurance of certain bankers that the War would be over in six months because none

of the belligerents could stand the financial strain for longer? We have even forgotten the food-hoarding scare that followed the spy scare during the height of the submarine activity, when elderly gentlemen, who had taken thought for the morrow, might have been seen burying biscuit tins in their gardens at midnight for fear that their neighbours should get wind of their hoard and hale them before the magistrate.

I began to think in those days that war hysteria was a pathological condition to which persons of mature age and generally normal intelligence were peculiarly susceptible. War work was evidently not a predisposing cause, for the readiest victims were those who were doing nothing in particular. In ante-bellum days there were a few mild cases. The sufferers would tell you gravely that at a public dinner they had turned suddenly to their German waiter and asked him what post he had orders to join when the German invaders arrived, and that he, taken off his guard, had clicked his heels and replied, "Portsmouth"; or they would whisper of secret visits of German aircraft to South Wales by night and mysterious rides undertaken by stiff guttural persons with square heads who would hire horses in the Eastern Counties and display an unhealthy curiosity about the stable accommodation in every farm that they passed. But in August 1914 the malady assumed a virulent epidemic form accompanied by delusions which defied treatment. It attacked all classes indiscriminately, and seemed even to find its most fruitful soil in sober, stolid, and otherwise truthful people. I remember Mr. Asquith saying that, from a legal and evidential point of view, nothing was ever so completely proved as the arrival of the Russians. Their landing was described by eyewitnesses at Leith, Aberdeen, and Glasgow; they stamped the snow out of their boots and called hoarsely for vodka at Carlisle and Berwick-on-Tweed; they jammed the penny-in-the-slot machines with a rouble at Durham; four of them were billeted on a lady at Crewe who herself described the difficulty of cooking for Slavonic appetites. There was nothing to be done but to let the delusion burn itself out. I have often wondered since whether some self-effacing patriot did not circulate this story in order to put heart into his fellow-countrymen at a time when depression would have been most disastrous, or whether, as has since been said, it was merely the rather outlandish-looking equipment and Gaelic speech of the Lovat Scouts that set the story afloat.

The second phase of the malady attached itself to pigeons. London is full of pigeons—wood pigeons in the parks, blue rocks about the churches and public buildings—and a number of amiable people take pleasure in feeding them. In September 1914, when this phase was at its height, it was positively dangerous to be seen in conversation with a pigeon; it was not always safe to be seen in its vicinity. A foreigner walking in one of the parks was actually arrested and sentenced to imprisonment because a pigeon was seen to fly from the place where he was standing and it was supposed that he had liberated it.

During this phase a pigeon was caught in Essex which was actually carrying a message in the usual little aluminum box clipped to its leg. Moreover, the message

was from Rotterdam, but it was merely to report the arrival of an innocuous cargo vessel, whose voyage we afterwards traced.



11. Recruiting for War

Enthusiasm of any sort, but most of all perhaps when it takes the form of politics, patriotism or religion, is contagious. Mr. F. A. Atkins tells a story of a minister calling upon a man who had ceased to attend church. The man informed his caller that in his opinion religion was in no way dependent upon attendance at places of worship, and that he could be just as truly religious in his own room as in a chapel or church.

The minister rose from his seat without a word and walked over to the fireplace. With the tongs, he picked out the most red-hot and fiercely glowing piece of live coal he could find, and placed it by itself in the hearth. For two or three seconds the fire within the heart of the coal was undimmed. But five or six seconds had hardly passed before—though still burning warmly within—the outer surface of the coal had begun slightly to darken, to crackle, and to cool. In half a minute the thing had turned to a dull and sullen red, and before the minute was out, the once brightly glowing and live coal was black cinder and grey ash.

I am of opinion that this apt object lesson has a bearing upon recruiting as well as upon religion. The assembling together of men and women, with one object in view, and all with one thought in mind, is like the laying of coal by coal when making a fire. As the fire kindles, each separate coal, by giving out heat, causes the coals nearest to it to burn more brightly, and is in return the gainer in warmth and brightness by the warmth and brightness it has itself thus helped to generate and to diffuse. Soon there is no longer a mere collection of odd pieces of live coal, but a fire. The many have coalesced into a unit. So, too, with the units constituting a crowd. Each hearer who feels and responds to the spoken word, communicates in some strange way—the psychology of crowds deserves closely to be studied—his enthusiasm and his ardour to those around him. Some mysterious soul-electricity or personal magnetism which moves men and women poignantly is abroad. It acts and re-acts not only on each member of the audience but upon the man who thus holds them with burning words. He too is conscious of it, and is moved thereby to new effort, to loftier thoughts and nobler speech, until at last he holds and sways the mass of men and women as one person. He and they *are* one, and at one—one in vision, one in aspiration, one in intention, and willing therefore to be one in deeds.

The singly burning coals have become a fire. The crowd had before this ceased to be a mere gathering together of individual women and men. It had already become a unit, an integral part of the nation. But now it is a personality, *one* personality,

I.11 From Coulson Kernahan, *The Experiences of a Recruiting Officer* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1915), 28–31.

and more even than a personality, it is a passion, and one passion—the sacred and inextinguishable passion and fire of selfless patriotism . . . and the speaker stands down. His work is done. Thereafter there is no further need of words to urge men to their duty. Rather is there need of help to record their names, so fast and so continuously does the stream of recruits pour in.

Meetings where one hears such oratory and witnesses such response and such results are of course rare, and meetings may, I admit, be overdone; for at this stage of the war they are less necessary than at an earlier period.

In those early days of the war, and I fear the fact holds true also to-day, it was very difficult to make the British public awaken to the fact that this is a war which is *their* business, not merely the business of soldiers; and that if they, the public, did not make it their business, they not only might not have any business to which to attend, but might live to see their own homes burning, their own women and children treated even more brutally and inhumanly than the enemy had treated the women and children of France and Belgium.

Meetings, the purpose of which is to explain the cause of the war, no doubt serve an educational purpose, and the use and influence of such meetings cannot always be accurately estimated by the immediate results. At least they set people thinking, and possibly they set a good many people working; and so eventually assist recruiting—but the note we were instructed; and rightly, to strike at our meetings was as follows: We were to endeavour to fix the attention of audiences, not upon how the war came about, but upon the fact that no matter how it came about, the one fact to be realised now was that a war which would have to be fought to a finish was upon us, and that the only way to end that war was to send more men, and again more men, and yet again more men, to the front.

The recital at one gathering of Mr. T. W. H. Crosland's almost brutally realistic poem "Reveille" did more to bring this fact home to the hearers than all the speech-making. As the poem will be new to many readers I venture to reprint it here:

I.

Oh, it's war, war, war! Peep o' day and morning star
Aghast, above a world that reels to war, war, war!
We've cheerful songs a-plenty and we've sung 'em sweet and well,
But the band has got new music from a shop not far from hell,
And the words aint "lovey dovey" nor "snookey cow-boy coon,"
But "Death and bloody slaughter," and the Devil's wrote the tune—
Hold your chins up—sing it hearty—don't you shirk a single bar;
For it's war, war, war!
My bonny boys—it's war!

II.

Oh, it's war, war, war! No matter who you are
You can either like or lump it, but all the same it's war!
You bear ill-will to nobody, your soul's desire is peace—
Well, stand upon your doorstep and bid the bugles cease:

You've been drilled and milled and hardened, you're spoiling for a fight—
 Your chance is at your elbow! Wherefore put your caps on tight—
 Chuck your chests out, grab your rifles, fling your blankets in the car,
 For it's war, war, war!
 My hefty lads—it's war!

III.

Oh, it's war, war, war! See 'em massing near and far;
 Roaring, rumbling, tumbling, stumbling on to war, war, war!
 The missus she looks scared like, she's forgiven you your sins,
 The kids go down the alley beating rataplans on tins,
 And waving bits of Union Jacks—the trooper's on the waves,
 And now's the time for Englishmen to seek their honoured graves!
 Oh, get busy! Up and at 'em—be you soldier-man or tar,
 For it's war, war, war!
 My dear young friends—it's war!

IV.

Oh, it's war, war, war! It may make us. It will mar
 Many a man and many a woman—but it's war, war, war!
 There's Drake and Blake and Nelson, and "Bobs" who pulled us through—
 Now it's Kitchener and Jellicoe and George the Fifth and YOU:
 The Lord help honest people and the foul Fiend take his own,
 For you shall smash the Mad Dog's head and stamp his rabbles down,
 And keep the old flag flying from Wick to Malabar—
 Oh, its war, war war!
 By Dad's best hat—it's war!

To say in effect directly yet not offensively, to each member of the audience; "Thou art the man!" is what is wanted in an appeal for recruits: and these stirring lines give a speaker several openings. To the pacifists we can emphasise the biting irony, the savage satire, of the lines addressed to the man whose "soul's desire is peace."

"Well, stand upon your doorstep and bid the bugles cease."

To the man in the street who is disposed to regard the war as a soldier's; somebody's, anybody's business except his own, one can say:

"There's Drake and Blake and Nelson, And Bobs who pulled us through—
 Now it's Kitchener and Jellicoe and George the Fifth—and YOU."

This direct man-to-man appeal must, our chief insisted, be made at every recruiting meeting he organised. While on recruiting duty, as with soldiers on parade, each of us—myself, his honorary recruiting officer, the recruiting sergeant, an ex-company-sergeant-major of the Royal Garrison Artillery, and the clerical staff, down to the smartest cadet-orderly who ever wore khaki or stood at salute—was rigidly expected to obey orders.

While no martinet, and welcoming suggestions from any of us, he rightly insisted—as we were responsible to him, and he, and he only, was responsible to headquarters for the conduct of recruiting in his area—that nothing be done inside the office or out of it without his cognisance and approval. In the meetings under his control, little or nothing was left to chance. He spared no pains in selecting and sifting his speakers, rarely, if ever, putting up anyone entirely “on spec,” but giving the men whom he had good cause to believe would come to the point, and would not “spread themselves” unduly, a hearing. If dissatisfied he unconditionally thenceforth cut them out.

Even in meetings in towns at a long distance from the recruiting office, and so necessarily organised by others, it was his rule, so far as was possible, not to call upon outside speakers. A few words, possibly, as chairman, or in proposing some resolution, were occasionally invited from someone well known in the neighbourhood where the meeting was held; but the Chief preferred, at all events at the first meetings in any particular place, to put up his own speakers, generally the same three, each of whom had the lines upon which he was to speak laid down for him, and each of whose speech was quite different in subject and in style from the speeches of the other two.

One spoke entirely as a civilian. He addressed himself from the standpoint of the man in the street and the woman in the house, and showed how urgent it was that every able-bodied man who could come forward should enlist; another gave a straightforward and soldierlike statement of the facts, the rates of pay, terms of service, and the like, and showed how many and how unique are the advantages, physical and mental, offered by the Army; while the third struck the patriotic note, and made a direct appeal for recruits.



12. A British Student in Arms

The unprecedented had occurred. For once a national ideal had proved stronger than class prejudice. In this matter of the war all classes were at one—at one not only in sentiment but in practical resolve. The crowd that surged outside the central recruiting offices in Great Scotland Yard was the proof of it. All classes were there, struggling for the privilege of enlisting in the new citizen Army, conscious of their unity, and determined to give effect to it in the common life of service. It was an extraordinary crowd. Workmen were there in cord breeches and subfusc coats; boys from the East End in the latest fashions from Petticoat Lane; clerks and shop-assistants in sober black; mechanics in blue serge and bowler hats; travelers in the garments of prosperity; and most conspicuously well dressed of all, gentlemen in their oldest clothes. It was like a section cut out of the nation.

Men and boys of the working class formed the majority. They were in their element, shouting, singing, cheeking the “coppers” with as much ribald good humor as if the recruiting office had been a music-hall. But some of the other classes were far less at their ease. They had been brought up from earliest youth to thank God that they were not as other men, to set store by the innumerable little marks that distinguished them from “the lower classes.” All these they were now sacrificing to an idea, and they felt horribly embarrassed. Even the gentleman, who had prided himself on his freedom from “the snobbishness of the suburbs,” felt ill at ease. Of course he had been to workingmen’s clubs; but there he had been “Mr. Thingumy.” Here he was “mate.” He told himself that he did not mind being “mate,” in fact he rather liked it; but he fervently wished that he looked the part. He felt as self-conscious as if he had arrived at a dinner party in a Norfolk jacket. A little later on, when he sat, one of four nude men, in a cubicle awaiting medical inspection, he did feel that for the moment they had all been reduced to the common denominator of their sheer humanity; but embarrassment returned with his clothes and stayed with him all through the march to the station and the journey to the depot.

At the depot he fought for the prize of a verminous blanket, and six foot of floor to lie on. When he awoke the next morning his clothes were creased and dirty, his collar so filthy that it had to be discarded, and his chin unshaven. He perceived with something of a shock that he was no longer conspicuous. He was no more than the seedy unit of a seedy crowd. In any other circumstances he would have been disgusted. As it was, he sought the canteen at the earliest opportunity and toasted the Unity of the Classes in a pint!

All emerged from the depot clothed exactly alike, and meditated on the symbolism of clothes. They donned the gray shirt and ready-made khaki of the new era, and deposited the emblems of class distinction on a common rag-heap. Even the perfunctory manner of the Q.M.S. [Quartermaster sergeant] could not rob the occasion of an almost religious solemnity. It was the formal beginning of a new life, in which men of all classes, starting with something like equality of opportunity, should gain what pre-eminence they might by the merit of their inherent manhood or the seduction of their native tact. Henceforward all fared alike. All ate the same food, slept on the same floor in similar blankets, and in their shirts. Even the pajamas no longer divided them! All took their share in scrubbing floors and washing dixies; and until the novelty wore off even these menial and dirty jobs caught a certain glamour from the great ideal which they symbolized. Gradually all found their level. The plausible were promoted, found wanting, reduced, and replaced by the men of real grit and force of character. Mechanics joined the machine-gun section, clerks became orderlies, signallers, or telephonists. The dirtiest and most drunken of the old soldiers were relegated to the cookhouse. Equality of opportunity had been granted, and the inequality of man had been demonstrated. It was found that the best formula, after all, was that of St. Paul: “Diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.”

13. A Canadian Clergyman at War

It was on the evening of the 31st of July, 1914, that I went down to a newspaper office in Quebec to stand amid the crowd and watch the bulletins which were posted up every now and then, and to hear the news of the war. One after another the reports were given, and at last there flashed upon the board the words, "General Hughes offers a force of twenty thousand men to England in case war is declared against Germany." I turned to a friend and said, "That means that I have got to go to the war." Cold shivers went up and down my spine as I thought of it, and my friend replied, "Of course it does not mean that you should go. You have a parish and duties at home." I said, "No. I am a Chaplain of the 8th Royal Rifles. I must volunteer, and if I am accepted, I will go." It was a queer sensation, because I had never been to war before and I did not know how I should be able to stand the shell fire. I had read in books of people whose minds were keen and brave, but whose hind legs persisted in running away under the sound of guns. Now I knew that an ordinary officer on running away under fire would get the sympathy of a large number of people, who would say, "The poor fellow has got shell shock," and they would make allowance for him. But if a chaplain ran away, about six hundred men would say at once, "We have no more use for religion." So it was with very mingled feelings that I contemplated an expedition to the battle-fields of France, and I trusted that the difficulties of Europe would be settled without our intervention. However, preparations for war went on. On Sunday, August 2nd, in the afternoon, I telephoned to Militia Headquarters and gave in my name as a volunteer for the Great War. When I went to church that evening and told the wardens that I was off to France, they were much surprised and disconcerted. When I was preaching at the service and looked down at the congregation, I had a queer feeling that some mysterious power was dragging me into a whirlpool, and the ordinary life around me and the things that were so dear to me had already begun to fade away.

On Tuesday, August the Fourth, war was declared, and the Expeditionary Force began to be mobilized in earnest. It is like recalling a horrible dream when I look back to those days of apprehension and dread. The world seemed suddenly to have gone mad.

All civilization appeared to be tottering. The Japanese Prime Minister, on the night war was declared, said, "This is the end of Europe." In a sense his words were true. Already we see power shifted from nations in Europe to that great Empire which is in its youth, whose home is in Europe, but whose dominions are scattered over the wide world, and also to that new Empire of America, which came in to the war at the end with such determination and high resolve. The destinies of mankind are now in the hands of the English-speaking nations and France. In those hot August days, a camp at Valcartier was prepared in a lovely valley surrounded by the old granite hills of the Laurentians, the oldest range of mountains in the world. The Canadian units began to collect, and the lines of white tents were laid out. On Saturday, August 22nd, at

seven in the morning, the detachment of volunteers from Quebec marched off from the drill-shed to entrain for Valcartier. Our friends came to see us off and the band played "The Girl I Left Behind Me," in the traditional manner. On our arrival at Valcartier we marched over to the ground assigned to us, and the men set to work to put up the tents. I hope I am casting no slur upon the 8th Royal Rifles of Quebec, when I say that I think we were all pretty green in the matter of field experience. The South African veterans amongst us, both officers and men, saved the situation. But I know that the cooking arrangements rather "fell down", and I think a little bread and cheese, very late at night, was all we had to eat. We were lucky to get that. Little did we know then of the field kitchens, with their pipes smoking and dinners cooking, which later on used to follow up the battalions as they moved.

The camp at Valcartier was really a wonderful place. Rapidly the roads were laid out, the tents were run up, and from west and east and north and south men poured in. There was activity everywhere. Water was laid on, and the men got the privilege of taking shower-baths, beside the dusty roads. Bands played; pipers retired to the woods and practised unearthly music calculated to fire the breast of the Scotsman with a lust for blood. We had rifle practice on the marvellous ranges. We had sham battles in which the men engaged so intensely that on one occasion, when the enemy met, one over-eager soldier belaboured his opponent with the butt end of his rifle as though he were a real German, and the poor victim, who had not been taught to say "Kamarad," suffered grievous wounds and had to be taken away in an ambulance. Though many gales and tempests had blown round those ancient mountains, nothing had ever equalled the latent power in the hearts of the stalwart young Canadians who had come so swiftly and eagerly at the call of the Empire. It is astonishing how the war spirit grips one. In Valcartier began that splendid comradeship which spread out to all the divisions of the Canadian Corps, and which binds those who went to the great adventure in a brotherhood stronger than has ever been known before.

The dominating spirit of the camp was General Hughes, who rode about with his aides-de-camp in great splendour like Napoleon. To me it seemed that his personality and his despotic rule hung like a dark shadow over the camp. He was especially interesting and terrible to us chaplains, because rumour had it that he did not believe in chaplains, and no one could find out whether he was going to take us or not. The chaplains in consequence were very polite when inadvertently they found themselves in his august presence.

News from overseas continued to be bad. Day after day brought us tidings of the German advance. The martial spirits amongst us were always afraid to hear that the war would be over before we got to England. I, but did not tell the people so, was afraid it wouldn't. I must confess I did not see in those days how a British force composed of men from farms, factories, offices and universities could get together in time to meet and overthrow the trained legions of Germany. It was certainly a period of anxious thought and deep foreboding, but I felt that I belonged to a race that has never been conquered. Above all, right and, therefore, God was on our side.

14. The View from the Cameroons

It was on the night of the 11th August 1914, when news of a great war in Europe reached us at Mbua (a town in the South Cameroons, about nine weeks or more from Duala [Douala]) and that preparations were being made between the allied forces of the British and French for a war with the Germans in the Cameroons. Being a native of Cape Coast and a British subject employed in an English factory [a trading station], it occurred to me that I would fare badly at the hands of either the German soldiers or the natives should this news be authentic. The inevitable trend of events was evident if war really broke out, the natives being mostly cannibals, would attack all aliens, irrespective of race or colour and eat their flesh before any assistance from the German Government could be obtained. My agent was stationed at Njassi, four days from Mbua, and until I heard from him, my sole duty was to remain at my place. There was hardly any signs of agitation noticeable in Mbua between the 12th and 14th August, but on the 15th the natives could be seen running hither and thither, with spears in their hands, removing their belongings to the bush, mysteriously disappearing and returning in a similar manner, with a seeming stern resolve to finally eradicate all foreigners. These wild ignorant people had long waited for this with wariness, and nothing could afford them a better chance than such an event. In a short time the whole country was thrown into a state of commotion so that by the 18th instant no woman or child could be seen in the town of Mbua except the men who appear and disappear concocting dangerous schemes, with surprising secrecy. Besides myself in Mbua there were the following clerks: two Kwitta [a coastal town in Ghana] clerks with 26 yard boys, five Cameroon native clerks with 30 yard boys and two Gabon clerks with 6 yard boys. I had ten yard boys. All these people were concerned with the safety of their stores and preparing some means of defence, should the natives attack us. On the 20th August I received a note from my boss intimating that he had been arrested by the German authorities, and his stores commandeered and, that sooner or later, a similar treatment would be meted out to me, so I closed up my accounts, and gave up myself to contemplation of the future. . . .

One by one all the traders removed from Mbua, so that by the end of August only three important stores remained, including mine. About the 11th September, I received another note from my boss intimating that he was being sent down to Ajoa, as a prisoner of war, by the Germans, and that I should follow at once. I dare not go, without the sanction of the German Government and I wrote to say so. On the 22nd September, however, a German official with three soldiers arrived to commandeer my store. This official first asked for the key of the safe which I handed to him. When I called his attention to the goods in the store, he said the best thing he could think of was to set fire to the goods, and put me inside to burn with them. "Dem be shit cargo, and I no get no time for count dem!" he said, and

I.14 From J.G. Mullen, "The View from the Cameroons," *Gold Coast Leader* (October 14, 16, and 28, 1916), as reprinted in *Africa* 78 (2008): 401–409.

then with a vehemence which alarmed me, this great German cursed me, the English, and everything connected with the English, and emphasised his words by kicking the breakable articles in the store. This caused me to giggle, but unfortunately he looked up and saw me in this act, and after that he administered heavy blows and kicks to me, he ordered the soldiers to bind me up, and keep me in custody. I soon found myself in the hands of these unscrupulous soldiers, whose cruelty was proverbial throughout South Cameroons. All day they goaded me to pain and anger. They were indeed painfully jocular; they tickled me, pelted at me with stones, ordered me to lick the dirty soles of their boots, and to do all sorts of un-nameable things. The officer stood by in calm indifference to my sufferings; my mute anger grew till I felt I must choke; an innocent person kept in captivity for the populace to stare at, might feel as I felt. These torments continued all day and the least reluctance on my part to comply with their requests was rewarded with whips and kicks. In addition to this, the cord with which I was bound gnawed into my flesh and inflicted a pain beyond description. I cried aloud in my agony for forbearance and the louder I cried out the more the soldiers jeered at me. Gradually I lost consciousness, and then all became still blackness. When I recovered consciousness, the German officer was bending over me, and I was unbound. My hands were very much swollen; this officer, after a short reproof full of venomous invectives handed me a passport to Ajoa, and ordered me to provision myself for the journey, I made up two loads and that very night I left Mbua with my boys. Great was my thankfulness to God for my wonderful deliverance from a torturing death, and from the hands of these wicked people, and as I repeated the "magnificat" the only song of thankfulness that I could think of at the moment I said my last farewell to Mbua. . . .

Three days from Njassi brought me to Dume, a large station situated on a hill, with walls which stood grim and forbidding. I arrived there on a Monday, and the crowd of people waiting to show their passports to a German Official, was thick and dense. I made several efforts to get through, but all was in vain. It can only be compared to a packed mass of humanity, which surged and swayed with the impatience of waiting. People were jostling and cuffing each other, gesticulating and shrieking in sharp piercing tones, in their mad and fruitless attempts to make way with their passports. No way in any given direction was possible and the more haste one made, the less he progressed. I followed closely at the heels of one tall man, a Kaka native, who, with majestic tread, and the strength of a giant, made way for himself by pushing the people right and left with an air of quiet unconcern. I kept close behind him, and indeed made good progress with him, but suddenly, my course was impeded by a Jaunde man, who sharply slapped me in the face, and said, "You be English shwine, *du sow*." . . .

I pushed my way as best as I could through the German Official inspecting passports, not without some trepidation though, for, as a British subject, I expected no more from the Germans, than contempt and reproaches and possibly 25 lashes. When I at length approached this Official with my passport, he cast a very severe

and scatching [sic] glance at me, and asked—"Nigger, was ist du, und was machst sie hier jetzt?" ("Nigger, what are you, and what doest thou here now?")

"Massa, I be Cape Coast man," I blurted out.

"Cape Coast, Cape Coast," he said, "You zink I be fool? You member I no sabe you long time palaver? I say vat for country you be? Na you talk quick ich habe keine seit." Uncertain how to reply, I stood pinned to the ground racking my brain for a fitting answer. The word Cape Coast somehow seemed to rouse his ire and indignation, and I felt at a loss what to say next.

"Donner, wetter Himmel Gott, how much for town, du sow, mench shwine," the German roared, evidently annoyed at my delay in replying, and thereat he whacked me on the head with a cane which he jerked somewhere from his Office. I writhed in agony. It then occurred to me that the Germans in Cameroons were more conversant with the names of Accra and Sekondi out of the whole Gold Coast (towns at which the German-South Coast Express steamers called) and ports like Cape Coast or Saltpond etc., were utterly beyond their ken.

"Massa, I be Accra true born," I hazarded, avoiding in the meantime, the incisive cane, with which this great German aimed at my head. "Jah you be dem English schwine what make plenty big moff," he said, and initialling the passport, he hurled it at me. As I stooped to pick it up, again came the cane on my back with such stunning aggressiveness, that I groaned like a bull. He then called a soldier to chase me out of the port, and for more than half a mile, this soldier chased me, hurling at me stones, pieces of wood, and even some raw cassada which he snatched from farmers. When all attempts to reach me proved futile, the soldier with menacing gestures, turned and went away. I had reason to be thankful that I had a pair of good legs to carry me far from these wicked people.

