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THE NECESSITY TO CONFORM: BRITISH JINGOISM

IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR

For D. H. Lawrence, the emotional fervour generated by the First World War was destructive because it resulted in the submersion of the individual in the mass. Most men were unable to retain their distinct identities, their independent minds, before the onslaught of group opinion. In the "Nightmare" chapter of *Kangaroo*, Lawrence characterizes the prevailing zeitgeist as a "vast-mob spirit"¹ and draws a dramatic picture of its power to consume the single man:

The terrible, terrible war was made so fearful because every man lost his own certainty, his own manly isolation in his own integrity, which keeps him real. Practically every man being caught away from himself, as in some horrible flood, unable to speak or feel for himself, or to stand on his own feet, delivered over and swirling, in the current, suffocated for the time being. (216)

This failure to keep the personal self intact is readily apparent in the lack of independent thinking about the war on the part of most British intellectuals. As Robert Ross suggests in *The Georgian Revolt*, "war brought to many men of letters the necessity to conform to majority opinions, even to reflect those opinions to a degree which most of them would have scorned in peacetime".²

The majority opinion was fiercely pro-war. Bertrand Russell, in *Portraits From Memory*, relates his discovery that "the average man and woman were delighted at the prospect of war",³ and in the second volume of his *Autobiography* adds that "the anticipation of carnage was delightful to ninety per cent of the population".⁴ Russell clearly reveals how such an attitude was based on an emotional rather than a rational response to the occasion. In a

letter published in the *Nation* on August 15, 1914, he aptly indicates the unleashing of what Lawrence calls in *Kangaroo*, "a vortex of broken passions, lusts, hopes, fears and horrors" (224). Russell writes:

A month ago Europe was a peaceful comity of nations; if an Englishman killed a German, he was hanged. Now, if an Englishman kills a German, or if a German kills an Englishman, he is a patriot, who has deserved well of his country. We scan the newspapers with greedy eyes for news of slaughter, and rejoice when we read of innocent young men, blindly obedient to the word of command, mown down in thousands by the machine-guns of Liège. Those who saw the London crowds during the nights leading up to the Declaration of War saw a whole population, hitherto peaceable and humane, precipitated in a few days down the steep slope of primitive barbarism, letting loose, in a moment, the instincts of hatred and blood lust against which the whole fabric of society had been raised. (*Autobiography*, 41)

The writers who adopted the prevalent attitude towards the war were swept up in a wave of unreason. They were to be found, as George Bernard Shaw states in the preface to *Heartbreak House*, "glorifying grotesquely in the licence suddenly afforded to our vilest passions and most abject terrors".⁵ Indeed, by reflecting the irrationality of the "mob spirit", they encouraged and fed further emotionalism and prejudice. For reasoning that is an expression of passion such as war-fervour rather than of a critical intelligence is necessarily biased. As Russell explains in "Some Psychological Difficulties of Pacifism in Wartime", one of a collection of anti-war essays in *We Did Not Fight*, "in times of excitement simple views find a hearing more readily than those that are sufficiently complex to have a chance of being true".⁶ Speaking of intellectual response to the war, he goes on to say, "crude moral categories such as 'virtuous' and 'wicked' revived in people who, at most times would have been ashamed to think in such terms". (333) Such ingenuousness of thinking is not unexpected in Kipling, or in G. K. Chesterton and his brother Cecil, but it is more curious to discover Henry James, Ford Madox Ford, and Arnold Bennett responding to the war in such uniformly-held simplistic terms. All these writers appear to have eschewed any responsible analysis of the European conflict, preferring to advance moral judgements that were definitely one-sided. Similarly, H. G. Wells, although his defence of British jingoism was more sophisticated, argued from a no less irrational bias.

Nor were the intellectuals who adopted an anti-war position necessarily more independent and less emotional in their pacifist stance than the jingoists. It is significant to find Russell admitting, in the essay already mentioned, that

a "herd-instinct" (330) conditioned much anti-war reasoning. Like the supporters of the war, the pacifists also found it necessary to seek the comfort of the group. Moreover, Russell accuses them of a similar naïvety of thought. In a letter to Colette Malleson in 1916, he railed against "the pacifists who keep on saying human nature is essentially good in spite of all proof to the contrary".⁷ (*Autobiography*, 54)

If the majority of pacifists and jingoists alike were thus driven by a desire for conformity which led them to espouse black and white moral judgements, one might well wonder whether there were any thinkers in England during the war who were able to maintain both their individual integrity and a critical awareness of the complexity of the issues involved. That there were a few is evinced by the figures already mentioned: Lawrence, Shaw, and Russell. When we examine the literature written on the war, these authors stand out as exponents of a rational response to the crisis which engendered so much hysteria in their fellows. There was actually little in common in the positions they upheld during the war. Shaw was a supporter of the war, advocating compulsory military service; Russell was a pacifist imprisoned for his anti-militarist views; and Lawrence took no public stance, preferring to isolate himself entirely from politics. What they did share was the refusal to surrender their independence of thought before the pressure of majority opinion. Moreover, the strength of will that allowed them to stand aside from the mass enabled them to retain a perspective on the conflict and thereby to react to the issues at stake rationally and with humane decency. How arduous a task this was is attested to by Russell:

The greatest difficulty was the purely psychological one of resisting mass suggestion, of which the force becomes terrific when the whole nation is in a state of violent collective excitement. As much effort was required to avoid sharing this excitement as would have been needed to stand out against the extreme of hunger or sexual passion, and there was the same feeling of going against instinct. (*We Did Not Fight*, 329.)

Most intellectuals, like most men, gave way.

Supporters of Britain's intervention in what was originally a continental war felt it necessary to whitewash the militarism of England and her Allies and to paint German aggression in the darkest possible colours. As Harold Lasswell explains in *Propaganda Technique in the World War*,

So great are the psychological resistances to war in modern nations that every war must appear to be a war of defence against a menacing, murderous aggressor.

There must be no ambiguity about whom the public is to hate. The war must not be due to a world system of conducting international affairs, nor to the stupidity or malevolence of all governing classes but to the rapacity of the enemy. Guilt and guilelessness must be assessed geographically, and all the guilt must be on the other side of the frontier.⁸

Consequently, the conflict between Britain and Germany and their respective Allies was commonly seen in terms of the simple dichotomy advanced by Israel Zangwill in *The War for the World* (1916) as "the elemental clash of Good and Evil".⁹ This juxtaposition was presented in similar terms by Frederic Harrison in *The German Peril* (1915), where he described the war as being between "the nations engaged in a fight for life on the one side and in Hymns for Hate on the other".¹⁰ However, the most chilling comparison was made by Rudyard Kipling. In a letter published in the *Morning Post* in 1915, Kipling confidently declared: "However the world pretends to divide itself, there are only two divisions in the world today—human beings and Germans".

It is surprising that most writers while condemning Germany's imperialist designs felt it unnecessary to offer any justification for Britain's own past territorial expansion. However, Zangwill does offer the astounding suggestion that "as the peacock's tail achieves its splendours without pigment, so Britain has achieved her Empire without imperialism. Absent-mindedly she has acquired a fifth of the globe". (*The War for the World*, 106). A far greater problem was that of rationalizing Britain's alliance with Russia, a nation clearly representing a monarchical and military absolutism. Consequently, we find H. G. Wells, in the *Nation*, on August 22, 1914, attempting to reassure the British people as to the ineffectiveness of Russian ambitions:

English people imagine Russia to be more purposeful than she is, more concentrated, more inimical to Western Civilisation. . . . They imagine that the tremendous unification of State and the national pride and ambition which has made the German Empire at least unsupportable, may presently be repeated upon an altogether more gigantic scale, that Pan-Slavism will take the place of Pan-Germanism as the ruling aggression of the world. This is a dread due, I am convinced, to fundamental misconceptions and hasty parallelisms. Russia . . . is incapable of that tremendous unification.

G. K. Chesterton, in *The Barbarism of Berlin* (1914), is more concerned to redeem the character of the Russian people. Incredibly, he finds virtue in the fact that while the Russians "flogged each other like barbarians, they called

each other by their Christian names".¹¹ He continues his pathetically naïve argument as follows:

At their worst, they [the Russians] retained all the best of a rude society. At their best, they are simply good like good children or good nuns. But in Prussia, all that is best in the civilised machinery is put at the source of all that is worst in the barbaric mind. Here again the Prussian has no accidental merits, none of those lucky survivals, none of those later repentances, which make up the patchwork glory of Russia. Here all is sharpened to a point and pointed to a purpose, and that purpose, if words and acts have any meaning at all, is the destruction of liberty throughout the world. (79)

Clearly, both Wells' and Chesterton's defence of Russia depends on a comparison with and a condemnation of Germany. Chesterton's charge that Prussia had systematically prepared to destroy other nations was a popular contention among Englishmen. Addressing the House of Commons in 1917, the Prime Minister, Lloyd George, declared: "We are fighting to defeat the most dangerous conspiracy ever plotted against the liberty of nations, carefully, skillfully, clandestinely planned in every detail with ruthless, cynical determination".¹² The fallaciousness of this assertion was admitted by Lloyd George after the war. In 1920, he stated:

The more one reads memoirs and books written in the various countries of what happened before August 1, 1914, the more one realizes that no one at the head of affairs quite meant war at that stage. It was something into which they glided, or rather staggered and stumbled, perhaps through folly, and a discussion I have no doubt would have averted the war.¹³

Nonetheless, many writers during the war, looking backwards to Germany's past history, saw a deliberate preparation for war. In *The German Peril*, Harrison asserts that Germany had been consciously planning "to crush out old Europe and to construct a new Europe on a basis of Teutonic 'blood and iron'". (13) Cecil Chesterton, in *The Perils of Peace* (1917), echoes this allegation when he declares that "when Prussia struck her blow, she struck to kill, meant to kill and expected to kill the civilization of Europe".¹⁴ In a pamphlet printed shortly after the outbreak of war and entitled *Liberty! A Statement of the British Case*, Arnold Bennett traces the current conflict to Germany's desire, initiated by her success in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, for further domains.¹⁵ However, the most irrational statement blaming Germany for consciously building towards war is made by G. K. Chesterton in *The Barbarism of Berlin*. He writes of the outbreak of German aggression

that it is "nothing less than the locating, after more than a hundred years of recrimination and wrong explanations, of the modern European evil; the finding of the fountain from which poison has flowed upon all the nations of the earth". (21)

Such prejudicial thinking not only fanned the hatred of Germany already felt by the British adult populace but also was allowed to infect the minds of children. In *Essays For Boys and Girls: A First Guide Toward the Study of the War* (1915), Stephen Paget echoes the argument espoused by Lloyd George, Harrison, Bennett, and the two Chestertons when he informs his youthful audience that:

To this end [war], she[Germany] prepared herself, body and soul, through we know not how many years. She created, at colossal expense, a Fleet, second only to ours. She amassed stores of artillery and munitions, far above all other nations. Such stores as the world had never seen, for such a War as the world had never seen. She planned, spied, threatened, intrigued, bribed, lied with incessant vigilance and forethought: looked forward to War, dreamed of it, lived for it.¹⁶

While some writers looked backwards to find historical weight for a blanket condemnation of Germany, at least two writers looked forward as well and predicted that frightening consequences would result from a German victory. Curiously, they contradicted each other as to the nature of the change Germany would seek to impose on the conquered peoples. In *Liberty!*, Arnold Bennett declared that "under the German ideal every male citizen is . . . an abject slave". He added that "if Germany triumphs her ideal . . . will envelop the earth, and every race will have to kneel and whimper to her, 'Please may I exist?' And Slavery will be re-born". (47) Ford Madox Ford did not agree with Bennett, but he was no less horrified by his own conception of Germany's plans. "The aim of Prussia", he wrote in *When Blood is Their Argument* (1915), "is to turn out monomaniacs".¹⁷ According to Ford,

the Prussian professor of philosophy is to be a monomaniac, knowing nothing of the world; the Prussian official is to be a monomaniac thinking nothing but officialdom; the Prussian schoolboy is to be a monomaniac, instructed in and thinking nothing but the glories of the House of Hohenzollern and the spread of Prussianism. And the thing that is important for the whole world to consider is that, if Prussia wins the present struggle, not merely every inhabitant of the European conquered states but every inhabitant of the whole world will have of necessity to become a monomaniac instead of a reasonable human being. (316-317)

The thesis of *When Blood is Their Argument* is an attack on Prussian culture. Ford sums up his argument in the following sweeping generalizations:

- (a) Under the auspices of Prussia the standard of culture in Germany has steadily and swiftly deteriorated.
- (b) The deterioration of the standard of culture in Germany has caused a deterioration of culture throughout the whole civilised world.
- (c) Germany has produced no art of a really capital kind since 1870 and all German art and learning has been on the down-grade since 1848. (311)

Thus, in terms of culture, Germany was condemned both for failing to produce any significant works of art—significant in Ford's view—and also for influencing, in some unspecified fashion, the rest of the world to do likewise. Two other writers agreed with Ford's criticism of German culture and linked the failure to German militarism. In *Liberty!*, Arnold Bennett declared that "no other nation in the world has ever produced a war literature comparable to Germany's; no other has said one hundredth part as much about the inevitableness of war". (21) Israel Zangwill, in *The War for the World*, advanced as perfectly serious criticism the fact that:

Even as an author I have suffered from the Germans, for one of the greatest tortures of my life was reading the proofs of my novels in German. When I reflect that my translator was a popular novelist who has since become famous for his vigorous verse against England, I cannot help suspecting that his translation was a premature act of war. His rendering of a nursery reference to "Baby's Bunting", I have never forgotten. It was turned into "Baby's Flagge". Such is the insidious effect of *Militarismus*. (5)

Patriotic writers not only stressed the defects in contemporary German culture but they also demanded the rejection of all German works of art, regardless of their quality. In the preface to *Heartbreak House*, Shaw speaks of the "frantic denunciations" of "German poetry, German music, German literature. . . ." (21) And in an article entitled "English Music and German Masters" in the *Fortnightly Review* in 1915, we find Isidore de Lara proclaiming:

The future belongs to the young hero who will have the courage to exclude from his library all the works of Handel, Mendelssohn, Wagner, Brahms and Richard Strauss . . . who will draw from the depths of his own being tone pictures of all that is beautiful in the wonderful poetry of Great Britain, and find the vigorous rhythms that will tell of the dauntless spirit of those who go to death singing "Tipperary". (Quoted by Lasswell, 75.)

From all the arguments against German culture and German imperialism already presented, it is certainly possible to infer a racist bias. However, this bias is made explicit in some attacks levied specifically at the German character. G. K. Chesterton, in *The Barbarism of Berlin*, denounces the "atrocious simplicity" of the Prussians, apparently revealed in their belief "that glory consists in holding the steel and not in facing it". (50) He goes on to declare that "so strongly do all the instincts of the Prussian drive against liberty that he would rather oppress other people's subjects than think of anybody going without the benefits of oppression". (54) In a letter to the *Daily News* in October, 1914, Arnold Bennett characterizes the Germans as "stupid bullies" and demands that "they should be treated according to their mentality".

A still greater vilification of German character was the assertion that the Germans were modern descendants of the asiatic Huns. In *The Trail of the Barbarians* (1917), a pamphlet translated from the French by Ford Madox Ford, who called it "a masterpiece",¹⁸ Pierre Loti contended:

It is only today that we see the true masking of a Germany that unveils its ghoul's face. For, since the days of Attila, Europe has lost the idea of such ferocities—of civil populations led away to slavery, of destruction, of rapine, of butchery—even of the violation of the tombs of our soldiers, which was officiously and meticulously organized. (3)

Frederic Harrison produced a similar assertion, proclaiming that "the war of Pan-German ambition is more like the flood of barbarous hordes which in Asia and in Europe brought desolation over prosperous and peaceful lands". (*The German Peril*, 235) G. K. Chesterton provided his readers with a vague intimation of Prussian barbarism when he stated: "The Prussian calls all men to admire the beauty of his large blue eyes. If they do it is because they have inferior eyes: if they don't it is because they have no eyes" (*The Barbarism of Berlin*, 60). As more explicit evidence of Prussian brutality, he authoritatively described an incident in which "one of the officers of the Kaiser in the affair of Saberna was found industriously hacking at a cripple". (47)

Linked to the assertion that Germany was a throwback to the barbaric Huns was the assertion that she was Satan's nation. Cecil Chesterton, in *The Perils of Peace*, declared that "the German of today is in action not only a barbarian but a diabolist". (37) Attributing this condition to the atheism apparently imposed on all the German peoples by Frederick the Great, he wrote:

The Prussian power is like nothing that Europe has ever seen. The sheer devilry which has appalled us in this war is at once the reflection and the outcome of a deeper devilry which has ever lain at the root of her policy, at least ever since her real founder, Frederick the Great, set out to prove that a State founded upon speculative and practical atheism—that is upon the denial of the whole conception of right, divine or human—could be made stronger than Christendom and could maintain and aggrandize itself in defiance of the moral traditions of all Europe. (40)

For Frederic Harrison, the Kaiser was Germany's "Satanic Emperor" (*The German Peril*, 261). Using even more inflammatory imagery than Cecil Chesterton, he proclaimed that the actions of the German army were "blood-offerings to their protecting Moloch. The history of fanaticism contains no record of brutality and folly more disgusting even if we search the bloody orgies of African fetichism". (267) Henry James, in *Within the Rim and Other Essays* (1918), used a terminology comparable to that of Harrison when he depicted Prussia laying "unholy hands"¹⁹ on her neighbours, and portrayed "a world squeezed together in the huge Prussian fist and with the variety and spontaneity of its parts oozing in a steady trickle, like the sacred blood of sacrifice, between those hideous knuckly fingers" (29-30). James became a British subject in 1914, and was described in the same year by Arnold Bennett in his journal as so "strongly pro-English" that he "comes to weeping-point sometimes".²⁰

It is not surprising that such inflammatory writings fired Hun hatred amongst an already anti-German civilian population. Rupert Brooke went to the front believing that "the central purpose of my life, the thing God wants of me, is to get good at beating Germans".²¹ In *Goodbye to All That* (1929), Robert Graves wrote of his decision to enlist in the army:

I entirely believed that France and England had been drawn into a war which they had never contemplated and for which they were entirely unprepared. It never occurred to me that newspapers and statesmen could lie. I forgot my pacifism—I was ready to believe the worst of the Germans. I was outraged to read of the cynical violation of Belgian neutrality. I wrote a poem promising vengeance for Louvain.²²

Germans and persons suspected of being German sympathizers were persecuted in the hysterically anti-Hun atmosphere of the home front. In October 1914, the First Sea Lord, Prince Louis of Battenberg, was forced out of office because of his German origin. In 1915, R. B. Haldane was pressured into resigning from the House of Lords because of suspected pro-German

sympathies. This charge against him resulted, in part, from a good-will mission he had paid to Germany in 1912 on behalf of the British Government. Writing in his autobiography of the accusations levied against him, Haldane stated:

My motives and the nature of my efforts when I went to Berlin in 1912 were grossly misrepresented by some newspapers. Every kind of ridiculous legend about me was circulated. I had a German wife; I was the illegitimate brother of the Kaiser; I had been in secret correspondence with the German Government. . . . On one day, in response to an appeal in the *Daily Express*, there arrived in the House of Lords no less than 2,000 letters in protest against my supposed disloyalty to the interests of the nation. . . . I had gone to Germany too often and had read her literature too much, not to give grounds to narrow-minded people to say that Germany was my 'spiritual home'.²³

H. G. Wells depicted the popular view of Haldane in *Mr. Britling Sees It Through* (1916), in which he records the opinion of an aristocratic Lady that: "Lord Haldane—she called him 'Tubby Haldane'—was a convicted traitor. 'The man's a German out and out. Oh! What if he hasn't a drop of German blood in his veins. He's a German by choice which is worse'".²⁴ D. H. Lawrence, who, unlike Haldane, did have a German wife, was suspected of spying for the Germans on the Cornish coast. Using the persona of Richard Lovat Somers in *Kangaroo*, Lawrence described the irrational fears and actions directed against him: "Now the tales began to go round full-tilt against Somers. A chimney of his was tarred to keep out the damp: that was a signal to the Germans. He and his wife carried food to supply German submarines. They had secret stores of petrol in the cliff. They were watched and listened to, spied on by men lying behind the low stone fences". (231) In 1917, Lawrence and Frieda, regarded as suspicious persons by the British authorities, were forced, under the Defence of the Realm Act, to leave Cornwall. In a letter to Lady Cynthia Asquith at the time, Lawrence wrote:

The bolt from the blue has fallen this morning: why, I know not, any more than you do. I cannot even conceive how I could have incurred suspicion—have not the faintest notion. We are as innocent even of pacifist activities, let alone spying of any sort as the rabbits in the field outside. And we must leave Cornwall, and live in an unprohibited area, and report to the police. It is very vile.²⁵

Germans of military age were interned under the Aliens Restriction Act of 1914. Further measures against the enemy included such disparate

acts as the erasure of German names from the British rolls of science and learning (Shaw, *Heartbreak House*, 21), and, after the sinking of the Cunard ship *Lusitania* by a German submarine in 1916, the destruction of German shops. In *The Lost Generation*, Reginald Pound describes British reaction following the sinking: "At Gravesend, soldiers with fixed bayonets were sent to disperse a mob of dock workers who were wrecking and looting the premises of German shopkeepers, many long naturalized. The entire stock of a furniture shop was pitched into the river. . . . The *Graphic* published seven new lists of alien names that had been changed for English ones".²⁶ Some of the anti-German feeling took a more humorous if no less cruel form. Pound relates how "Dachshund owners were stared at suspiciously and their pets kicked in the streets". (157) In addition, Arthur Marwick in *The Deluge: British Society at War*, tells that "*sauerkraut* and liver sausage appeared in shop windows labelled simply 'good English viands'.²⁷ Moreover, the *Daily Mail*, according to Marwick, published in "big block letters", messages like the following:

REFUSE TO BE SERVED BY AN AUSTRIAN OR GERMAN WAITER.
IF YOUR WAITER SAYS HE IS SWISS ASK TO SEE HIS PASS-
PORT. (50)

Suspicion and anger were also directed early in the war at men who did not enlist and later, after the 1916 Compulsory Service Act, at Conscientious Objectors. According to A. J. P. Taylor in *The First World War: An Illustrated History*, conscription "was not due to any shortage of men: on the contrary, more volunteers were still coming forward than could be equipped. Parliament and the politicians wanted to give the impression that they were doing something active to aid the war; and conscription seemed the way to do this. Popular clamour insisted 650,000 'shirkers' lay hidden".²⁸ To help individuals fight the imposition of military duties, the No Conscription Fellowship was formed. The initial thirty C.O.'s tried under the Act were sent to France in an attempt to have them executed, for, under military law, death sentences could only be carried out at the front. However, the N.C.F. managed to induce Asquith, then Prime Minister, to stop the executions. This incident is related by one-time Labour M.P. Fenner Brockway in *Inside The Left: Thirty Years of Platform, Press, Prison and Parliament*. Brockway adds that these C.O.'s were instead sentenced to ten years penal servitude (they were released six months after the Armistice), and were "handcuffed to poles, subjected to 'crucifixion' (ankles and wrists tied to a cross), put on a bread and water diet, and confined in dark and crowded punishment cells".²⁹

Later on, C.O.'s whose cases were heard before special tribunals—Shaw deplores the fact that decisions about C.O.'s were left entirely to the discretion of each independent tribunal²⁰—were sometimes given the option, if their objections were considered sincere, of doing alternative service of importance to the nation instead of going to prison.

The attitude of jingoist writers towards men of military age who refused, first to serve voluntarily, and then, to be drafted was naturally very harsh. As early as August 15, 1914, Arnold Bennett wrote in his journal: "When one sees young men idling in the lanes on Sunday, one thinks: 'Why are they not at war?' All one's pacific ideas have been rudely disturbed. One is becoming militarist". (98) After the introduction of conscription, when the presence of C.O.'s became obvious, Cecil Chesterton, reflecting public opinion, declared in *The Perils of Peace* that "conscientious objectors" were "lunatics . . . given to exhibit their mental diseases to the astonished eyes of England and Europe. . . ." (82) A rather more rational attitude was expressed by H. G. Wells in a letter to Miles Malleson in 1916. "I think a small minority of the C.O.'s are sincerely honest men", Wells wrote, "but I believe that unless the path of the C.O. is made difficult it will supply a stampede track for every variety of shirker". (Quoted by Russell, *Autobiography*, 90) Chesterton, and Wells were not capable of the humane understanding of the situation conveyed by Bertrand Russell in a letter to Ottoline Morrell in 1916. He admitted that "no doubt a good many [C.O.'s] are cowards"; then added "people are unspeakably cruel about cowardice—some have gone mad, some have committed suicide, and people merely shrug their shoulders and remark that they had no pluck". (*Autobiography*, 75)

For the C.O.'s and pacifists who remained at home, life was not easy. In "War Resistance by Working Class Struggle" in *We Did Not Fight*, Independent Labour M.P. James Maxton, recalls that, to the British populace: "We were 'white-livered curs', bloody pro-Germans, friends of the Kaiser, traitors to our country". (216) Women were among the most ardent jingoists, giving white feathers to men who did not fight. In 1915, before conscription, Baroness Orczy, of Scarlet Pimpernel fame, organized the Women of England's Active Service League with 20,000 members. Members had to sign a form that read "At this hour of England's peril, I do hereby pledge myself most solemnly in the name of my King and Country to persuade every man I know to offer his service to his country. I also pledge myself never to be seen in public with any man who, being in every way fit and free for service, has refused to respond to his country's call".²¹ After the introduction of

conscription, the popular female attitude to the soldier and to the pacifist is best illustrated by an extract from a letter to the *Morning Post*, signed by "A Little Mother", and quoted in full by Robert Graves in *Goodbye to All That*:

To the man who pathetically calls himself a 'common soldier', may I say that we women, who demand to be heard, will tolerate no such cry as 'Peace! Peace!' where there is no peace. The corn that will wave over land watered by the blood of our brave lads shall testify to the future that their blood was not spilt in vain. We need no marble monuments to remind us. We only need that force of character behind all motives to see this monstrous world tragedy brought to a victorious ending. The blood of the dead and the dying, the blood of the 'common soldier' from his 'slight wounds' will not cry to us in vain. They have done their share, and we, as women, will do ours without murmuring and without complaint. Send the Pacifists to us and we shall very soon show them, and show the world, that in our homes at least there shall be no 'sitting at home warm and cosy in the winter, cool and "comfy" in the summer'. There is only one temperature for the women of the British race, and that is white heat. With those who disgrace their sacred trust of motherhood we have nothing in common. Our ears are not deaf to the cry that is ever ascending from the battlefield from men of flesh and blood whose indomitable courage is borne to us, so to speak, on every blast of the wind. We women pass on the human ammunition of 'only sons' to fill up the gaps, so that when the 'common soldier' looks back before going 'over the top' he may see the women of the British race on his heels, reliable, dependent, uncomplaining. (284-285)

Graves reports that the Queen was "deeply touched" by the letter, and that "the Editor found it necessary to place it in the hands of London publishers to be reprinted in pamphlet form, seventy-five thousand copies of which were sold in less than a week direct from the publishers". (284)

However, the most horrifying depiction of a woman's, and by implication the nation's, feelings towards the enemy is to be found in Rudyard Kipling's short story "Mary Postgate" published in 1915. Mary, spinster companion to an old lady, Miss Fowler, raises Miss Fowler's nephew with loving care only to have him killed in an airplane accident while training for the front. She decides to burn all his belongings in the garden and while she is engaged in this task hears the groans of a pilot whose aircraft has apparently just crashed. Earlier in the day, a child in the village had been killed by a bomb from a zeppelin. The German begs her to get a doctor:

'Casse', it repeated. 'che me rends. Le medicin! Toctor!'

'Nein!' said she, bringing all her small German to bear with the big

pistol. 'Ich haben der todt kinder gesehen'. . . . Again the head groaned for the doctor.

'Stop that!' said Mary, and stamped her foot. 'Stop that, you bloody pagan!'³²

Mary refuses to help the pilot, but stays with him in order to enjoy his suffering. The impression the reader has of her sensual abandonment to the pleasure of watching a hated human being dying is appalling:

She leaned on the poker and waited, while an increasing rapture laid hold on her. She ceased to think. She gave herself up to feel. Her long pleasure was broken by a sound that she had waited for in agony several times in her life. She leaned forward and listened. There could be no mistake. She closed her eyes and drank it in. Once it ceased abruptly.

'Go on', she murmured, half aloud 'that isn't the end'.

Then the end came very distinctly in a lull between two rain-gusts. Mary Postgate drew her breath short between her teeth and shivered from head to foot. 'That's all right', said she contentedly and went up to the house, where she scandalised the whole routine by taking a luxurious hot bath before tea, and came down looking, as Miss Fowler said when she saw her lying all relaxed on the other sofa, 'quite handsome'. (440)

Naturally such violent Hun-hatred found vent in the demand that Germany be completely crushed by the victorious allies at the cessation of the war. Horatio Bottomly's newspaper *John Bull* reflected majority opinion on this issue. On August 15, 1914, an editorial declared that "the German fleet must be swept from the face of the earth", and later in the month, another editorial stated: "As regards Germany herself, she must be wiped off the face of Europe". It is surprising how close these outrageous statements were to those of the British jingoist intelligentsia. In *The Perils of Peace*, Cecil Chesterton called for "the punishment of [Germany] the guilty party". (221) Arnold Bennett, in a letter published in the *Daily News* in October, 1914, pressed for "the public humiliation of Germany". "Many a savage brute", he continued, "has been permanently convinced of the advantages of civilisation by the idiom of one knock down blow". In *The German Peril*, Frederic Harrison demanded that "blood and iron must be met with fire and ruin; Germany must be ringed around by enormous armies to bring her to helplessness. Until Germany was reduced to exhaustion, she would remain a menace to Europe". (261) No doubt such attitudes helped to produce the humiliating conditions imposed on Germany at the Treaty of Versailles in 1919, and it can at least be conjectured that they, in part, paved the way for the rise of Hitler

and the start of another world war. Perhaps the best summation of jingoist attitudes and the best suggestion of how to deal with the people who espoused them was made by Shaw. In "Common Sense About the War", another essay in *What I Really Wrote About the War*, he wrote:

We have . . . the people who are craving for loot and vengeance, who clamour for the humiliation and torture of the enemy, who rave against the village burnings and shootings by the Prussians in one column and exult in the same proceedings by the Russians in another, who demand that German prisoners of war shall be treated as criminals, who depict our Indian troops as savage cut-throats because they like to think of their enemies being mauled in the spirit of the Indian mutiny, who shriek that the Kaiser must be sent to Devil's Island because St. Helena is too good for him, and who declare that Germany must be maimed and trodden into the dust that she will not be able to raise her head again for a century. Let us call these people by their own favourite name, Huns, even at the risk of being unjust to the real Huns. And let us send as many of them to the trenches as we possibly can induce to go, in the hope that they may presently join the lists of the missing. (73-74)

H. G. Wells did not appear to express the naked Hun hatred of the worst jingoist writers. His argument in favour of the war was far more subtle and sophisticated. He saw the war as a holy crusade waged by England against, not a people, but a criminal military ideology. Once German militarism was overthrown, Wells believed that the world could be reconstructed on a new social order. In "The War of the Mind", published in the *Nation* on August 29, 1914, Wells claimed: "We fight not to destroy a nation but a nest of evil ideas. We fight because a whole nation has become obsessed by pride, by the cant of cynicism and the variety of violence. . . ." In *Mr. Britling Sees It Through*, Wells was careful to stress the fact that Germans were not monsters but rather misguided human beings. For example, Mr. Britling's son, Hugh, writes from the trenches of the Belgian atrocities that:

Most of the barbarities were done—it is quite clear—by an excited civilian sort of men, men in a kind of inflamed state. The greater part of the German army in the early stage of the war was really an army of demented civilians. Trained civilians no doubt, but civilians in soul. They were nice orderly clean law-abiding men suddenly torn up by their roots and flung into quite shocking conditions. They felt they were rushing at death, and that decency was at an end. They thought every Belgian had a gun behind the hedge and a knife in his trouser leg. They saw villages burning and dead people, and men smashed to bits. They lived in a kind of nightmare. They didn't know what they were

doing. They did horrible things just as one does them in dreams. . . . (328) Similarly, when Mr. Britling is filled with hatred for the German zeppelin pilots who have killed his aunt in a coastal raid, his reason tells him that "This thing was done neither by devils nor fools, but by a conspiracy of foolish motives, by the weak acquiescences of the clever, by a crime that was not man's crime but the natural, necessary outcome of the ineffectiveness, the blind motives and muddleheadedness of all mankind". (299)

Such characterizations of the enemy are remarkably humane. However, Mr. Britling's reason does not in the end prevail. While he is able to feel grief for the deaths of both his son and a German who had tutored his children in pre-war days, his grief for them as individuals does not change his belief that Germany was solely responsible for the war. Writing to the parents of the dead German boy, he totally disregards British militarism while presenting German militarism in emotional terms as a great evil. Mr. Britling states:

I am convinced that in the decade that ended with your overthrow of France in 1871, Germany turned her face towards evil, and that her refusal to treat France generously and to make friends with any other great power in the world is the cause of this war. Germany triumphed and she trampled on the loser. She inflicted intolerable indignities. She set herself to prepare for further aggressions; long before this killing began she was making war upon land and sea, launching warships, building strategic railways, setting up a vast establishment of war material, threatening, straining all the world to keep pace with her threats. . . . (432)

It is clear that this quotation reflects Wells' own attitude to Germany. For he not only blamed Germany for initiating the conflict, but also advocated that the war be pursued by England with great ferocity. His concern that the Germans be treated with decency was not apparent in an article in the *Nation* on August 15, 1914, in which he declared: "Let us borrow a little from the rash vigour of the types that have contrived this disaster. Let us make a truce of our finer feelings and our dissentient passions". In fact, by rationalizing the war in idealistic terms as a "war to end war",²² Wells encouraged both a vigorous execution of the war and a moral smugness in the executioners which was quite in keeping with public opinion and with the views expressed by other jingoist writers. The truth of this statement emerges distinctly when we examine part of an article, "The Sword of Peace", published in the *Daily Chronicle*, on August 7, 1914:

Every sword that is drawn against Germany is a sword drawn for peace. . . . The Victory of Germany will mean the permanent enthronement of the War God over all human affairs. The defeat of Germany may open the way to disarmament and peace throughout the earth. To those who love peace there can be no other hope in the present conflict than the defeat, the utter discrediting of the German legend, the ending for good and all of the blood and iron superstition of the Krupp, flaggwagging [sic] Teutonic Kiplingism, and all that criminal sham efficiency that centres on Berlin. Never was a war so righteous as war against Germany. Never has any state at war so clamoured for punishment. . . .

Wells believed that the war was righteous not only because of German criminality, but also because he thought that the war, as he wrote in *Experiment in Autobiography* (1934), indicated "the old traditional system falling to pieces and the world state coming into being".²⁴ But by assigning the negative characteristics of the old world to the enemy and the positive potential to England, Wells was only making a refinement on Zangwill's dichotomy of the war as the "clash between Good and Evil". As he was to admit in *Experiment in Autobiography*, "the World-State of my imagination and desires was presented hardly more by one side in the conflict than by the other. We were fighting for 'King and Country' and over there they were fighting for 'Kaiser and Fatherland', it was six of one and half a dozen of the other, so far as the World-State was concerned". (669) Nevertheless in 1914, as we have already seen, Wells' desire, as stated by him in the *Nation*, August 15, 1914, "to redraw the map of Europe boldly" led him to advocate, with the majority of writers, British militancy.

These then were some of the prevailing attitudes towards the First World War advanced by British jingoist writers. It is clear that they not only reflected popular opinion, but also reinforced the mass hatred of Germany. They were part of Lawrence's "vast-mob spirit" in which reason and individual integrity were sacrificed to emotionalism and conformity.

NOTES

1. D. H. Lawrence, *Kangaroo*, (New York: The Viking Press, 1966 [1923], 216.
2. Robert H. Ross, *The Georgian Revolt: 1910-1922, Rise and Fall of a Poetic Ideal*, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1965), 218.
3. Bertrand Russell, *Portraits From Memory and Other Essays*, (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1956), 31.
4. Bertrand Russell, *The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell 1914-1944*, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1951), 6.

5. George Bernard Shaw, *Heartbreak House*, (London: Penguin Books, 1964 i.e. 1919), 21.
6. Bertrand Russell, "Some Psychological Difficulties of Pacifism in Wartime", in *We Did Not Fight*, edited by Julian Bell, (London: Cobden-Sanderson, 1935), 333.
7. It is unfortunately beyond the scope of this paper to examine in close detail pacifist stances.
8. Harold D. Lasswell, *Propaganda Technique in the World War*, (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co. Ltd., 1938), 47.
9. Israel Zangwill, *The War for the World*, (Toronto: William Briggs, 1916), 7.
10. Frederic Harrison, *The German Peril: Forecasts 1864-1914, Realities, 1915, Hopes*, (London: T. Fisher Unwin Ltd., 1915), 7.
11. G. K. Chesterton, *The Barbarism of Berlin*, (London: Cassell & Company, Ltd., 1914), 79.
12. Quoted by Arthur Ponsonby, *Falsehood in War-Time*, (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. Inc., 1928), 58.
13. Quoted by Ponsonby, 59. No source given.
14. Cecil Chesterton, *The Perils of Peace*, (London: T. Werner Laurie Ltd., 1917), 59.
15. Arnold Bennett, *Liberty! A Statement of the British Case*, (Toronto: The Musson Book Company, 1914), 18.
16. Stephen Paget, *Essays For Boys and Girls: A First Guide Toward the Study of the War*, (London: Macmillan, 1915), 141.
17. Ford Madox Hueffer, *When Blood is Their Argument*, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1915), 316.
18. Pierre Loti, *The Trail of The Barbarians*, translated by Ford Madox Hueffer, (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1917), v.
19. Henry James, *Within the Rim and Other Essays*, (London: W. Collins Son & Co. Ltd., 1918), 29.
20. Newman Flower (ed.), *The Journals of Arnold Bennett 1911-1921*, London: Cassell and Company, 1932), 108.
21. Quoted by George Dangerfield, *The Strange Death of Liberal England*, (New York: Capricorn Books, 1961 i.e. 1935), 439.
22. Robert Graves, *Goodbye to All That: An Autobiography*, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1929), 99.
24. Quoted by Donald McCormick, *The Mask of Merlin: A Critical Study of Lloyd George*, (London: MacDonald, 1963), 90.
24. H. G. Wells, *Mr. Britling Sees It Through*, (New York: Macmillan, 1916), 353.
25. Aldous Huxley (ed.), *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, (London: William Heinemann, 1932), 417.
26. Reginald Pound, *The Lost Generation*, (London: Constable, 1964), 157.
27. Arthur Marwick, *The Deluge: British Society at War*, (London: The Bodley Head, 1965), 37.
28. A. J. P. Taylor, *The First World War: An Illustrated History*, (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1963), 85.

29. Fenner Brockway, *Inside The Left: Thirty Years of Platform, Press, Prison and Parliament*, (London, George Allen & Unwin), 78.
30. Shaw, "Compulsory Soldiering" in *What I Really Wrote About The War*, (London: Constable and Co. Ltd., 1930), 233.
31. Quoted by David Mitchell, *Women on the Warpath: The Story of the Women of the First World War*, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1966), 40.
32. Rudyard Kipling, "Mary Postgate" in *A Diversity of Creatures*, (London: Macmillan, 1966 [1917]), 438.
33. Quoted by Irene Cooper Willis in *England's Holy War*, (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1928), 90. The title of an article by Wells in the *Daily Chronicle*, August 14, 1914.
34. H. G. Wells, *Experiment in Autobiography*, vol. II, (London: Victor Gollancz, 1934), 668.