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# German Militarism and Its German Critics

FULLY ILLUSTRATED BY EXTRACTS  
FROM GERMAN NEWSPAPERS



*By*

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# German Militarism and Its German Critics\*

BY  
CHARLES ALTSCHUL

## I

### INTRODUCTION: NEW LIGHT ON GERMAN MILITARISM SINCE 1914

The Great War has focussed the attention of all Americans upon political and social conditions in foreign countries, and has familiarized them with many matters which had not occupied their minds before. The feature which probably attracts more attention than any other is the difference in the respective points of view of the Teutonic and of the English-speaking nations, as revealed in all matters relating to war and warfare. Character and habits of other peoples have been more closely studied than ever before, and the aggressive leaders of the group of enemy nations, the Germans, have quite naturally come in for the closest scrutiny.

Accustomed as these leaders have been for many years to universal military service, to a large standing army, to officers drawn principally from the ranks of the nobility, and to marked class distinctions, they have absorbed, and are now wedded to, certain notions which to us, who have grown up under very different conditions, seem like worship of constituted authority and the unwarranted surrender of individual responsibility.

The gradual development of these very notions has brought about an inordinate influence of the military group in public affairs, which at the present moment is frequently referred to and much discussed. It may therefore not be amiss to try to throw some side-lights on the subject.

\* A German edition of this pamphlet is in press, in which the extracts from German newspapers are given untranslated.

At the outbreak of the war, the German army was acknowledged to be the most stupendous military machine imaginable. It was in all its branches efficient, scientifically developed, thoroughly up to date, and very ably officered. It consisted of a small contingent of professional soldiery and of a mass of men made available by universal military service, and seemed truly representative of the entire nation. To belong to any branch of the service carried, as a matter of fact, a certain prestige at home, and the ambition of almost all educated men was to be appointed officers of reserve after concluding the regular term of service with the colors.

The disappointment in this country at the receipt of the horrifying news about the conduct of this representative body of men when the German army broke into Belgium, was as great as it was sincere. The stories seemed beyond belief; it was incredible that fathers, sons, brothers, could have been so unmindful of their education, of their heritage of whole-souled and humane instincts! But the sickening and revolting details were confirmed, and repeated from different districts, until one could no longer resist the conviction that frightfulness was to be a feature of German campaigning, to be carried out as ruthlessly as the commanding officers saw fit.

Although fully aware that war conditions usually result in the commission of atrocities by every army—because all restraint of normal life is removed, and the lack of normal surroundings brings about a deplorable abandonment of self-control—yet the world stood aghast at this display of license and brutality.\*

\*Confronted with this charge, Germans and German sympathizers usually endeavor to meet it by repeating the old accusations brought against the English during the Boer War in South Africa. That procedure is no longer admissible. The German General Staff has this to say concerning these accusations: "In view of the many errors concerning the methods of English warfare which have been disseminated throughout the world by an ill-informed press, it is the duty of those who are recording history in a truth-loving spirit to emphasize, on the strength of the knowledge of actual conditions, that the English, whenever opposed by regular forces, were guided in the conduct of the war by the same chivalry and humanity that the Boers too have always displayed. Later on, the loosely organized, poorly equipped Boer militia disbanded, and those Boers who still remained in the field often adopted guerilla tactics. When their style of warfare thereby obliterated the distinction between regular forces and hostile population, it was naturally bound to provoke a constantly increasing feeling of bitterness on the part of the much harrassed English troops, and this explains much of their severity, and even makes it appear to have been necessary. If the military authorities, in consequence, repeatedly adopted increasingly severe reprisals, which often made their conduct of the war appear harsh, they have, in the majority of cases, merely acted as in duty bound and in a justifiable manner to protect the lives of the troops under their command."—(*Aus dem süd-*

The question very naturally presented itself, whether our earlier very favorable impression of the German army had been warranted or whether insufficient knowledge had driven us to wrong conclusions? What had contemporary opinion in Germany been on this very important matter? What did the daily press reveal—the best mirror of passing impressions everywhere?

In a country in which the influence of Governmental agencies on the press is as great as we now all know it to be in Germany, one cannot expect a frank expression about an institution as closely interwoven with the Government as the army is, except in the opposition newspapers. The press of Germany, as that of most countries, caters nowadays assiduously to the taste of its readers, and devotes much space to matters in which its particular public is especially interested. On this account, the fullest discussion of conditions in the army is likely to be found in those newspapers which circulate most widely among the masses, from which the bulk of the army, the common soldier, is drawn.\* The best source of information for our purposes, would therefore seem to be the daily newspaper *Vorwärts*, the official organ at that time of the Social Democratic party, the party which secured about one-third of all the votes cast for the

*afrikanischen Kriege, 1899 bis 1902. Kriegsgeschichtliche Einzelschriften, Heft 33. Herausgegeben vom Grossen Generalstabe, Berlin, 1904. P. 62.)*

Furthermore, Hans Delbrück in *Preussische Jahrbücher* (February 1902, p. 387), speaks as follows: ". . . Another charge, however, which I myself supported in this place, I feel compelled to withdraw. It is the allegation that the English in their campaigns repeatedly tried to cover themselves by placing Boer women in front of them. Mr. Schowalter who represents the cause of the Boers in Germany with courage and eloquence, once presented in the *Tägliche Rundschau* a collection of the certificates and proofs for that outrage. I have examined that collection with all care, but have reached the conclusion that, judged by all rules of historical criticism, it furnishes, as a matter of fact, no proof. . . ."

\*Young men who have had the benefit of a better education are required to serve in the army only one year, instead of the two demanded of most others. The "one-year men" enjoy many advantages over the common soldiers, one of the most highly prized privileges being that they are not compelled to sleep in the barracks except a relatively few days, on and off, so as to acquire the routine. In that manner they escape the coarseness of the non-commissioned officers to a great extent, and besides find ways to buy their peace and get into the good graces of these worthies. For this reason the complaints about the brutalities are voiced by the representatives of the poorer classes, and by those who interest themselves in their cause.

The regular standing army of Germany for 1914 was constituted as follows:

Officers.....	30,739	Privates.....	655,582
Non-commissioned officers...	105,856	Others.....	8,469
		Total.....	800,646

—(*Statistisches Jahrbuch für das Deutsche Reich, 1915, page 341.*)

The number of "one-year men" who joined the army in 1913 was 22,052.—(*Ibid., page 346.*)

Reichstag at the last election before the war\*—not only socialistic votes, but those of liberals of every description as well, who could in no other manner give expression to their anti-Governmental views.

Our quotations will, therefore, in a great measure be taken from that publication.

## II

### BRUTALIZING EFFECT OF MILITARISM

The trial, in 1914, of the socialist, Rosa Luxemburg, one of the active workers in the field of socialistic propaganda, brought to light much information of value in connection with what one of the representatives in the Reichstag, Schulz, called "the gloomy, barbarous bestiality of maltreating soldiers (*Scheusäligkeiten der Soldatenmisshandlungen*) which recalls the Middle Ages." Rosa Luxemburg was tried because, at a public meeting, she had used the expression—

. . . it is surely one of those tragedies (*Dramen*) which are enacted in the German barracks day after day, but the groans of the participants rarely reach our ears.

She explained at her trial that she meant by tragedies (*Dramen*)—

any abuse of a soldier, of course particularly such as lead to suicide, desertion, or such as have similar consequences. Whatever instances of maltreatment are to be proved here, are tragedies. . . . It can also be proved that these incidents of daily occurrence are considered tragedies by the witnesses. . . . Was it not a tragedy when a soldier in Bautzen threw himself from a fourth story window, and was unfortunate enough to miss his goal and was court-martialed and sentenced to six months' imprisonment for desertion?—(*Vorwärts*, July 4, 1914.)

\*At the election for the Reichstag in 1912, there were:

Total number entitled to vote.....	14,442,400
Total number of valid votes cast.....	12,207,600

The distribution of the vote by parties was as follows:

Social Democrats.....	4,250,400
Center Party.....	1,996,800
National Liberals.....	1,662,700
Progressives.....	1,497,000
German Conservatives.....	1,126,300
Poles.....	441,700
Reichspartei.....	367,200
Alsations and Lorrainers.....	162,000
Different smaller parties, and scattering.....	703,50

—(*Statistisches Jahrbuch für das Deutsche Reich*, 1915, page 340.)



In answering the statement of the public prosecutor to the effect that, according to the complaint of the Minister of War, defendant had by her remark insulted all the officers, non-commissioned officers, and besides, all persons attached to the Prussian army, her attorneys expressed their readiness to prove the correctness of the defendant's statement. They said:

. . . We do not intend to prove single blows and knocks, but innumerable ones. The examination of this evidence is startling. We may assert that not one per cent of it has ever reached the public or the courts-martial. There is an endless chain of complaints which no one has, so far, heard of. Scarcely a witness will speak of two or three blows only, but it is always the question of a chain of incredible cases of maltreatment stretching over a period varying from a month to several years. . . .—(*Vorwärts*, June 30, 1914.)

. . . We have submitted hundreds of decisions of courts-martial from the year 1907 to 1913, in which alone tens of thousands of cases of maltreatment of soldiers have been judicially established. . . .—(*Vorwärts*, June 30, 1914.)

They then proceeded to present the testimony which witnesses, at that time in Berlin, were prepared to give.

When the prosecution of the defendant was first announced, an appeal was issued through the *Vorwärts*, calling upon all to come forward and testify whose own experiences in the army were apt to substantiate the statement of the defendant. It is no slight matter in Germany to espouse openly the cause of one who is being prosecuted by the Government in a matter as zealously guarded as the reputation of the army; nevertheless, when the trial started, **922 men from all parts of Germany had responded, and were ready to testify to something like 30,000 separate instances of brutal treatment of soldiers.**

Before the trial came to an abrupt end, the attorneys for the defendant had stated in court what testimony they were prepared to produce in support of the defense, and had mentioned the names of witnesses and the evidence which was to be proved by each. These witnesses were not called to the stand and did not have the opportunity to testify to these facts; the trial was adjourned before that. But the statement that they were ready to do so was made in open court by the attorneys of Rosa Luxemburg, and their standing as *Rechtsanwalt*—a title conferred on lawyers in Germany when they have borne themselves

faultlessly in following their profession a certain length of time—is a warranty of the integrity of their statement.

It will suffice to select from the mass of material presented some particularly striking examples:\*

A witness who  
had served  
in the army  
from:

WOULD TESTIFY THAT—

- 1885-1888. He was struck in the face with the fist by Lieutenant Erler so that a tooth bled and got loose. He was beaten till he was bleeding, but report of the case was not sent higher up. Musketeer Hempel shot and killed himself after drill, because he had been grossly insulted by a corporal in front of the company. A reservist threw himself in front of a railroad train, another drowned himself, because they could no longer stand the abuse of N.C.O.† Huebner.
1886. He witnessed maltreatment so severe as to cause blood to flow; spitting at soldiers by superiors; cursing by officers, one of whom made two soldiers poke the head of another, who was bodily and mentally weak, into the snow up to his neck. This lieutenant stuck his sword between a soldier's hands which were tied behind his back, so that when he walked, the point struck the hollow of his knee.
- 1892-1894. A Polish recruit was maltreated so fearfully by a N.C.O. that he finally hanged himself. The N.C.O. got the soldiers to certify that they had seen nothing.
- 1893-1894. A N.C.O. struck a sick recruit repeatedly on the chest so that he screamed with pain and soon thereafter died in a hospital.
- 1893-1894. Two sergeants beat soldiers daily with their fists and with side-arms. The witness was himself struck with a side-arm by a N.C.O. Everybody was afraid to complain. During a lecture on the right to complain a sergeant said: "There is such a thing as the right to complain. A soldier once did complain about a N.C.O. The latter was sentenced to three days in jail; the soldier was soon transferred to the workingmen's division."
- 1895-1897. Witness saw that the recruits were made to sweep the rooms with tooth-brushes, climb on wardrobes, slide under the beds on their stomachs; were beaten with whips, particularly at night, by the professional regulars (*alle Leute*). Officers and N.C.O.'s tolerated the maltreatment on the part of these men. The witness reported such a case, but without result. One officer struck recruits in the face during instruction.

\*Blackfaced type is used in this publication for purposes of editorial emphasis, and passages thus marked in the quoted extracts are not to be understood as being so printed in the original.

†The letters N. C. O. mean "non-commissioned officer."

- 1893-1895. The maltreatment practiced by N.C.O. Bolz became known only after recruit Wiesnowski had deserted. N.C.O. Poltorack came when the men were in bed, commanded them to stretch out their feet and struck across them with the wire end of a cleaning instrument.
- 1897-1899. An officer struck him when he did not succeed in an exercise which had not been practiced and which was not according to regulations. Disgusting invective was used and maltreatment practiced by officers. When the adjutant took his deposition and he wanted to testify to instances of brutality, the adjutant did not want to hear about it and said that the soldier had not got enough.
- 1897-1899. Captain von Rock used terribly offensive language. His body servant (*Bursche*) attempted suicide owing to bad treatment. A N.C.O. broke two ribs of a soldier who while bayoneting dodged a little because he was timid. Neither had the courage to file a complaint.
- 1898-1899. Soldiers were struck in the face during instruction. Were made to bend their knees while stretching out the rifle, until they dropped. Holes in the clothes were intentionally torn open, and the soldiers told jeeringly that they would now be worth while mending. Witness saw hundreds of times helmets pressed down and the bands which held them under the chin pulled so that the soldiers got red in the face. Alsatians and Lorrainers particularly were maltreated and frequently called "damned French-heads," "French skulls," etc. The N.C.O.'s warned men against complaining, promising worse treatment for such cases.
1898. Witness knew of a case of suicide in consequence of maltreatment. Witness himself, after complaining about a sergeant, was abused by the captain and got five days' light arrest for improper conduct towards a superior.
- 1899-1900. Terrible abuse and maltreatment were indulged in while at target practice. When the corporal noticed that passers-by were looking on and had seen the maltreatment, he called out: "If those damned socialists were not watching, I'd smash you in the jaw." Nothing was reported because of fear. The "artillery drew up," that is, the professional regulars (*alte Leute*) abused the recruits by beating them on their naked bodies with whips and clubs.
1900. Sergeant Fuerst maltreated and tormented witness and several other soldiers in such a manner that witness decided to run away, reports and complaints being useless and even making matters worse. Soldiers were repeatedly struck under the chin.

- 1902-1903. Soldiers were frequently maltreated by N.C.O.'s. **Boxing of ears, blows, even with the sword and the riding-whip**, were daily occurrences. One sergeant beat habitually, one lieutenant boxed the soldiers' ears repeatedly, and a major did so once. Complaints were omitted because of fear of the consequences.
- 1902-1903. A musketeer had to step into a bath-tub full of cold water, when it was below freezing point, and several musketeers had to rub him with a brush until he bled. Witness was ordered to assist in this, but refused to obey so immoral an order, whereupon the N.C.O. threatened to report him. Just then, the maltreated soldier fainted. During the breakfast interval the soldiers had to **stand at "present arms" until exhausted**. When some of them cried, the N.C.O. Renz laughed at them. Blows and kicks were applied during drill.
1905. During the maneuvers . . . no day passed without **some brutality**. Witness offered to pay N.C.O. Reichle all the liquor he would drink all week if he would abstain from beating one day. This was refused on the ground that he had to do enough beating every morning to get properly aroused. The other N.C.O.'s too all beat the soldiers.
- 1905-1906. Witness was struck on the back with a rifle by a N.C.O. All the corporals were ordered to scrub two men with scrubbing-brushes and cold water.
- 1905-1907. A recruit was so badly abused by a N.C.O., in the room, that he cried and said, if that had happened to him in civil life he would have smashed the fellow's head; he was too much ashamed to tell what had really occurred.
1906. A merchant by the name of Schuchardt **shot himself** in 1907 on account of abuse. This case was not brought into court.
- (?) Witness received his training from two N.C.O.'s who had already been punished for maltreating soldiers. Several N.C.O.'s maltreated regularly and grossly. Recruits were compelled to **sweep the rooms of the N.C.O.'s from nine till eleven at night, with tooth-brushes**. One recruit was tortured until he went insane and was then dismissed as unfit for the service.
- 1906-1908. Lieutenant Schmidt boxed a soldier's ears, then ordered all the men to leave the room, and one heard only groaning and cursing. The recruit was **injured in such a manner that he had to be discharged**, and received a pension for injury in the service.
- 1906-1908. Soldiers fell sick in consequence of systematic maltreatment by N.C.O.'s and professional regulars (*alle Leute*).

1907-1909. N.C.O.'s compelled soldiers to lie in dirty ice-water and dung water. Lieutenant Mueller repeatedly boxed the soldiers' ears and taught: "You have the right and the duty to complain, but three days after you will find yourselves locked up."

1908-1910. Witness was struck across the hand so severely by a N.C.O. that it bled. A quarter of an hour later, the N.C.O. asked: "What's the matter with you?" When witness replied that the N.C.O. had struck him across the hand, the latter answered: "You must have gone mad; what do you imagine; I have not struck you at all." He did not report this because he was afraid.

Once when it was very cold, the captain ordered the drill to be carried out in the barracks and only half an hour in the open air. The soldiers thereupon had to stand outside for half an hour at attention. Witness was so badly frozen that the rifle dropped from his hands, for which the N.C.O. ordered him to stand another half hour. Then the soldiers were got into perspiration by running "double quick," and then compelled to stand ten minutes in the cold.

1909-1911. A soldier had complained. The sergeant yelled at him: "You who have complained, you are going to be here another year. We'll show you!"

1910-1911. Witness had to exercise in spite of a painful illness, contracted catarrh of the lungs, and was dismissed as unfit for service.

1911-1913. N.C.O. Klee corrected soldiers when presenting arms by striking them across the fingers with his side-arms. Professional regulars (*alte Leute*) abused the recruits by order of their superiors.

—(*Vorwärts*, July 1, 1914; not arranged there according to date of service.)

The attorneys for the defense of Rosa Luxemburg also placed at the disposal of the court—

the testimony of Colonel Nissen-Meyer, retired, who had been in command of a batallion, and who had made it his life's work to combat the maltreatment of soldiers. He will tell the court of his experiences during his time of service including 1906, and express his opinion to the effect that the reason for the maltreatment of soldiers lies in the fact that: in the first place, a great amount of drill is expected of the captains; and that, in the second place, the punishments they mete out in a disciplinary way are not expected to be too numerous. In consequence, the captains leave the training of the troops to the "professional regulars"

(*alte Leute*) and overlook that these men maltreat the soldiers by beating them.—(*Vorwärts*, July 1, 1914.)

They would have continued to present to the court the details of their evidence, but before the trial had proceeded very far the Minister of War gave notice that he would submit to courts-martial all cases that had been mentioned, which had not been passed upon by such courts before, and were not yet outlawed. This attempt to force before courts-martial the witnesses who had volunteered to testify in favor of Rosa Luxemburg before a civil court, was looked upon as a veiled threat, because these witnesses were more likely to be treated as if they themselves were the accused, if the military authorities desired to frighten off others from testifying. When, therefore, the defendant's counsel were called upon to give the names of all their witnesses, they stated that—

. . . We believe it to be in the interest of the defendant, in the interest of the fight against the maltreatment of soldiers and the unlimited public criticism of German Militarism, that we refuse to lend a hand when the attempt is made to bring these proceedings to an end before a court-martial. A definite statement whether we will give the names of our other witnesses, the number of which has meanwhile risen to 1013, will be made dependent upon the treatment which the witnesses already named will receive from the courts-martial.—(*Vorwärts*, July 4, 1914.)

At the request of the Government, but against the vehement protest of the defendant, this interesting trial was then adjourned to give the Minister of War an opportunity to carry out his plan. The outbreak of the present war, soon after the last court proceedings in the case, increases the likelihood that the expectation held at the time will prove correct, and that the prosecution will not be reopened.

The position taken with reference to this trial by the Social Democratic press did not go unchallenged. It was attacked by the semi-official newspapers as soon as adjournment had been ordered. But it was defended by other liberal papers. The *Berliner Tageblatt*, one of the most widely read liberal dailies in Germany, said on July 5, 1914:

The retreat of the District Attorney (*Staatsanwalt*) in the trial of Rosa Luxemburg is being covered as well as possible by a semi-official can-

nonade. Were one to believe the *Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, the decision to adjourn must have given the *Vorwärts* a "decided attack of nerves." . . . It appears to us as if von Falkenhayn [Minister of War] had not closed his prosecution of Rosa Luxemburg particularly happily, in spite of the somewhat labored justification of the decision to adjourn. He wanted her punished; otherwise he would not have had to file a complaint. Now the proceeding is adjourned; of course, never to be re-opened. It may be very convenient to sign a complaint charging insult, but in this case it would have been more correct if the Minister had somewhat more carefully considered what the consequences of his act were bound to be. And even the adjournment cannot prevent this mistake from leading to very disagreeable consequences for von Falkenhayn.

So much for the Luxemburg trial.

There is, fortunately, other material available from which to gather information concerning the conditions in the German army in times of peace.

On April 8th, 1914, the *Vorwärts* published an article on "German *Kultur* in the Barracks," which commences:

When we hear different Prussian Ministers of War talking in the Reichstag about the maltreatment of soldiers, we might be led to believe that a great improvement had taken place with respect to this deep-seated evil in the army. However, he who attentively follows the incessant flow of instances of cruelty, shudders at the abyss of brutality which is still yawning. We wish to submit but a small selection from the record of cases of maltreatment which have come into court during the last fifteen months; they will suffice to put all attempts at white-washing in their right place.

The details then fully presented cover the cases of eight officers and of about fifteen non-commissioned officers. The instances of brutality are about the same as mentioned in our former list; but these non-commissioned officers seem to have outdone those whose records we listened to before. We hear that—

In the fourth squadron of the Regiment Garde-du-Corps, two acting corporals and three "professional regulars" maltreated recruits in the most brutal manner with ropes, snaffles, horse brushes, the sword, etc. One of the victims became temporarily insane.

In the Queen Augusta Guard Regiment No. 4, Sergeant Waske ordered a grenadier to lie down before a cuspidor and then called out "Drink." The grenadier drank from it quite obediently, which proves that "servile obedience" (*Kadavergehorsam*) is no idle phrase.

In the Guard Train Battalion, non-commissioned officer Hoffman ordered exercises which consisted in bending the knees, while the men had to hold a full manure-box in their outstretched arms.

In the 50th Infantry, non-commissioned officer Poeselt, at inspection of the rooms, ordered the recruits to take cuspidors into their hands, and he then threw the disgusting contents into their faces.

In the King's Grenadier Regiment No. 7, a recruit was also ordered to drink the contents of a cuspidor.

In the Württemberg Uhlan Regiment No. 19, non-commissioned officer Krall struck a tubercular Uhlan with his carbine across the helmet, so that it broke to pieces, and the Uhlan got a hemorrhage from the mouth and nose. During the extra drill, this poor soldier was made to run, and had to lie down in a pool of rain water. He died before the main trial of the N.C.O. came off; the latter escaped with two months' imprisonment.

In the Prussian Infantry Regiment No. 11, Corporal Schlolaut made a recruit throw himself on the floor and jump up again (*auf- und niederwerfen*) twenty times in one evening. When this got too difficult for the man, the corporal pressed him down with his knees. Shortly thereafter the tormentor of this recruit pushed him against a clothes closet about 21 times, threw a coffee pot at him, and pulled him across the washstand by the throat. When this recruit, later on, was again pushed against the clothes closet, he ran away and committed suicide soon thereafter. Corporal Schlolaut escaped with two months' imprisonment.

In the Prussian Infantry Regiment No. 70, a recruit was maltreated by the "professional regulars" (*alte Leute*) during the night in such a fashion that, in desperation, he jumped out of a second story window and was found in the courtyard unconscious and seriously injured.

The article concludes:

. . . Our compilation proves clearly what to think of the statement that severe and systematic maltreatment has been done away with in the army, and teaches how necessary the right of self-defense is for the soldier. It teaches, besides, that the punishment for those who maltreat soldiers should be made more severe. It should not be tolerated that officers who maltreat defenseless subordinates are punished by internment in a fortress, or by confinement to their room. Such gentlemen should go to jail. Furthermore, the minimum punishment for maltreatment, which is now one week in prison, should be considerably increased. Three months in prison is the least that should be inflicted in such cases. . . .

Glancing further through this illuminating file of papers, we come across an article by Richard Gädke on "Maltreatment in the Army," from which a few extracts follow:



. . . No matter how often those at the head of our Government pretend to be modernists, no matter how often they express approval of the freedom of criticism, and of the advantages thereof, no matter in how candid a manner they claim the intention to strike only at the excesses and abuse of such criticism—all that is, at best, self-deception; frequently, however, mere fraud and sham. Numberless victims who had considered it their duty to expose abuses in our public organization, as the physician lays bare an ulcer that poisons the blood, have very soon been brought to the realization that they were fools to have given credence to such professions. . . .

. . . Beating and abuse have been in vogue in the Prussian army as long as it has existed, nearly 275 years; every effort to eradicate the trouble has so far failed. . . .

. . . Official spokesmen like to point out how insignificant is the evidence of brutal treatment of subordinates, as recorded in statistics. The number of convictions is as follows:

	1908	1909	1910	1911	1912
For insult and treatment contrary to regulations.....	190	188	161	167	184
For maltreatment.....	393	368	363	359	306
	<u>583</u>	<u>556</u>	<u>524</u>	<u>526</u>	<u>490</u>

This shows a slight reduction; but these figures nevertheless still justify one in saying that offenses against the personal pride of subordinates are committed daily, and that there is much, and at times systematic, tormenting. These figures merely give the number of convictions, but not the separate cases of brutality. We know that one conviction has often covered numerous and in some revolting instances, even hundreds of separate acts of maltreatment. Aside from this, the above figures refer only to the verdicts of courts-martial, but not to the cases which have been handled without trial. Judging by my experience, I should say that the latter are more than three times as numerous as the former. . . .

. . . It is likely that but a tenth part of all the reprehensible acts comes to the notice of the superiors, and only at a public trial, exposed as by a stroke of lightning, does one see what is really going on. . . .

. . . It is the system that must be attacked, bitterly and relentlessly. The system which has sprung from old, bad, and moldering custom, from antiquated views of the time of the armies of mercenaries. The nature of our entire military organization still resembles that of a troupe of *lansquenets*, gathered from the roughest elements of the people, rather than an army of the people which draws into its fold the flower of our youth for the sole purpose of teaching them the use of arms and preparing them for a defense of the Fatherland. . . . Thus, we reach the idea of purely passive, purely suffering obedience; and many a commander is still subconsciously controlled by the opinion of Freder-

ick the Great, that a soldier should fear his superior more than the enemy. . . .—(*Vorwärts*, June 20, 1914.)

Further on, we find extracts from a book by a retired Prussian captain, Hans Pommer, *Twenty Years as Officer of Infantry in the Imperial Provinces (Reichslanden)*, who says, among other things:

. . . The disciplining of German soldiers is still done by coercive measures, which may have been warranted under feudal serfdom, but which must be considered a mockery of human rights when employed in a modern army of the people. . . .

. . . I knew a captain who insulted his men in the commonest manner and made a habit of striking the man who held his horse when he dismounted, who maltreated his body-servant (*Bursche*), and yet no one had the courage to proceed against this torturer of soldiers. This captain, who should really have been retired from the army, was even honored with a command in China. Another captain, who closed his career only after having been appointed brigade commander, was so blinded when in rage that he did not mind riding down three rows of men in order to punish a man in the fourth. . . .—(*Vorwärts*, July 20, 1914.)

From time to time other news-items and articles have appeared in the German press, all reciting similar instances of outrage upon the person or dignity of the soldier. Our investigation has only been carried back to the month of June, 1913, but enough has now probably been recorded here, even if only in brief extracts, to remove a good deal of the glamor which surrounded the German army. The cumulative proof of brutality is shown in the relentless and unexpected light which Germans themselves have thrown upon the conditions in their army in times of peace. If Americans had been familiar with these details, they would have expected the worst during the stress of a campaign, and would have been less unprepared for the unheard of barbarities practiced in so many places where the Germans set foot. If officers, non-commissioned officers, and professional regulars, treat their own recruits in the fashion described, in times of peace, what could be expected of troops commanded by such ruffians in enemy country, under the terrific excitement of combat, and particularly when "frightfulness" is the slogan? It is not contended that all German officers are addicted to these practices. There are no doubt a great many, perhaps a majority among them, who are them-

selves opposed to such conditions. But the system has evidently continued in spite of the more humane, and has become so thoroughly ingrained that it showed its true colors as soon as the first opportunity presented itself.

The explanation lies perhaps, primarily, in the working of an exaggerated Militarism, but to a certain extent also in the peculiar social features of German *Kultur*. To quote from a prominent English scientist, a former student at Heidelberg and Leipzig:

. . . The establishment of the ideal of the gentleman as a fixed social standard—whatever our [English] social weaknesses and vices and tendencies to so-called snobbishness may be—which strikes the keynote of our social life and which more or less implies the axiom that all gentlemen are, as such, equal in social intercourse, does not exist in Germany. Now, it will readily be perceived how the German system lends itself to the blunting of the sense of justice in the free intercourse of men, how it counteracts the sense of social fair-play, and how it must favor the development of truculence of manner and character, of the reign of the “bully” throughout the whole nation. For the differences of address, treatment, and intercourse do not end with the form of salutation, but extend to the tone of address in speech and manner, constantly impressing the superiority of one and the inferiority of the other. We can well understand how tactical rapidity, promptness, and smartness of evolution in military bodies are necessary for strategic success, and that the words and tone of command must be short, abrupt, and decisive; while the response to the command must be immediate, manifest, and unquestioned. But when we leave the barrack-room and the drill-yard it is not likely that the extension of such a tone into the ordinary life of all members of the community will facilitate and encourage free intercourse, will raise the self-respect of those who are forcibly, manifestly, and continuously placed in a position of inferiority; nor that it will endow the favored superior with a sense of considerateness and sympathy towards his fellow-man in ordinary life. Above all, it will not yield opportunities for the exercise of that sense of fairness and social justice in dealing with our fellow-man which enables him to realize his claims to consideration and to act accordingly.—(Sir Charles Waldstein, *What Germany is Fighting For*, pp. 95-96.)

## III

MILITARISM THE EXALTATION OF THE ARMY ABOVE THE CIVIL  
AUTHORITIES

If Militarism is supposed to be in part responsible for the conditions in the German army to which reference has been made, it may be worth while to look into this question of Militarism.

Before the war, Americans knew little of Militarism. It is one of the features of European development that have been forced upon our attention since we commenced to study the conditions with which this war was likely to bring us into contact. The term now has become almost a commonplace, even though still vaguely understood by many who use it, and probably defined in a varying manner even by those who have given it much thought. Like other expressions which originally carried a limited well-defined meaning, it stands at present for something broader and more complex than in earlier days. It means today more than—

The giving of undue prominence to military training and military glory; the maintenance of government by military power; war-like or military spirit; used now mostly in reference to the European policy of maintaining great standing armies.—(*Standard Dictionary*.)

It is all that; but more recent experience has shown that it has now certain distinguishing features which it did not formerly possess, and which are essential to the present conception of it. Perhaps Militarism may be considered—

The condition which manifests itself among a people, when education and social custom have for a prolonged period given undue prominence to military training and military glory, and the tendency has developed to magnify the function of the army in the State at the expense of purely civic virtues, until finally civil authority is undermined and no longer resists the encroachment of the military authorities.

In trying to define Militarism it is very important to consider its effect upon civil government, because therein lies the fundamental difference between the dangerous tendencies of Militarism as compared with Navalism. The latter can never sweep the control of civil matters out of the hands of the civil authorities; the men in the naval service are not only very much less

numerous, but are scattered all over the world, and therefore not in a position to play politics at home. And the real danger of Militarism is not in relation to foreign countries alone, but more particularly in connection with its disturbing influences at home.

The most unmistakable evidence of such a tendency has since many years existed in Germany, though probably little noticed by most Americans who travelled there. Visitors to foreign countries usually observe only what appears on the surface; come into contact with certain classes of the population only; and have in consequence, quite naturally, but a superficial picture of local conditions. Some of the characteristics of Militarism are in evidence in all European countries, in all of which some disadvantages of maintaining large standing armies are apparent. **But in no other is the adulation of the soldiery so pronounced as in Germany; in no other have citizens, once retired from active military service, as much reason to cling tenaciously to the rights and privileges of the Army Reserve; in no other is Militarism either so exaggerated or so objectionable.** And it is not only the observer from abroad who is inclined to take this view. It is highly significant to see how German liberal opinion faced this issue, even though many Germans and many German publications deny that there is such a thing as Militarism in Germany! They may be entirely candid in their expressions; they have grown up in an atmosphere, amidst surroundings, and under the influence of a prejudiced education, which makes it impossible for them to recognize any longer the artificial conditions upon which their political structure is built.

But let us see what the liberal German elements have had to say.

#### IV

##### THE "ZABERN INCIDENT" AS AN ILLUSTRATION

Just as the Luxemburg trial caused much comment in the press regarding the brutal treatment of soldiers, so the "Zabern incident," as it is called, was the source of long and embittered discussion of the aspects of Militarism in Germany. It may not be amiss first to state briefly what the incident was.

In the Imperial Provinces (*Reichslanden*, Alsace-Lorraine) much irritation had been aroused shortly before the outbreak of the present war by the unusually aggressive demeanor of some officers stationed there. This reached its height when it was noised about that Lieutenant von Forstner had said to one of the recruits during instruction that if one of them should stab a "*Wackes*," he would not be punished; in fact, he, the lieutenant, would then even give him ten marks; one of the non-commissioned officers present adding that he too would contribute three marks on such an occasion. Now, the expression *Wackes* is a particularly offensive term used in Alsace, and means "loafer," "vagabond," or something else similarly derogatory. Used by non-Alsatians in addressing the natives, it of course carries an ugly nationalistic reflection besides. Addressed to Alsatian recruits, it was a great offense; and when not only immunity, but a reward was promised anyone who might run a *Wackes* through, it was bound to arouse the greatest excitement, even though it was claimed that the remark had referred only to those who might actually attack soldiers. The population, as one might have expected, grew very restless and was much wrought up, so that when a slight outbreak occurred in Zabern the military took matters at once into their own hands and practically declared a state of siege, although the civil authorities did not even consider that the situation warranted calling out the police. Some days later blood was shed in a little village near by, when the same Lieutenant von Forstner struck a lame cobbler across the head with his sword, explaining afterwards that he had acted in self-defense. The officers connected with these disorders were all court-martialed, but were all acquitted.

Now for the press comments:

. . . The fault lies with the military authorities, who should have reminded the officers of different rank long ago that it is not their province to indulge in rather questionable speeches which excite the native population. . . .—(*Vorwärts*, November 11, 1913.)

. . . About three months ago we discussed a similar case. In Metz a merchant, German born and bred and besides a non-commissioned officer of the reserve (*Landwehr*), got amongst a column of marching soldiers through no fault of his own, was nearly trampled under foot by a regulation army-boot, and when he addressed the sergeant in a tone of complaint, was treated by that "representative of God" with the insulting

epithet of "Wackes" and "damned Schangel," and with blows. The sergeant who did the beating and the trooper who did the trampling not only got off with absurdly trifling punishments, but at the court-martial it was established that the captain had called the soldiers weak-kneed fellows (*schlappe Kerle*) because they had not immediately drawn their side-arms and run the merchant through without further ado. . . .  
—(*Vorwärts*, November 12, 1913.)

. . . But the method consists also in this, that one wants, in a measure, to "Germanize" Alsace-Lorraine with the help of the soldiery. A conquered country is treated by every ruling class according to the latter's best understanding. By brutal force of arms the British bourgeoisie took the two South African Boer republics a dozen years ago; but then, by the extremely generous grant of the right of citizenship, they attached the inhabitants of the former Free States so firmly to the mother country that today nobody calls himself a British subject with greater pride than the Boer who, a short time ago, met every Briton as hereditary foe with a gun in hand. By brutal force of arms, too, the Prussians took Polish territory a hundred and forty years ago, Alsace and Lorraine forty years ago; but even today the Pole is unable to realize the blessings of the Prussian knout, and the Alsatian and the Lorrainer still fails to beam with joy and kick his heels together when a barrack baron (*Kommisbaron*) honors him by calling him a "Wackes." The Pole, like the Alsatian, still resists the Prussian prick simply because the attempt to Germanize by means of the prick is as brutal as it is stupid. . . .  
—(*Vorwärts*, November 12, 1913.)

The gentlemen who swagger through the streets of Metz and Strassburg with rattling saber and spur and with bits of glass in their eyes imagine themselves the actual rulers of the country. Never mind Parliament! Never mind the Constitution! We set the example and the civilian pack should keep still. And thus they can do anything, thus they may do anything, thus anything is permitted them. Whatever friends of peace have painstakingly accomplished towards an understanding between Germany and France, falls to the ground as soon as a martinet corps- or division-commander, like von Deimling recently, lets loose a speech full of blood and iron. Whatever ground cultural Germany—not the bewhiskered and blustering kind—has gained in the annexed provinces, is lost at a stroke as soon as an insignificant lieutenant, as in the case of von Forstner, ceases to hide what's in his heart and displays before the natives the point of view of the rulers. . . .  
—(*Vorwärts*, November 12, 1913.)

. . . While a representative [in the Reichstag] was demanding protection from provocation for the people or Alsace-Lorraine, and the Prussian Minister dared to make the naïve assertion that after all nothing had happened in Zabern that could have caused any kind of excitement, our dear Militarism proved again and conclusively, at the very same time in Zabern, what acts of presumption and what excesses it is capable

of, as long as the representatives of the people do not assume an entirely different attitude towards the lack of understanding and the failure to listen on the part of the Ministry of War. . . . For the most trivial reason, "because it is alleged that civilians yelled after some officers," the troops stationed at Zabern, arbitrarily and contrary to law, placed the city for hours in a state of siege, threatened the inhabitants with the sword, bayonet, and ball cartridges, hunted harmless passers-by in the streets, and carried off into military custody unquestioned supporters of law and order, such as judges and district attorneys (*Staatsanwälte*). . . .

. . . The impossible Lieutenant von Forstner is again supposed to have been at the bottom of the trouble. This man, whom our military authorities still permit to promenade about Zabern, is supposed to have walked through the streets with a military guard of four men, virtually to taunt the population. While he made all sorts of purchases, his soldiers are said to have stood guard in front of the shops with fixed bayonets! That such a carnival display attracted the street urchins and gathered a bit of a crowd, is easily understood! But the armed forces seem actually to have been on the lookout for the slightest provocation, in order to respond at once by calling out a larger number of troops. As against 20 or 30 curious onlookers, 50 soldiers were called out, who not only immediately fixed bayonets, loaded with ball cartridges, and amidst a warlike rolling of drums announced their intention to shoot to kill, but made streets and houses unsafe, and carried off those of the passersby who did not escape them by prompt flight. People were not only carried from their homes, but even judges and district attorneys (*Staatsanwälte*) who had just finished their business in court and were on their way home were at once arrested, if they did not without further ado submit to the military terror.

And this terror of the sword was carried on in Zabern without the civil authorities having in the slightest manner expressed the constitutionally prescribed request for military assistance. Yes, this terror of the sword was in fact directed absolutely against the civil authorities! The city authorities of Zabern declared that there had not been the slightest occasion for the interference of the police under their control! . . .

. . . The latest incident in Zabern was monstrous beyond compare. It has never happened before that a garrison has arbitrarily set itself up as the ruler of a city, and simply declared a state of siege and of war in disregard of the civil authorities and of the police. This was reserved for the year 1913! . . . The question for the representatives of the people now is, Should such a military disregard of the most fundamental constitutional provisions be permitted, or should it be punished in the most decided manner? If the Reichstag stands for the terror of the sword in Zabern, and the guilty are not called to account in the most unconditional manner, and guarantees given to prevent the repetition of similar military excesses, then the government by constitution and law



will have capitulated altogether before the arbitrariness of our Militarism! That would formally sanction the absolutism of our military powers, which in turn are but the tools of the backward Junkers and of the most feudal bureaucracy! . . . —(*Vorwärts*, November 30, 1913.)

. . . In consequence of the incredible policy of procrastination on the part of those bearing the responsibility, blood has now been shed in the theater of war in Alsace. . . . Lieutenant von Forstner and a company of the 99th infantry were marching through Dettweiler, when the cry "Wackes" went up from a crowd of children (others say young people). This word . . . excited the hotblooded officer in such a manner that he at once threw out a skirmish line in order to arrest the one who had insulted his honor as an officer. The crowd so attacked ran of course in every direction, but a lame cobbler who could not flee was caught by one of the men. When he, as it is claimed, tried to defend himself, . . . he received from Lieutenant Forstner, who came running up with drawn sword, a cut across the head which was six centimeters long and went clean to the bone. The soldiers then dragged the injured man to the Mayoralty, and Lieutenant Forstner there made a deposition covering the case. . . .

. . . It goes without saying that the indignation of the people, not only of Alsace but of the entire Empire, will not be directed exclusively against the lieutenant who had risen to such sad glory, but even more against his superiors. . . . What forbearance and what backing from responsible parties must those who administered the dictatorship of the sword in Zabern think they have a right to expect, if they continually, day by day, commit such excesses, in spite of the protest of the entire people!

The events in Zabern have developed into an enormous scandal. The conflict between military absolutism and the civil authorities, between the boundless arbitrary rule of our Militarism and the will of the people, has reached awful proportions. The damage can no longer be repaired either in Alsace-Lorraine or in all Germany. The eyes of the nation have been forcibly opened to the totally untenable conditions which we enjoy in Prussia-Germany. . . .

. . . All these astonishing conditions are due to our extraordinary constitution, according to which the Imperial Chancellor, the highest official of the Empire, is entirely powerless in the face of military presumption. He cannot even force the suspension of the youngest lieutenant. The Minister of War, who is permitted to address the Reichstag on behalf of Militarism, has just as little to say. Our military administration is simply something entirely independent and absolutist, a power within the State. [The decision concerning military affairs rests entirely with independent military authorities. Neither the Imperial Chancellor nor any other official of the Empire has anything to say concerning Militarism, but the Military Board [*Militärkabinett*] alone is the all-powerful institution which has sole control of the movements of

Militarism here. The Military Board is not responsible to the authorities of the Empire, nor to the representatives of the people, the Reichstag, but to the "Supreme Commander-in-chief" [the Kaiser].\* Within our semi-absolutist Government there exists then an entirely absolutist institution—Militarism. . . .

. . . To this extent the military excesses in Zabern will have done some good. They show the people what to expect if the military rule should once take it into its head to consider not merely Alsace-Lorraine but the entire Empire a drill ground for its fervid activity!—(*Vorwärts*, December 3, 1913.)

The colonel of the regiment stationed at Zabern, von Reuter, and a lieutenant, Schadt, were tried in connection with the troubles which had arisen in that quiet little town, and were acquitted. The court-martial sustained the contention that the civil authorities had ceased to function, and that the military were therefore acting in a kind of self-defense. A very prominent German paper published in Vienna (Austria), commenting on this said:

. . . This decision will not satisfy public opinion in Germany, will still further intensify the contrast between soldiers and civilians, and above all provoke the most decided protest from the Reichstag. The German people do not want to be governed in such a manner that a colonel should have a right to decide whether in his opinion, as he said, the shedding of blood might become unavoidable and even a blessing. . . . It is inadmissible that in times of peace and in one's own country, where more moderate means are surely not wanting to protect officers from insult, a colonel should proceed to self-defense according to his own judgment, and should venture to give orders nearly leading to bloodshed because of the grimaces and pranks of immature boys on whom the honor of a soldier surely does not depend. It is monstrous, this mixing up of war and peace, of enemy country and home. . . .

\*The manner in which the absolute control of the armed forces in the hands of the "Supreme Commander-in-chief" lends itself to the spread of *Kultur*, is best exemplified by the words which Emperor William II addressed on July 27, 1900, to the German Expeditionary Forces about to embark for China. After telling the troops that they were being sent abroad to avenge the murder of the German ambassador in China, he said among other things:

"You can see by this what happens to a *Kultur* that is not built upon the foundations of Christianity; every Pagan *Kultur*, no matter how beautiful or glorious, will succumb at the first test of force! If you get a chance to face the enemy he will be beaten! No quarter will be given! No prisoners will be taken! Whoever falls into your hands, let him be at your mercy! Just as the Huns a thousand years ago, under their King Etzel [Attila] made a name for themselves which up to this day makes them appear mighty in tradition and story, so may the name German be established by you in China for a thousand years in such a manner that never again shall a Chinese even dare to look at a German askance! . . . May God's blessing follow your flags, and this war bring the blessing that Christianity may enter that country so that such sad cases no longer arise!"—(*Berliner Tageblatt*, July 28, 1900.)

. . . The propitiation of Alsace, which would be one of the guarantees of general European peace, will not be made easier by the acquittal of Colonel Reuter. For the friends of the German Empire that is the most unpleasant reverberation of the events in Zabern. . . .  
—(*Neue Freie Presse*, January 10, 1914.)

When Lieutenant von Forstner came to trial he too was acquitted. It may be more interesting to vary somewhat the sources of our information, and we therefore again draw upon the pages of the *Berliner Tageblatt*, a liberal daily of large circulation in Germany:

And so, Lieutenant von Forstner also gets off scot free. It is established that in Prussia today a lieutenant twenty years of age may strike about with a sword, and may seriously wound peaceful citizens, without a hair on his head being touched. As the military judges declared well-meaningly, Lieutenant von Forstner had struck the lame cobbler over the head in self-defense. That is to say, he may have *thought* that he was in danger from the lame cobbler, and that he himself was acting in self-defense! A lieutenant who is surrounded by his comrades and his subordinates, and imagines himself in danger from a lame cobbler! . . . The Zabern affair is not ended by today's verdict. It will be heard from for a long time to come!—(*Berliner Tageblatt*, January 11, 1914.)

The presiding judge of the court-martial which sat on the first Zabern case, at the close of the trial, sent telegrams announcing the acquittal to two men prominent in political life, and was taken to task for it in very unceremonious manner:

The President of the court-martial, General von Pelet-Narbonne, knew very well to whom to address his message of victory. It is, at least, not very likely that he personally knew von Jagow and von Oldenburg at Januschau. But he was justified in reasoning that these two people were considered the most outspoken representatives of the rule of the sword, and that his announcement would do their hearts good. He may also have considered that it might be well to get into intimate touch with von Jagow and von Oldenburg. The adviser of the Crown Prince in matters of internal politics, and the representative of the military right of might in the case of Lieutenant von Forstner, characterize with incomparable clearness the future course for which some circles are yearning. And no matter what one may think of the exulting telegrams of the presiding judge in the Reuter case, it is certainly marvelous how well souls know how to find one another, with the help of the accommodating telegraph, when they are related by the rule of the sword. . . .

. . . Whoever followed the trial of Colonel von Reuter [regimental commander at Zabern] a little more closely knew, of course, beforehand

that an acquittal would result. And whoever might still have entertained a doubt that this *could* possibly be the outcome of the absolutely incredible violation of the law of the Empire by the accused officers, must have had his eyes opened by the announcement of *Oberkriegsgerichtsrat* Dr. Medicus, which was surely not a mere invention: "On Thursday Colonel von Reuter will be acquitted, and on Saturday I shall acquit Lieutenant von Forstner." It turned out a little differently in the end. The court-martial postponed its decision two days, and Dr. Medicus had to be withdrawn from the trial of Lieutenant von Forstner because his announcement had shown his hand too clearly. But he was right in the main facts. The representatives of the Zabern rule of the sword have been given satisfaction in a striking manner, to the great joy of von Jagow and von Oldenburg. . . .

. . . Fool, he who expects an atonement for Zabern from the military authorities while they are left to themselves! Least of all can one expect this in these times when the *military party*, as one can tell by the telegrams of General von Pelet-Narbonne, *scents the morning air*. The necessary atonement must be brought about by outsiders and from above. And here it is indeed incumbent upon the governing and responsible statesman to show that he is more than a mercenary. He ought to be deprived of all authority if it were to prove impossible to sidetrack the officers, guilty in spite of the Strassburg acquittal. It is not enough to deal with the very young lieutenants who, after all, merely acted on orders; nor to drop Colonel von Reuter. The really guilty are higher up; how high, may remain undetermined for the moment. But General von Pelet-Narbonne's conduct points after all to the circle of the guilty. Nothing but a daring thrust into this hornets' nest can restore the authority of law and order which is so seriously endangered. Von Bethman Hollweg, *be serious about it at last!* So far, the military authorities have merely made a fool of you (*ist Ihnen die Militärbehörde nur auf der Nase herumgetanzt*).

Not merely the authority of the law, not merely the authority of the Chancellor, is most seriously endangered. Much more still, the authority of the German Reichstag. It meets again tomorrow. When it adjourned a month ago the Zabern incidents were left in abeyance. The occurrences of the last few days have shown that the military authorities treat the Reichstag as so much air. It must not permit such disrespect, unless prepared to resign in favor of the rule of the sword. But will the Reichstag really attempt a trial of strength? . . .

. . . The Reichstag must do its duty. The German people have a right to expect it. The sword or the law, that is the great question. The Reichstag can settle it in favor of civil law and constitution, if it goes seriously to work. But if it does not, then it too will have resigned in favor of the Reuters, the Pelet-Narbonnes, and their followers.—(*Berliner Tageblatt*, January 12, 1914.)

What clearer picture of conditions in Germany before the war could one possibly wish for? What a direct accusation against the elements in control of the Government, and particularly what a clear exposure of the close connection between officers and politicians!

The controversy in the press grew more excited as time went on, because it had become known that the acquittal of the accused officers was brought about by calling into life an old Order in Council (*Kabinettsorder*)\* which had been considered a dead letter nearly a hundred years:

. . . Nobody is exercised because Colonel von Reuter was acquitted, although the manner in which the case was conducted, the unceremonious pushing aside of witnesses who could not be influenced, and the companionable handshakes, was exactly like the trial at Rennes [the notorious French court-martial in 1899 which convicted Captain Dreyfus] and similar trials. That colleague von Forstner was also saved merely provokes a shrug of the shoulders, considering that the Court gave him credit for only limited mental responsibility. But the question cropped up throughout the entire debate, Whether the Order in Council (*Kabinettsorder*), foisted upon the country during an ignominious period by a foreign Minister in Prussia, is still valid?—the question, Whether every military bully has the right, on his own responsibility and at his discretion, to depose the civil government and to take it upon himself to “restore order”? Should the answer be in the affirmative, after it was put so clearly, then Prussia has ceased to be a State governed by law and constitution, and there remains here only that kind of law which prevails in Mexico and Bolivia. If the unconstitutional Order in Council, which is dangerous to the community, should be preserved as something splendid and valuable, it would be an undisguised encouragement for the Forstners of every garrison to smash the head of every citizen who seems to them lacking in respect. . . .

. . . How can one count upon a quiet evolution while no statesman with vision steers safely towards the future? Even a member of the Upper House knows that it is not a revolution from below that is to be feared; the day for such popular uprisings has passed. Nothing but

\*The Order in Council (*Kabinettsorder*) of October 17, 1820, is worded as follows: “For the purpose of suppressing internal disturbances and enforcing the law, military commanders are entitled and bound to take charge of a situation themselves, even without request from the civil authorities, in case (a) excesses are committed which disturb the public peace, and the military commander in witnessing them concludes, in accordance with his conception of duty and according to his conscience, that the civil authorities had delayed the demand for military assistance too long, inasmuch as their power was no longer adequate to restore order; (b) the military commander must at all times direct his attention to the proper moment when to take charge of a situation. As soon as the time has arrived to take charge, he alone issues the directions for the purpose of restoring order, and the civil authorities must submit until order is restored.”—(*Berliner Tageblatt*, January 7, 1914.)

the revolution from above, the revolution by which it is attempted to choke off demands and warnings for a moment, is still within the realms of possibility. For such exploits, officers are wanted who, in case of need, would lock an entire parliament into a Pandour\* cellar, and kings are required whom one hopes to be able to use as tools. These wishes shone clearly through much that has happened in these last weeks.

. . . Does not a blush creep over the face of the Chancellor at the thought that every educated foreigner and every friend of Germany is today commenting that a nervous swashbuckler can here set aside law and constitution with the help of a mouldy piece of waste paper? Does he not appreciate the immense harm that comes from such uncertainty of legal security? The day before yesterday he assured the Upper House very energetically that "he would know how to prevent in every way that the answers given to brief interpellations would amount to an encroachment upon the Executive or the Law." We are in face of an *entirely different encroachment upon the law*, in face of an unheard-of encroachment upon the constitution—which plainly says that "the armed forces may be used for the suppression of internal disturbances and for the execution of the law *only* in such cases and in such manner as provided by law, and when called upon by the civil authorities"—and we shall wait and see if he will "know how to prevent in every way" *this* encroachment that touches the very life of a constitutional State. Unless he does; unless he sweeps this illegal Order in Council onto the rubbish heap; if his energy should again be merely directed against the people, as in the case of the franchise question: then he will share the guilt for whatever may come out of this illegal situation. The German Chancellor will then have resigned in favor of the non-commissioned officer.—(*Berliner Tageblatt*, January 12, 1914.)

. . . On Friday the incidents in Zabern were brought to the attention of the Reichstag for the second time. The ostensible reason for the interpellation by the Social Democracy and the Progressive party was the proceeding against Colonel von Reuter at the court-martial in Strassburg. But the ultimate purpose around which the debate turned, was the fundamental question, whether the military authorities have the right to disregard law and constitution, or whether the civil law limits their authority. . . .

. . . Zabern was, after all, merely a clear symptom of the Germany of today. Even looking at matters as he does, von Bethman Hollweg could not close his eyes to the fact that more than Zabern was involved in the conduct of Colonel von Reuter. He even spoke of "troubled waters" which the Zabern case had stirred up. And he was right; an entire nation could be drowned in them. But he does not seem quite clear in his own mind who has stirred up these waters. . . .

\*Pandours were soldiers in the Austrian army from the Slavonian and Rumanian districts of Hungary who, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, were dreaded on account of their terrible brutality and licentiousness.

. . . No one who takes the cultural mission of the German Empire seriously wants to belittle that army. But one may nevertheless demand very definitely that the army too should adjust itself to the united interest of the entire German people, and develop into a true army of the people, which it is not in all respects at present. . . .

. . . Respect for mankind, consideration for popular sentiment, force coupled with common sense and humanity, must be insisted upon to steer the German people safely past the Zabern rocks. No matter how much has heretofore been sinned, herein lies the possibility to adjust distressing conflicts and to prevent them for the future. But unfortunately one cannot help confessing that there is still a far cry to that goal. After last week's debates, one cannot even feel sure that there even exists a real intention to adopt this true policy of reconciliation.—(*Berliner Tageblatt*, January 25, 1914.)

These short extracts establish pretty well that opposition to arbitrary rule was at the time agitating Germany, and that it seemed to be gaining headway. But what did it lead to? Nothing but a formal vote of censure upon the Chancellor; and then the hoped for reform "dried up," as it had been feared it might!

The advanced liberals, undaunted, kept up the fight and continued to attack the fateful conditions in which they clearly recognized a menace to the Fatherland. A thorough presentation of their attitude was made in the Reichstag, on May 5, 1914, by the socialist representative Schulz. Anyone who can read the speech in the original and in full should not fail to do so. Here we can give only extracts because of the length of the speech—a speech which is important not only on account of the exhaustive criticism it proclaimed, but also on account of the very significant reply it evoked from the Minister of War:

. . . The circumstances surrounding this change of [War] Ministers seems to me to typify the new tendency among our officers, which appears to be the political influence surrounding them, and their pronounced feeling of caste, in consequence of which they think, "We are of the first rank; civilians should pay taxes and shut up; hurrah for the military!" This is the spirit that rattles the sword in the face of foreign countries, and says, "If they rattle in return, so much the better; then the honest German will get frightened and will grant further demands for the army;" the spirit that attacks the enemy within by singling us out and by slandering us as "the only ones" who continually trouble it; . . . the spirit that destroys the former conception that the army should not meddle in politics. . . . General von Reichenau . . . closes

his article with the words, "Any work done to promote military efficiency counts for more than busying oneself with civilizing fancies." . . .

. . . All this was but a zephyr compared with the storm that has broken loose among the military writers since March. One cannot understand in what world these gentlemen really live, who dare to drag the war of the future into the open. Major General Keim wrote: "We should develop our military preparedness to the fullest limit of our war capacity." . . . General Bernhardi wrote: "The German armaments could not in the least compare with the French. One had to be prepared for war with France after 1915." In the *Rheinisch-Westfälische Zeitung* it was said that "we had to arm for war against France, Russia, and England—the German people demanded it." Well, the German people would much prefer to give such newspaper writers a thrashing. . . .

. . . Consciousness of *Kultur* leads to horror of the killing and of the laying waste which accompany war. (*Interruption from the Right.*) What do you know of the people, of the working classes, of Social Democracy? Surely not more than the cadets who have just left the academy. In view of your ignorance of the common people you are quite incompetent to judge what part the people would play in a war—this is not meant in the sense of undisciplined insubordination. But the soldiers of today are not mercenaries who enter a war without thought or judgment; they are human beings who have awakened to consciousness of *Kultur*; who want to protect it against the ravages of war. . . .

. . . By the by, what the General said of Social Democracy, of its hatred of the monarchy, of its hatred of religion, of its hatred of Prussia, is all incorrect. That is all foolish talk. When General Keim delivered his baiting speech in Strassburg, the civil authorities absented themselves, but the body of officers, led by General von Deimling, was present and applauded demonstratively. Is that not playing politics? The Minister of War says, No, because politics is only what we choose to call it; everything else is not politics, but defense against socialistic attacks. . . .

. . . One of the first acts of the Minister of War was his well-known round-robin to the Chambers of Commerce, requesting them to find positions in business houses for pensioned officers. That is a gross misconception of civilian vocations and of the importance of vigor in commerce and industry. . . . The minister is not likely to forget the answer from the Chambers of Commerce. All but one . . . were to the effect that "the business office is no asylum for cast-off officers." . . .

. . . Why this brusque manner? There can be only one explanation for it—the bloated self-assurance of certain military circles owing to the outcome of the Zabern incident. Is it to convey the idea that it does not concern the Reichstag what happens when the troops are trained? Does the General claim that the High Command should not be discussed? Does he deny that the High Command rests upon law? . . .



. . . I am afraid that the Reichstag will give way, as it always has done since Zabern. Only once did it show power of decision, when it passed a vote of want of confidence in the Chancellor. It would seem as if the Reichstag had thereby spent its energy for an endless time, and is now trying to make good threefold what it sinned then.

The Reichstag has the opportunity to show whether it realizes its duty to the people, or whether it will stand every rebuff. The so-called new regulation concerning the use of arms by the soldiers, is the end of the Zabern incident, as discreditable as possible. . . . As a matter of fact, it is nothing but a very decided retreat, the final submission of civil authority to that of the military. . . .

. . . Nobody can be surprised that the military authorities handle the Reichstag as they do. When I read the printed report of the Bundesrat's replies to the decisions of the Reichstag, I, being a representative, felt ashamed. The representatives are lectured like children. The Reichstag desired that personal fitness alone should determine the question of appointment to higher positions. That would naturally indicate that it believes this not to be the case at present. The Minister of War answers: "The appointment is made as heretofore, according to military fitness alone." The Reichstag desires that nobody in the army shall be slighted on account of his religious or political convictions. The Minister of War replies: "Nobody in the army is slighted on account of his religious convictions." The Reichstag desires that nobody in the army shall be boycotted for political reasons. The Minister of War replies: "The boycott is not ordered for political reasons." The Reichstag desires that officer-corps of the nobility shall not be given a preference; the Minister of War denies preference. The Reichstag desires the revision of the military law of criminal procedure; the Minister of War replies: "The military law of criminal procedure has given entire satisfaction," and so on. It is the business of the middle-class parties (*bürgerliche Parteien*) to reckon with this slight. We demanded at the time that the Reichstag should embody its wishes in the Army bill; had that been done, such answers would have been impossible. The Reichstag has the power, if it would only make use of it. . . .

. . . It was never the Social Democrats who gained their ends by force and murder. When kings were decapitated and killed, it was not done by Social Democrats; but the better classes and officers were connected with the recent murder of a king in Serbia. Were we to advocate offenses against the law in the army and out of it, how many incidents of that kind do you think would then occur which do not now occur, considering our influence on the four and a half million voters; incidents which do not occur now because Social Democracy carries on a great civilizing and educational campaign? We certainly have our views about the organization of the State; we certainly consider the republican form of government the best; but we are entitled to a different point of view from yours on questions relating to public law, and to defend it within the law. . . . We have our own ideas about the defense of

country and army organization too, and it is our right, guaranteed by the law of the States and the Empire, to defend our dissenting opinions. . . . We are fighting strictly within the law, and according to the constitution, and we therefore the more resent that the military spirit has the audacity to represent us as inferior. . . .

. . . We do not encourage soldiers to disobedience, but we shall wage war against this system the same as before, in public political combat, by ruthlessly exposing the abuses in the army, by explaining the reforms we advocate in the army, by increasing the Social Democratic votes and representatives, and finally by thorough criticism of the Army budget every year.—(Proceedings in the Reichstag, May 5, as reported in *Vorwärts*, May 6, 1914.)

This exhaustive address, and others delivered in the Reichstag on May 5, 1914, provoked a reply from Minister of War von Falkenhayn on the following day. This is likely to be memorable for all time on account of an expression used by the Minister that throws a flood of light on the ideas of the German army leaders, and sounds almost prophetic in view of what subsequently occurred in Belgium, in Poland, in France. In the course of the speech he said:

. . . If the representative intended to suggest, and if it were true, that the advance of our Kultur had led to it that we could no longer go to war with the same confidence in our army that our fathers had in the army of 1870—if that were true (pardon the expression) then, as far as I am concerned, Kultur may go to the mischief (*Dann kann mir die ganze Kultur gestohlen bleiben*). . . .—(Proceedings in the Reichstag, May 6, as reported in the *Berliner Tageblatt*, May 7, 1914.)

With this our quotations are about at an end. If they refer principally to one particular incident, it is because this was the most startling one that had occupied the attention of thoughtful people shortly before the outbreak of the war; because it brought about more discussion of Militarism than any other single incident of late; and because it seemed desirable to obtain comment as recent as possible and yet not affected by the developments which followed the beginning of hostilities.

It might, however, be well to throw one more sidelight on the picture. At the opening of the Luxemburg trial a very interesting and significant incident occurred. The attorneys for the defense challenged two of the judges because they were officers of the reserve. As a result of their connection with the army, it was alleged or suggested that the defendant was justified in fear-

ing (1) that these judges were biased, (2) that they were amenable for their judicial acts to the military court of honor and to the military High Command, and (3) that in case they took an attitude adverse to the Government they might be disciplined by being "pensioned." The extracts which follow indicate the possibility of these subtle influences affecting the independence of the judiciary, especially in all that concerns the army:

The attorney for the defense, *Rechtsanwalt* Dr. Rosenfeld, thereupon challenged for bias those judges who were or had been in any way connected with the corps of officers, and named the Presiding Judge and *Geheimrat* Schulze. The complaint was filed on behalf of the officers and non-commissioned officers of the Prussian army. These gentlemen are among those officers. They are consequently interested parties. The question is, have they been insulted? The fear that they might be prejudiced is warranted in view of their close connection with the question. But it is besides warranted because they are subject to the military court of honor, and the military High Command, as they are officers. How far the military authorities carry their right in this direction is shown by the fact that Colonel Gädke was cited before a court of honor because he had criticized the Serbian officers who were connected with the murder of the king, and that Lieutenant-Colonel von Wagenburg was also sentenced by a court of honor for having presumed to criticize army regulations. As long as this is possible, we have to take into consideration the possible risk that these gentlemen may likewise be subject to the wishes of the military authorities and the military High Command in the exercise of their judicial functions. Paragraph I of the law governing the constitution of courts says that judicial authority shall be exercised by independent courts, subject only to the law. It is repugnant to this foundation of the constitution of our courts if gentlemen join in sitting in judgment on military questions who themselves are subject to the military court of honor and the military High Command.

The attorney for the defense, *Rechtsanwalt* Levi: The fear of prejudice is not a purely theoretical one, but results from an imminent danger which threatens every day. Cases are known in which the military authorities have, after a lawsuit, disciplined military judges who were their subordinates. In the Bilsle litigation, dissatisfaction with several judges was expressed in an Order in Council (*Kabinettsorder*) on December 1, 1903, and after the trial was ended, the judges were "pensioned," that is, disciplined. The danger and the possibility exist that the military authorities discipline judges afterwards, and that means, as far as the defendant is concerned, that she runs the risk and naturally fears that these judges may not approach the case in as unbiased a manner as she has the right to expect.

The President states that he is a retired captain of *Landwehr*; the Associate Judge, *Landesgerichtsrat* Schulze: "I was retired at my request thirty years ago, when I was a lieutenant." Both judges withdrew. *Landesgerichtsrat* Bienutta takes the chair.

District Attorney Hagemann explains that the two judges, being officers on the retired list, are not interested parties; there could be no warrant for a fear of prejudice; the time of their active service could not be called into question.

*Rechtsanwalt* Dr. Rosenfeld: The complaint is not limited to any special time. It is unlimited as to time. The expressions of the defendant are also quite general ones. She criticized the military system, one of the results of which are the military courts of honor.

Attorney for the defense, *Rechtsanwalt* Levi: In a very similar trial in Lübeck the judges in question themselves admitted prejudice.

The Board of three announces through *Landesgerichtsrat* Bienutta, after deliberation, that **the request for disqualification is refused, because the fear of prejudice was not justified.** Neither of the judges were interested parties, and had not been connected with the army for so long a time that their freedom from prejudice could not be questioned; both had besides declared that they were not prejudiced and the Board had full faith in their statement.—(*Vorwärts*, June 30, 1914.)

Although the attorneys' request was refused—and probably quite properly so—the incident shows what suspicions lurk in the minds of some of the people when the invidious influences of Militarism have once made themselves felt. It throws into bold relief one phase of the condition with which Americans are little familiar.

## V

### CONCLUSION: THE HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

It must be clear to anyone who closely follows the above extracts that in Germany the connection between Militarism and the political life and position of the citizen is extremely and dangerously close.

A large army, universal military service, the thorough development of every branch of the army and navy, are not the dangerous features of Militarism. All these may exist, and yet the term Militarism as understood today would not apply. In order to carry with it the real meaning, the meaning that is dreaded, there must be a fundamental basis which makes it possible for the military authorities to gradually paralyze the effectiveness and the vigor of civil administration. Preparedness as now adopted in this country, and actual mobilization of every branch of industrial and commercial endeavor in the present war, do not spell Militarism, so long as political and social conditions remain as they are. Wherever class distinctions, which create a preference in the service in favor of citizens of a certain group are unknown; wherever those who direct the fighting forces of the country are ultimately responsible to the representatives of the people; wherever a sound public opinion finds expression;—there Militarism in the modern sense cannot prevail. Long established custom is essential to its development.

The extracts here presented are culled from articles of some length, and are necessarily circumscribed. They are taken from newspapers published before August 1, 1914, and attempt, in spite of their brevity, to convey an impartial impression of the attitude of a great number of Germans towards certain vital questions before the European conflagration obscured their vision and before the controlling influence of patriotic fervor made it impossible for them to view things in their normal light or from a normal angle.

It has often been said with a considerable degree of truth, that—given a good pair of scissors—one could make extracts prove almost anything. No doubt quotations could easily be gathered from other German newspapers which would convey an entirely different impression from the one to which we have thought it important to direct attention. The policies attacked by the writers whose comments we have quoted are advocated by others, and by them necessarily discussed in an entirely different manner. However, the main object of this collection is merely to show that, according to a well defined even though not general opinion in Germany, certain abuses and conditions did exist there the existence of which has been frequently called into question and often absolutely denied.

Considered in their broader aspect these quotations not only reflect the German picture which was to be presented here, but they warrant the hope that when the German people awaken from the nightmare which now holds them in its grasp; when they realize that it was the dream of world power that had blinded them; when, under the pressure of stern necessity, they recast their views of frightfulness and of its consequences;—then there will reawaken that conscience which the liberal press endeavored to stimulate in times of peace, and it will again be possible to treat with the Germany of today as with the Germany of old, when she had not yet sacrificed her soul on the altar of Efficiency!

We know now, after reading these extracts, that underneath the cover of patriotic submission to constituted authority there must still be smoldering the embers of individual and humane opinion, which will some day burst into flame and light up the path which Germany will follow in the desire to meet once more as an equal the sister nations she so overbearingly and grievously affronted.

Nothing could support this hope more forcibly than the outcry of the German masses, voiced editorially by the *Vorwärts* on July 30, 1914. Now, more than three years after this editorial was written, it sounds more like a voice from one of the Allied countries! Let it be remembered that these sentiments were expressed in Germany, by a German editorial writer, in a German newspaper—shortly before the German Government ex-

plained that Germany had been "forced" into the war. The concluding paragraphs of this memorable editorial read as follows:

. . . Meanwhile, England and Russia have urged the cessation of Austrian hostilities. Austria has refused, because she wants to let grapes talk first. Germany is supposed to have refused so far to join in this demand, the foremost and most important, the one which will turn the scale in the question of the world war! That is a point of view of the German Government which we are unable to grasp, which as we have demonstrated above places especially on the German Government the most frightful responsibility! Towards its own people, towards the foreign powers, towards the judgment of History!

In France, where they yearn for world peace as fervently as anywhere, it is already announced that nobody can any longer consider Russia the instigator of the world conflagration, the real mischief maker, but solely Austria and her ally, Germany.

And in England the conception is quite general that the German Emperor, in his capacity of ally and counsellor of Austria, as the deciding element, could shake from the folds of his toga the die for War or Peace.

And England is right. As matters stand, the decision rests with William II.

No matter what undisguised opponents on principle we have always been of the monarchy; no matter how fierce the contest has sometimes been which we have waged against the temperamental wearer of the crown; just as outspokenly do we now declare, and not for the first time, that William II has by his demeanor, particularly in the last years, proved himself a true friend of world peace. In so far as it lies at all in human power and good intention to determine the destiny of millions in accordance with humanity and reason, misgiving concerning the momentary situation would not need to be serious. But even the most energetic person is not free from influences, and the proofs are unfortunately within grasp that the camarilla of war barons (*Kriegshetzer*) is again at work, without the slightest qualm of conscience, in order to cross all activities of the Government and bring about what is monstrous—the world war, the world conflagration, the devastation of Europe.

We are democrats and republicans, but despite the loudest bragging Nationalists the German Social Democracy is most keenly alive to German honor and German advantage. In face of the shameless lies of the war-baiters, let this self-evident fact be once more emphasized. It is, however, not a question of Germany's honor and future, but of a senseless war adventure which must be stopped as quickly as possible!

The influence of Germany upon Austria is therefore the paramount issue.

Whoever, without scruple, continues to advise to strike, commits a crime against his own people and criminal violence against the cultural solidarity (*Kulturgemeinschaft*) of all civilized peoples!

The socialist proletariat declines all responsibility for **the events conjured up by a governing class that is deluded unto madness**. The socialist proletariat knows that new life will blossom out of the ruins, for itself in particular. All responsibility fall upon those in power today!

For them it is a question of **TO BE or NOT TO BE!**

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