LEABHARLANN CHOLÁISTE NA TRÍONÓIDE, BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH | TRINITY COLLEGE LIBRARY DUBLIN
Ollscoil Átha Cliath | The University of Dublin

Terms and Conditions of Use of Digitised Theses from Trinity College Library Dublin

Copyright statement

All material supplied by Trinity College Library is protected by copyright (under the Copyright and Related Rights Act, 2000 as amended) and other relevant Intellectual Property Rights. By accessing and using a Digitised Thesis from Trinity College Library you acknowledge that all Intellectual Property Rights in any Works supplied are the sole and exclusive property of the copyright and/or other IPR holder. Specific copyright holders may not be explicitly identified. Use of materials from other sources within a thesis should not be construed as a claim over them.

A non-exclusive, non-transferable licence is hereby granted to those using or reproducing, in whole or in part, the material for valid purposes, providing the copyright owners are acknowledged using the normal conventions. Where specific permission to use material is required, this is identified and such permission must be sought from the copyright holder or agency cited.

Liability statement

By using a Digitised Thesis, I accept that Trinity College Dublin bears no legal responsibility for the accuracy, legality or comprehensiveness of materials contained within the thesis, and that Trinity College Dublin accepts no liability for indirect, consequential, or incidental, damages or losses arising from use of the thesis for whatever reason. Information located in a thesis may be subject to specific use constraints, details of which may not be explicitly described. It is the responsibility of potential and actual users to be aware of such constraints and to abide by them. By making use of material from a digitised thesis, you accept these copyright and disclaimer provisions. Where it is brought to the attention of Trinity College Library that there may be a breach of copyright or other restraint, it is the policy to withdraw or take down access to a thesis while the issue is being resolved.

Access Agreement

By using a Digitised Thesis from Trinity College Library you are bound by the following Terms & Conditions. Please read them carefully.

I have read and I understand the following statement: All material supplied via a Digitised Thesis from Trinity College Library is protected by copyright and other intellectual property rights, and duplication or sale of all or part of any of a thesis is not permitted, except that material may be duplicated by you for your research use or for educational purposes in electronic or print form providing the copyright owners are acknowledged using the normal conventions. You must obtain permission for any other use. Electronic or print copies may not be offered, whether for sale or otherwise to anyone. This copy has been supplied on the understanding that it is copyright material and that no quotation from the thesis may be published without proper acknowledgement.

Vanessa Ther

Unlike Phoenix from the Ashes:

Republican constructs of the First World War in Weimar Germany 1918-1920



PhD Thesis

Department of History

2010

TRINITY COLLEGE
2 8 JUL 2011
LIBRARY DUBLIN
THOSIS
9193

I declare that the PhD thesis *Unlike Phoenix from the Ashes: Republican constructs of the First World War in Weimar Germany 1918-1920* has not been submitted as an exercise for a degree at this or any other university. It is entirely my own work and I agree that Trinity College Library may lend or copy the thesis upon request. This permission covers only single copies made for study purposes, subject to normal conditions of acknowledgement.



THESIS SUMMARY

This thesis seeks to examine the utilisation of the legacy of the First World War in republican press and propaganda as a central focus of the new state's foundation narrative. Assessing the role of the war in republican attempts to establish its legitimacy to govern and its implications for the identity of Germany's first democracy, this comparative study evaluates the coverage of war-related issues in a broad range of republican press sources between 9 November 1918 and 6 June 1920. In order to contextualise these 3,626 newspaper and journal articles in their related party-political framework, this research furthermore assesses 327 political leaflets as well as selected contemporary pamphlets, monographs and novels to explain the republican failure to come to terms with the trauma of war.

This study establishes that attempts to derive political legitimacy from politicised interpretations of the war experience were not confined to anti-democratic propaganda. Rather, republican press and propaganda promoted a uniformly horrific narrative of the war as carnage and suffering as a negative contrast to the humanitarian values promoted by the revolution. With the intention of deriving legitimacy from popular esteem for the soldiers and capitalising on the population's war-weariness, the republican foundation narrative consciously justified the republic's moral authority to represent Germany by emphasizing its antagonism to war. Contemporaneously, this portrayal of the conflict sought to discredit representatives of the imperial regime as those responsible for the people's wartime suffering. In a counter-narrative to the 'stab in the back' myth, republican discourse established a stereotype of right-wing politicians as cowardly demagogues and war profiteers. The unstable political and economic situation in the aftermath of the armistice and right-wing efforts to blame the revolution for defeat, however, pushed the republic into a defensive position which led to inconsistencies in the revolutionary foundation narrative. Political rivalry among the republican parties furthermore diluted a common republican stance against Germany's former elite which could have strengthened the republic against right-wing opposition.

Although republican discourse continued to pursue its revolutionary narrative of the war, as evident in republican attempts to devise several counter-myths to the right-wing 'stab in the back' allegation, the debate regarding the war guilt question showed the limitations of this approach. Identifying the Allies rather than domestic reactionaries as the main threat to the republic, republican propaganda pursued a campaign of misinformation regarding German wartime conduct, thus encouraging the right-wing 'culture of denial'. The contradictory considerations which motivated political decisions regarding the memory of the war were particularly evident in the republican failure to accompany the military demobilisation with a cultural equivalent. In failing to devise an alternative code of commemoration to military traditions, misjudging the needs of

ordinary war veterans and war invalids, and upholding aggressive wartime rhetoric regarding the Allied decision to postpone the return of German prisoners of war, republican discourse failed to impose its values on the demobilisation.

The Treaty of Versailles eventually dealt a fatal blow to the revolutionary portrayal of the republic as a peacemaker. This challenge to its political legitimacy motivated the government to base its illusory expectations regarding the peace on a propaganda campaign emphasising Germany's innocence, a campaign intended to induce the Allies to grant better peace terms. Simultaneously demonstrating their defiant stance against the Allies, republican politicians sought to maintain their political credibility by consolidating Germany's unity against the peace. Failing either to motivate the Allies into moderating the peace terms or to forge a popular identification with the republic because the government was not able to pursue its aggressive foreign policy, the republican peace strategy undermined the new state's legitimacy to govern and sanctioned the remobilisation of Germany's political life. Perceived as an admission of political impotence because it did not accord with republican peace propaganda, the republican return to a pragmatic, non-confrontational foreign policy after the acceptance of the peace destabilised the government. This sign of weakness provided a catalyst for open right-wing opposition to the republic, particularly evident in the extradition debate and the army's repeated threats to disobey the government. The republican inability to respond appropriately to such challenges to its authority ultimately invalidated the republican foundation narrative by suggesting that the democratic parties had failed to implement the lessons they had claimed to learn from the legacy of the war.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As PhDs generally do, this project accumulated a massive debt of gratitude to various individuals and institutions contributing to its eventual completion. Initially I want to express my gratitude for the generous scholarship from the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences and several Travel Grants from the Trinity Trust, which allowed me to pursue a project of this scope in the first place. The same applies to the helpful and capable archivists and librarians in the Institut für Zeitungsforschung in Dortmund, the Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung in Bonn, the Bibliothek für Zeitgeschichte in Stuttgart, the International Institute for Social History in Amsterdam, the Staatsbibliothek and the Bundesarchiv in Berlin, as well as the university libraries in Dublin, Hagen, Bochum, Dortmund, and Bonn, whose efficiency and expertise was often astounding. I particularly want to thank the staff in the Institut für Zeitungsforschung, where I collated most of my source material, for their tremendous efforts to accommodate my requests.

I am deeply indebted to Professor Alan Kramer for his patient supervision, his unrelenting encouragement, and his critical scrutiny of my work which greatly benefited its cohesion. I am also particularly grateful to my examiners Professor John Horne and Professor Gerhard Hirschfeld for their careful and constructive engagement with my work. Discussions with many other academics and fellow postgraduates, too numerous to be named individually, have helped to clarify and refine my argument. Gratefully acknowledging all those who engaged with my work within the last years, I would particularly like to thank Professor John Horne, Professor David Fitzpatrick, Professor Gilbert Carr, Dr. Benjamin Ziemann and Professor Bernd Hüppauf for commenting on my methodological approach or parts of the work in progress. I also want to thank Dr. Heather Jones and Dr. Nadine Rossol for sharing their work with me.

I owe drinks, dinner and eternal gratitude to all friends and strangers who helped to eliminate the German unwieldiness from my writing, particularly Jennifer O'Brien and Phil Palmer, Eimear O'Connell, Alexis Howell-Jones, Ruraidh Conlon O'Reilly, Matt, Mary and Roger Manktelow, Gerd Dahlbüdding and Dr. Gregory Martin.

A big thank you to Trinity's WW1 postgraduate enclave and my fellow lunchtime conspirators for manifold discussions about academia, the world and everything, and generally making my PhD experience a very enjoyable and sociable one. I also wish to apologise profoundly to my friends who never complained about being told more about the Weimar Republic than they ever desired to know. Thanks for support, shelter, and always putting life back into perspective. I am also very grateful to Dr. Helga Robinson-Hammerstein for tea and many memorable conversations, to Martin Mötter for being a never-ending source of useful literature and to Dr. Villis for many helpful hints, detective genius, and archival companionship.

Above all, I want to thank my parents Hans and Greta Ther whose moral and financial support allowed me to follow in my grandfathers' footsteps and to pursue my fascination with the Weimar Republic rather than a 'sensible career'. We will see where it leads me, but you have done your job far beyond the call of duty. Thanks to Bright Eyes for writing the theme tune to my PhD and to Christoph for playing it to me. While still wondering whether I succeeded in refining your artistic interpretation of the period, I want you to know that your encouragement and your view of our life with the Weimar Republic made a world of difference to me.

ABBREVIATIONS

BFZ	Bibliothek für Zeitgeschichte, Stuttgart
BNV	Bund Neues Vaterland
DDP	Deutsche Demokratische Partei (German Democratic Party)
DNVP	Deutschnationale Volkspartei (German National People's Party)
DVP	Deutsche Volkspartei (German People's Party)
FES	Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung – Archiv der sozialen Demokratie, Bonn
KPD	Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands (Communist Party of Germany)
OHL	Oberste Heeresleitung (Supreme Army Command)
RZNG	Russisches Zentrum für die Aufbewahrung und Erforschung von Dokumenten der neuesten Geschichte, Moscow
SPD	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (German Social Democratic Party)
USPD	Unabhängige Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (Independent German Social Democratic Party)

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Title Page: *Ulk* caricature of the war as a 'Lesson for the future', captioned 'The balance sheet of the war: So many pluses – and [yet] a massive minus'[1]

I	*Ulk* caricature of the impact of the war on human development	**69**
II	USPD election leaflet criticising Hindenburg's perception of the war	**70**
III	Pro-revolutionary image of soldiers and war dead carrying the red flag from *Der wahre Jacob*	**71**
IV	SPD election leaflet referring to wartime losses	**72**
V	German and Allied wartime depictions of Wilhelm II	**112f**
VI	*Ulk* caricature of Ludendorff as a defeated 'gambler'	**114**
VII	DDP caricature of the right-wing parties' 'catalogue of sins'	**115**
VIII	*Ulk* caricature ridiculing the right-wing reliance on the 'stab in the back' myth	**157**
IX	Patriotic wartime postcards	**202**
X	Artists' contemporary images of German war invalids	**203f**
XI	*Ulk* caricature of Woodrow Wilson's failure to criticise the French employment of German prisoners of war in reconstruction work	**205**
XII	*Der wahre Jacob* caricature of the Allied intentions to murder German civilians through the terms of the Treaty of Versailles	**246**
XIII	*Der wahre Jacob* caricature of the Allies as Germany's torturers	**247**
XIV	*Der wahre Jacob* caricature comparing the consequences of the war in France and Germany	**248**
XV	*Ulk* caricature of Germany's mortal struggle against the peace	**249**
XVI	*Ulk* caricature of the destructive consequences of the peace	**296**
XVII	*Der wahre Jacob* caricature of German victimhood and hope	**297**
XVIII	*Ulk* caricature criticising right-wing agitation against the peace	**298**
XIX	*Ulk* satire drawing up the 'balance sheet' of the war	**299**

[1] Willibald Krain, 'Lehre für die Zukunft' *Ulk* 52 (25 December 1919).

CONTENTS

THESIS SUMMARY 2
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS 4
ABBREVIATIONS 5
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS 6
CONTENTS 7

INTRODUCTION 11

CHAPTER 1: WAR AND REVOLUTION 31

DEFINING REVOLUTION 31
'REVOLUTIONARY' WAR EXPERIENCE AND SOLDIERS' SACRIFICE 40
REVOLUTIONARY ROLE OF THE SOLDIERS 53
REVOLUTIONARY IMPETUS 60

CHAPTER 2: MORAL LEGITIMACY FOR GOVERNMENT 73

THE DISCREDITED KAISER 75
DISCREDITED MILITARY LEADERS 85
DISCREDITED POLITICIANS 95
REPUBLICAN GOVERNING LEGITIMACY 103

CHAPTER 3: ALLOCATING BLAME 116

CASE STUDY 1: WAR GUILT 117
CASE STUDY 2: RESPONSIBILITY FOR DEFEAT 132
1. THE CHANCE FOR GERMAN VICTORY 137
2. SOLDIERS' ABILITY TO CONTINUE FIGHTING 142
3. REPUBLICAN 'STAB IN THE BACK' ALLEGATIONS 149

CHAPTER 4: DEMOBILISATION AND REMOBILISATION 158

THE SOLDIERS' RETURN 159
1. CELEBRATION AND MOURNING 162
2. RECONCILING THE IRRECONCILABLE 164
3. REPUBLICAN SELF-REPRESENTATION DURING THE WELCOME CEREMONIES 170
WAR INVALIDS 177
PRISONERS OF WAR 188
1. OBSTRUCTED DEMOBILISATION 188
2. DOMESTIC DIMENSIONS OF THE PRISONER OF WAR QUESTION 194

CHAPTER 5: ENVISAGING PEACE 206

REVOLUTION AND PEACE 210
WILSON AND THE SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL 214
VICTIMHOOD 222
ENVISAGING PEACE 230
ASSESSING THE DRAFT 234

TO SIGN OR TO REJECT 239

CHAPTER 6: DECLARING WAR ON WEIMAR 250

DEALING WITH GERMANY'S ACCEPTANCE OF THE PEACE 254
FACING THE TERMS OF THE TREATY 261
THE ARMY – A CATALYST FOR COUNTER-REVOLUTION 271
ARMY RESPONSES TO THE PEACE 278
POLITICS IN THE ARMY 282
DECLARING WAR ON WEIMAR 286

CONCLUSION 299

BIBLIOGRAPHY 308

APPENDIX I: BIOGRAPHIES OF POLITICIANS AND JOURNALISTS 322

AVENARIUS, FERDINAND 322
BADEN, PRINCE MAX VON 322
BARTH, EMIL 322
BARTH, ERWIN 322
BAUER, GUSTAV 322
BERNSTEIN, EDUARD 323
BOHM-SCHUCH, KLARA 323
BREITSCHEID, RUDOLF 323
BREUER, ROBERT 323
BRÖGER, KARL 324
COHN, OSKAR 324
DÄUMIG, ERNST 324
DITTMANN, WILHELM 324
DORTU, MAX 324
EBERT, FRIEDRICH 324
EISNER, KURT 324
ENDERLING, PAUL 325
ERKELENZ, ANTON 325
ERZBERGER, MATTHIAS 325
FOERSTER, FRIEDRICH WILHELM 325
FISCHART, JOHANNES 326
FISCHER, HANS-WALDEMAR [DR. FROSCH] 326
GANZ, HUGO 327
GERLACH, HELLMUTH VON 327
GOLDSCHMIDT, ALFONS 327
GRAF, GEORG ENGELBERT 327
GUMBEL, EMIL JULIUS 327
HAASE, HUGO 328
HAENISCH, CONRAD 328
HAHNEWALD, EDGAR WILLIAM 328
JACOBSOHN, SIEGFRIED 328
KAHRSTÄDT, FRITZ 328
KAUTSKY, KARL 328
KIRCHER, RUDOLF 329
KLAAR, ERNST 329

KRÄTZIG, HERMANN 329
KRAIN, WILLIBALD 329
KUTTNER, ERICH 330
LAMSZUS, WILHELM 330
LANDSBERG, OTTO 331
LASK, BERTA 331
LEHMANN-RUSSBÜLDT, OTTO 331
LEONARD, RUDOLF [OLF] 331
LEUß, HANS 332
LIEBKNECHT, KARL 332
LUXEMBURG, ROSA 332
MANN, HEINRICH AND THOMAS 332
METZGER, DR. ARNOLD 332
METZLER, GEORG 332
MEYER[-HAMBRUCH], ALFRED RICHARD 332
MOLKEBUHR, HERMANN 333
MÜLLER, HERMANN 333
NICOLAI, GEORG FRIEDRICH 333
NIPPOLD, OTFRIED 333
NOSKE, GUSTAV 333
PEISER, DR. WERNER 334
PERSIUS, (KARL LUDWIG) LOTHAR 334
POLGAR, ALFRED 334
QUIDDE, LUDWIG 334
RADE, MARTIN 335
RATHENAU, WALTHER 335
RAUSCH, BERNHARD 335
RECK-MALLECZEWEN, FRITZ 335
REIFENBERG, CARL BENNO 335
REMARQUE, ERICH MARIA 335
ROß, COLIN 336
SCHÄFER, WILHELM 336
SCHEIDEMANN, PHILIPP 336
SCHIFF, VICTOR 336
SCHULZ, HEINRICH 336
SCHWARZSCHILD, LEOPOLD 336
SINZHEIMER, DR. HUGO 337
SOLLMANN, WILHELM 337
STAMPFER, FRIEDRICH 337
STRÖBEL, HEINRICH 337
TOLLER, ERNST 338
TROELTSCH, ERNST 338
TUCHOLSKY, KURT 338
UHDE, WILHELM 338
UNRUH, FRITZ VON 339
WELS, OTTO 339
WISSEL, RUDOLF 339
WOLFF, FRITZ 339
ZECH, PAUL 339
ZICKLER, ARTUR [PAULCHEN] 340

APPENDIX II: NEWSPAPERS AND JOURNALS 341

COMMONLY HELD VIEWS IN DIE FREIHEIT, VORWÄRTS, AND THE FRANKFURTER ZEITUNG 341
FRANKFURTER ZEITUNG 342
VORWÄRTS 347

DIE FREIHEIT 352
DIE WELT AM MONTAG 355
DIE WELTBÜHNE 357
DAS TAGE-BUCH 360
DER WAHRE JACOB 360
ULK 362

INTRODUCTION

This thesis is based on the fundamental assumption that Germany's war experience defined the political identity and the ideological framework of the Weimar Republic. Both specialised literature dealing with the ideological consequences of the war and survey literature of the period generally note the profound impact of the conflict's legacy on post-war Germany.[2] While acknowledging that right-wing interpretations of the war experience posed a major threat to the republic, current historiography tends to overlook its political significance in republican attempts to define and legitimise the new state. Kurt Sontheimer's concise yet somewhat disjointed assessment of the role of the memory of war in 'anti-republican' ideology, for example, refers to the existence of a pacifist narrative of the war experience.[3] Yet he merely describes its main tenor with reference to Erich Maria Remarque's much quoted novel *All Quiet on the Western Front* rather than analysing its political function. George Mosse's study *Fallen Soldiers* likewise focuses predominantly on assessing how attempts to find symbolic meaning for the human losses of 1914-18 resulted in a mythical glorification and sanitization of the conflict which became part of Germany's nationalist propaganda.[4] Mosse's work provides an insightful analysis of the infiltration of popular culture by wartime memorabilia and the cultural manifestations of the right's glorification of war. His unsubstantiated assumption that the political dominance of the right-wing 'Myth of the War Experience' in the Weimar period was due to 'the inability of the left to forget the reality of the war and enter into' it, however, needs to be challenged.[5] The same applies, although to a lesser extent, to Richard Bessel's related claim that 'the truth about the 1914-1918 conflict, its causes and consequences, remained excluded from

---

[2] See for example Walter Mühlhausen, *Friedrich Ebert 1871-1925. Reichspräsident der Republik* (Essen, 2006), p 156; Karl Dietrich Bracher, *Die Auflösung der Republik* (Düsseldorf, 1984), pp. 14-16; Alan Kramer, 'Der Umgang mit der Schuld. Die "Schuld im Kriege" und die Republik von Weimar' in Dietrich Papenfuß and Wolfgang Schieder (eds.), *Deutsche Umbrüche im 20. Jahrhundert* (Cologne, Weimar, Vienna, 2000), p. 78; Richard Bessel, 'Kriegserfahrungen und Kriegserinnerungen: Nachwirkungen des Ersten Weltkrieges auf das politisch und soziale Leben der Weimarer Republik' in Marcel van der Linden and Gottfried Mergner (eds.), *Kriegsbegeisterung und mentale Kriegsvorbereitung: interdisziplinäre Studien* (Berlin, 1991), p. 125; George Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers. Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (New York, Oxford, 1990), p. 180f; Benjamin Ziemann, 'Republikanische Kriegserinnerung in einer polarisierten Öffentlichkeit. Das Reichsbanner Schwarz-Rot-Gold als Veteranenverband der sozialistischen Arbeiterschaft' in *Historische Zeitschrift* 267 (1998), p. 359-361.

[3] Kurt Sontheimer, *Antidemokratisches Denken in der Weimarer Republik 1918-1933. Die politischen Ideen des deutschen Nationalismus zwischen 1918 und 1933* (Munich, 1983), pp. 94ff.

[4] Mosse, *Fallen soldiers*, pp. 159-200. Klaus Theweleit's convoluted two-volume monograph *Male Phantasies*, which repeatedly refers to mythologised references to the war experience in the the writings of German *Freikorps* men, can also be regarded as an example of research which exclusively focuses on the conflict's influence on (proto-)'fascist ideology'. Although he makes a useful contribution to the understanding of violent, misogynist, and dehumanising mentalities among German *Freikorps*, his (self-admittedly) inexpert psychoanalytical approach merits a critical assessment of his findings. See Klaus Theweleit, *Male fantasies 1/2: Women, floods, bodies, history* (Cambridge, 1987)/ *Male bodies: Psychoanalysing the White Terror* (Cambridge, 1989).

[5] Quote from Mosse, *Fallen soldiers*, p. 106.

mainstream public discussion'.[6] Although republican discourse contributed significantly to the obfuscation of the war guilt question and the wartime policies which led to the treaty of Versailles, a study of republican propaganda in the first years of the Weimar Republic does not permit one to conclude that the Germans 'fled into a [...] mythical, heroic 'spirit of the front".[7]

In line with literary scholars, who tend to date the emergence of a politically relevant republican war narrative to the late 1920s, Sabine Behrenbeck and Ulrich Linse have provided explanations for the non-existence of an official pacifist narrative of the conflict.[8] While Behrenbeck maintains that a 'socially dominant' pacifist interpretation of the war remained impossible in its aftermath, as it would have threatened established values, Linse argues that counter-narratives to the nationalist war myth existed, but did not gain political relevance as they were not institutionalised to the same extent.[9] Historiography dealing with the legacy of the war has hitherto denied the existence of a republican war narrative in the republic's early years or dismissed it as politically insignificant compared with the reactionary right-wing myths which later became the foundation of National Socialist ideology.

This perception is the ideological equivalent of Mosse's theory of 'brutalisation' which linked the violent political culture of the Weimar Republic to the soldiers' traumatising war experience.[10] If one assumes, as Mosse and Jürgen Reulecke have done, that the majority of soldiers upheld military values and remained prone to excessive violence because they could not reconcile their experience at the front with post-war civilian values, it follows that this influential social group also prevented a pacifist narrative of the war from becoming politically relevant.[11] Mosse's theory of 'brutalisation'

---

[6] Richard Bessel, 'The 'front generation' and the politics of Weimar Germany' in Mark Roseman (ed.), *Generations in conflict. Youth revolt and generation formation in Germany 1770-1968* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 135.

[7] Bessel, 'Kriegserfahrungen und Kriegserinnerungen' in Linden and Mergner (eds.), Kriegsbegeisterung, p. 138.

[8] Thorsten Bartz, *Allgegenwärtige Fronten – Sozialistische und linke Kriegsromane in der Weimarer Republik 1918–1933. Motive, Funktionen und Position im Vergleich mit nationalistischen Romanen und Aufzeichnungen im Kontext einer kriegsliterarischen Debatte* (Frankfurt, Berlin, Bern, New York, Paris, Vienna, 1997), p. 14; Bruno Schulze, 'Fiction and Truth: Politics and the War novel' in Franz Karl Stanzel and Martin Löschnigg (eds), *Intimate Enemies. English and German reactions to the Great War* (Heidelberg, 1994), pp. 297, 308f; Ulrich Baron and Hans-Harald Müller, 'Die Weltkriege im Roman der Nachkriegszeiten' in Gottfried Niedhart and Dieter Riesenberger (eds), *Lernen aus dem Krieg? Deutsche Nachkriegszeiten 1918 und 1945. Beiträge zur historischen Friedensforschung* (Munich, 1992), p. 301.

[9] Sabine Behrenbeck, 'Heldenkult und Opfermythos. Mechanismen der Kriegsbegeisterung 1918-1945' in Linden and Mergner (eds.), *Kriegsbegeisterung*, p. 149; Ulrich Linse, 'Das wahre Zeugnis. Eine psychohistorische Deutung des Ersten Weltkrieges' in Klaus Vondung (ed.), *Kriegserlebnis. Der Erste Weltkrieg in der literarischen Gestaltung und symbolischen Deutung der Nationen* (Göttingen, 1980), p. 97.

[10] Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers*, pp. 159-181.

[11] Ibid, particularly pp. 162-170; Jürgen Reulecke, '*Männerbund* versus the family: middle-class youth movements and the family in Germany in the period of the First World War' in Richard Wall and Jay Winter (eds.), *The upheaval of war: family, work and welfare in Europe, 1914-1918* (Cambridge,

has since been moderated. Although Richard Bessel has acknowledged that the war experience had a destabilising influence on individuals and its right-wing glorification instilled military values in the generation who had been too young to experience combat, he has also shown that far from glorifying martial ideals, a majority of war veterans simply returned to civilian life.[12] Benjamin Ziemann and Dirk Schumann furthermore qualify Mosse's theory in regional studies, demonstrating that war veterans in Bavaria were unlikely to join military or paramilitary formations, while Reichswehr members in Saxony were not particularly prone to excessive violence.[13]

The political dimension of the assumption that Germany largely remained mentally and culturally mobilised after the war has so far been challenged only by Benjamin Ziemann. In his article on the SPD veterans' organisation *Reichsbanner*, Ziemann stressed not only that during the Weimar Republic's existence 'no issue has been debated with such intensity and bitterness as the 'inheritance of the war'', but also acknowledged that the republican side of the dispute reflected more than just individual memories.[14] Assessing the *Reichsbanner's* pacifist interpretation of the war experience as part of a political dispute which polarised republican and anti-republican forces, Ziemann broke new ground in recognising that pacifist narratives of the war experience also sought to mythologize it as a symbol of the republic's legitimacy to govern.[15] Ziemann's analysis is, however, limited to a rather specific thematic and temporal framework, as he focuses exclusively on the *Reichsbanner*, (which was only founded in 1924), in the context of its rival right-wing organisations. In assessing the role of the war in republican attempts to conceptualise and legitimise the new state in the aftermath of the revolution, this thesis hopes to provide a more nuanced assessment of Germany's political response to the war, proposing that a systematic analysis rather than a general dismissal of attempts to invest the legacy of the war with a republican symbolism can help to explain the ideological weaknesses of Germany's first democracy.

1988), p. 444. Benjamin Ziemann provides more references for this view in 'Republikanische Kriegserinnerung in einer polarisierten Öffentlichkeit' in *Historische Zeitschrift*, p. 358.

[12] Richard Bessel, *Germany after the First World War* (New York, 1993), pp.257-260, 272f; Bessel, 'The 'front generation'' in Roseman (ed.), *Generations in conflict*, p. 127. Also see Alan Kramer, *Dynamic of Destruction. Culture and mass killing in the First World War* (Oxford, New York, 2007), pp. 307f.

[13] Benjamin Ziemann, *Front und Heimat. Ländliche Kriegserfahrungen im südlichen Bayern* (Essen, 1997), pp. 396f, 399f; Dirk Schumann, *Politische Gewalt in der Weimarer Republik 1918-1933. Der Kampf um die Straße und die Furcht vor dem Bürgerkrieg* (Essen, 2001), p. 359.

[14] Ziemann, 'Republikanische Kriegserinnerung in einer polarisierten Öffentlichkeit' in *Historische Zeitung*, pp. 359-361. Susanne Brandt shares Ziemann's view that the attempt to influence the 'memory of the war was never innocent' but was closely linked with Germany's post-war politics. Having mainly focused on reactionary organisations and institutions, however, Brandt's analysis only identifies the German mobilisation against the Treaty of Versailles as the dominant political aim for which the memory of the war was instrumentalised. See Susanne Brandt, *Vom Kriegsschauplatz zum Gedächtnisraum: Die Westfront 1914-1940* (Baden-Baden, 2000), p. 128.

[15] Ibid, pp. 360f.

It has been argued that the absence of a founding ritual or convincing political program contributed to the republic's lack of political legitimacy.[16] A detailed analysis of revolutionary propaganda reveals, however, that the creation of a republican narrative of the war experience which responded to the prevalent war-weariness in Germany was turned into a 'politically unifying symbol' enabling the creation of a common republican blueprint for the new state.[17] Initially less divisive than the more specific conception of the political parameters of the new state, the common perception that it was shaped by rejection of wartime slaughter and suffering allowed the creation of a republican foundation narrative which all republican forces could agree on despite their ideological differences. On the premise that republican forces from the USPD to the DDP based their legitimacy to govern on a pacifist narrative of the war experience, this thesis challenges George Mosse's assumption that new historical discoveries should be sought in the investigation in the non-pacifist left-wing politicisation of the war.[18] Questioning whether Germany's political discourse really remained fully mobilised after the war, it suggests that the predominant historiographical debate, which seeks the republic's weakness in the nature or lack of revolutionary policies, can be complemented by assessing republican achievements and failures in defining a cohesive political identity with regard to the war's inheritance.[19]

In accordance with the prevalent focus on the exploitation of the war in anti-republican propaganda, the 'stab in the back' myth has received particular attention. While Wilhelm Deist has deconstructed its factual basis by assessing the soldiers' desire for peace, which resulted in a 'covert military strike' in the last months of the conflict, Gerd Krumeich, Boris Barth and Rainer Sammet, have discussed the origins of the myth, its reception, and its devastating impact on the political legitimacy of the republic in varying degrees of detail.[20] Yet only Rainer Sammet's doctoral thesis *"Dolchstoss": Deutschland und die Auseinandersetzung mit der Niederlage im Ersten Weltkrieg (1918-1933)* considers the myth beyond its role in anti-republican propaganda. As part of his analysis of the different manifestations of the 'stab in the back' myth, Sammet provides a

---

[16] Detlev J. K. Peukert, *The Weimar Republic. The crisis of classical modernity* (London, 1993), pp. 5f; Richard Bessel, 'Why did the Weimar Republic Collapse?' in Ian Kershaw (ed.), *Weimar: Why did German democracy fail?* (London, 1990), pp. 129-131.

[17] Peukert, Ibid.

[18] George Mosse, 'Über Kriegserinnerung und Kriegsbegeisterung' in Linden and Mergner (eds.), *Kriegsbegeisterung und mentale Kriegsvorbereitung*, p. 30.

[19] For a summary of this historical controversy see Dieter Gessner, *Die Weimarer Republik* (Darmstadt, 2002), pp. 24-26.

[20] Wilhelm Deist, 'Verdeckter Militärstreik im Kriegsjahr 1918?' in Wolfram Wette (ed.), *Der Krieg des kleinen Mannes* (Munich, 1992), pp. 148f, 152-160. For a similar discussion see Bernd Ulrich and Benjamin Ziemann, 'Das soldatische Kriegserlebnis' in Wolfgang Kruse (ed.), *Eine Welt von Feinden. Der Große Krieg 1914-1918* (Frankfurt, 1997), pp. 153f, 156-158; Boris Barth, *Dolchstosslegenden und politische Desintegration: das Trauma der deutschen Niederlage im Ersten Weltkrieg, 1914-1933* (Düsseldorf, 2003); Gerd Krumeich, 'Die Dolchstoßlegende' in Etienne François and Hagen Schulze (eds.), *Deutsche Erinnerungsorte* (Munich, 2001), pp. 586-599; Rainer Sammet, *"Dolchstoss": Deutschland und die Auseinandersetzung mit der Niederlage im Ersten Weltkrieg (1918-1933)* (Berlin, 2003).

significant selection of quotations showing that the reactionary attack on the republic was not left unchallenged.[21] Lacking clear analytical parameters, however, Sammet's research remains confined to demonstrating that a left-wing counter-narrative to the 'stab in the back' myth existed between 1918 and 1928 but does not offer an assessment of its political role in establishing a republican identity. In order to refine Sammet's valuable discovery that left-wing forces actively opposed the right-wing myth of defeat, this thesis will undertake a thorough analysis of republican narratives and myths regarding the war. In identifying and analysing the legacy of the war as a crucial component of the republic's foundation narrative, it will offer a more nuanced analysis of republican failures to reinforce the republican interpretation of the war's legacy during the political challenges of the first years of the republic.

This inquiry aims to investigate the extent to which the republican press and republican propaganda instrumentalised the war in defining and consolidating the political parameters of the post-war state. It is not primarily concerned with political decision-making process at government or party level, examining instead how the political relevance of the war and its legacy were communicated to the German people. Party political leaflets are the most obvious source for an assessment of the conflict's significance in the early years of Weimar politics, because they showed the extent to which individual parties regarded war-related issues as central to arguments for or against the republic. They generally contained extremely concise information intended to define the political framework of individual parties and entice potential voters. Leaflets can therefore be seen as attempts to rally support for specific party political objectives, while representing political statements regarding the war considered likely to gain public support. Accordingly, this thesis has analysed 327 political leaflets dealing with the First World War and its legacy, 142 of which reflect republican views ranging from the Independent Social Democratic Party (USPD) to the left-wing liberal German Democratic Party (DDP).[22] The wide availability of leaflets from all political parties also permits introducing a comparative approach which includes prominent right-wing arguments. This could not be achieved by examining right-wing newspapers, for their inclusion would widen the scope of the material under examination to an unmanageable degree.

Direct party political propaganda was, however, by no means the only source of political information available to the German population after the revolution of November 1918. Germany's traditionally partisan press also considered itself a significant influence

---

[21] Sammet, *"Dolchstoss"*, pp. 176-188, 259-268.

[22] Of these leaflets 26 were published by the KPD, 27 by the USPD, 62 by the SPD, 53 by the DDP, 17 by the DVP, 26 by the DNVP and 15 by republican councils. Of the remaining 101 leaflets 69 were of democratic and 32 of right-wing origin or content. The exception is the Centre Party, for which I have only found the grand total of one leaflet dealing with the war. Benjamin Ziemann's argument that the Centre Party did not tend to define itself with reference to the war explains this phenomenon. See 'Die Erinnerung an den Ersten Weltkrieg in den Milieukulturen der Weimarer Republik' in Thomas F. Schneider (ed.), *Kriegserlebnis und Legendenbildung. Das Bild des "modernen" Krieges in Literatur, Theater, Photographie und Film* (Osnabrück, 1999), p. 258.

on political opinion.[23] In contrast to the Anglo-American tradition of objective journalism, German journalists reported news in accordance with the political *Weltanschauung* they or their paper sought to promote.[24] A representative expression of this view can be found in Bernhard Fulda's study of the Weimar press, which quotes a contemporary book on newspapers as maintaining that 'news which present events in [...] an unclouded and unbiased fashion is only suitable for academic treatments. Newspapers can neither use them nor do they need them'.[25] In the same vain, Fulda described how two readers could be presented with entirely divergent interpretations of the same situation according to the political bias of their respective newspaper.[26] The assumption that newspapers were crucial leaders of political opinion, which was shared by journalists and politicians alike, gained particular significance after the revolution.[27]

Freedom of the press and free speech had been among the main demands of the 1848 revolution, but were not fully implemented until November 1918.[28] Although complete control over the press could not be re-established after 1848, regulatory measures such as publishing licences, postal control, censorship and the implementation of repressive tax measures continued to limit journalists' freedom of expression.[29] Although economic repression of the press was abolished in 1874, political control was upheld within a legal framework that prohibited 'spreading indecent publications, committing lèse-majesté, appealing for treason and endangering public peace by inciting class hatred'.[30] Additionally, Bismarck attempted to spread official reports in the guise of impartial news communications in order to influence political press coverage.[31] With the state of emergency declared on the outbreak of the First World War, the imperial government abolished any freedom of the press, imposed severe censorship on military as well as mundane information likely to undermine public morale, and ordered a falsification of news reports.[32] The revolution altered the limited scope of political action open to the press on two counts. Not only did it end the climate of press repression, enabling journalists to openly participate in political debate, but the democratic inclusion

---

[23] Bernhard Fulda, *Press and Politics in the Weimar Republic* (Oxford, 2009), pp. 14, 203f.
[24] Ibid, pp. 14, 17-20, 42, 203, 216f.
[25] Paul Harms, *Die Zeitung von heute. Ihr Wesen und ihr Daseinszweck* (Leipzig, 1922), p. 22 quoted in Fulda, *Press and Politics*, p. 217.
[26] Fulda, *Press and Politics*, p. 11.
[27] Ibid, pp. 9f, 19f, 42f, 203f. Fulda also convincingly shows that newspapers were to some extent led by 'public opinion' because, as a commercial enterprise, they could not afford to alienate their readers too much. See Fulda, *Press and Politics*, p. 21.
[28] Kurt Koszyk, *Deutsche Presse im 19. Jahrhundert. Geschichte der deutschen Presse, vol. II* (Berlin, 1966), pp. 118-126; Konrad Dussel, *Deutsche Tagespresse im 19. und 20 Jahrhundert* (Münster, 2004), p. 121.
[29] Koszyk, *Deutsche Presse II*, pp. 118-126.
[30] Dussel, *Deutsche Tagespresse*, pp. 107-110.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Kurt Koszyk, *Deutsche Presse 1914-1945. Geschichte der deutschen Presse vol. III* (Berlin, 1972), pp. 14-19.

of the population in the decision-making process increased the political relevance of 'public opinion'.[33]

In his dissertation on the German press between 1918 and 1923, the historian Burkhard Asmuss has outlined his ambition to provide a comprehensive evaluation of 'public opinion' through analysis of the press.[34] Asmuss' assumption that 'published' and 'public' opinion were identical uncritically adopts the perception prevalent amongst contemporary editors, journalists, and politicians that the people indiscriminately believed whatever their newspaper told them.[35] Such a simplified equation of 'public' and 'published' opinion merits revision, however. In his refreshingly nuanced analysis of the political role of the press in the Weimar Republic, Bernhard Fulda has tackled the relationship between the different agents of political discourse. While acknowledging that the political polarisation of press coverage in Germany and the distortion of facts within news coverage had an impact on public opinion, he challenges the idea that readers' uncritical acceptance of such views was the only factor shaping the population's political opinions.[36] As an alternative interpretation Fulda instead suggests that while the popular evaluation of newspapers depended on the reader's preferred political opinion, they nevertheless provided the population's main 'window on politics' and created the basis for everyday political discussions.[37] In pointing out the limited availability of historical sources clarifying the exact impact of press coverage on ordinary people's opinions, Fulda concedes the difficulties in reconstructing 'public opinion'.[38] This study has sought to avoid rehashing the problem by taking a different approach. In focusing on the republican instrumentalisation of the war, it shifts its interest in the press to its role as a medium which allowed the assessment of political communication beyond high politics, yet still in relation to it and away from its impact on public opinion.

In order to contextualise the political role of the press, one must consider the multi-dimensional creation of 'published opinion'. Even newspapers which were explicitly conceptualised as party political organs, such as the SPD publication *Vorwärts* and the USPD mouthpiece *Die Freiheit*, did not exclusively support their party's mainstream

---

33 Fulda, *Press and Politics*, pp. 203.

34 Asmuss, *Republik ohne Chance?*, p. 30. Although the media studies scholar Kaaren Moores criticises Asmuss' definition of public opinion as too simplistic, she also claims to represent Weimar's 'climate of [political] opinion' without offering an alternative methodology suitable for credible historical research. See Moores, *Presse und Meinungsklima*, pp. 30, 44, 69.

35 Asmuss, *Republik ohne Chance?*, p. 30; Eksteins, *The Limits of Reason*, pp. 71f; Fulda, *Press and Politics*, pp. 203-205.

36 Fulda, *Press and Politics*, pp. 72, 203-216.

37 Although Fulda argues that it is almost impossible to reconstruct communication channels in this period, he notes that newspapers were often shared among working class households and could be read in pubs, suggesting that they played an important role in public debate. Ibid, pp. 6f. Burkard Asmuss and Kaaren Moores also emphasise that, at least until the late 1920s, newspapers were the people's main source of political information. See Kaaren Moores, *Meinungsklima in der Weimarer Republik. Eine publizistikwissenschaftliche Untersuchung* (Mainz, 1997), pp. 31, 33f; Burkhard Asmuss, *Republik ohne Chance? Akzeptanz und Legitimation der Weimarer Republik in der deutschen Tagespresse zwischen 1918 und 1923* (Berlin, New York, 1994), p. 19.

38 Fulda, *Press and Politics*, p. 209.

political policies. Margot Mayer argues in her *Magister* dissertation that the SPD leadership successfully imposed the dominant party line on the *Vorwärts* by appointing Friedrich Stampfer as its editor-in-chief in 1916, thus limiting the publication's role as a forum for internal political debate.[39] Although the SPD organ subsequently largely followed the dominant party line and supported the SPD's government policies, *Vorwärts* also printed dissenting opinions.[40] Eduard Bernstein and Friedrich Wilhelm Foerster, for example, were strongly censured by *Vorwärts* for criticising the government's foreign policy approach.[41] Both, however, were also allowed to voice their dissent within its pages.[42] Newspapers and journals without an immediate party political affiliation such as the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, also took a clear political stance. The publication's political proximity to the liberal DDP was evident from its custom of printing the party's announcements and commenting on its political activity. Even when the *Frankfurter Zeitung* did not agree completely with the DDP party line, it pursued a distinctive left-wing liberal agenda.

Each of these three political broadsheets has been identified as a contributor to the creation of a 'republican' ideology, publishing four categories of political information which reflected the complexity of political discourse in Germany. First of all *Die Freiheit*, *Vorwärts* and the *Frankfurter Zeitung* alike printed some government and respective party political announcements, minutes as well as summaries of political events and meetings without commentary. Secondly the publications featured political commentary by journalists and, on occasion, also by politicians and prominent German citizens. Thirdly, it was common to quote from other newspapers or journals to attack or promote a certain view.[43] With regard to the war, this cross-medial communication is particularly evident between *Die Freiheit* and *Vorwärts*, which regularly attacked each other's political reporting. Finally, all the newspapers analysed printed readers' letters occasionally, thus providing very brief insights into 'public opinion' on particularly contentious issues. The diversity of the available information becomes even more evident if the different sources of political opinion which went into the creation of each newspaper are considered. To

---

[39] Margot Mayer, *Der „Vorwärts" in der Weimarer Republik und seine Rolle in der innerparteilichen Diskussion* (Magister Dissertation, Ludwig-Maximilian-University Munich, 1980), p. 142-145. For biographical information on Stampfer see Appendix I, p. 337.

[40] Ibid, p. 145.

[41] For an evaluation of Foerster's and Bernstein's views in *Vorwärts* or within the party see Victor Schiff, 'Wilsons Versagen unsere Schuld?' *Vorwärts* 362 (18 July 1919); 'Zur Psychologie des Friedensschlusses' *Vorwärts* 407 (11 August 1919); Eduard Bernstein, 'Mäßigt Euch. Ein Wort an alle Nationen' *Vorwärts* 213 (27 April 1919); 'Mäßigung auf beiden Seiten' *Vorwärts* 227 (5 May 1919); Friedrich Stampfer, 'Die Suche nach dem Frieden' *Vorwärts* 214 (28 April 1919); Auswärtige Politik auf dem Parteitag' 297 (13 June 1919). For biographical information on Bernstein and Foerster see Appendix I, pp. 323, 325f.

[42] For Foerster's and Bernstein's journalistic contributions to *Vorwärts* see for example 'Zur Psychologie des Friedensschlusses' *Vorwärts* 392 (3 August 1919); Friedrich Wilhelm Foerster, 'Der Kernpunkt I/II' *Vorwärts* 662/663 (29 December 1919); Eduard Bernstein, 'Mäßigt Euch. Ein Wort an alle Nationen' *Vorwärts* 213 (27 April 1919); Idem, 'Nochmal: Mäßigt Euch' *Vorwärts* 231 (7 May 1919); Idem, 'Bekennen ist die Losung' *Vorwärts* 277 (1 June 1919); Idem; 'Die nächsten Aufgaben in der Friedensfrage I/II' *Vorwärts* 337/339 (4/5 July 1919).

[43] Fulda, *Press and Politics*, p. 20.

varying degrees, it reflected government policy, party political considerations, the political agenda of the publication's editor-in-chief or editorial board, the political convictions of individual journalists or contributing politicians as well as taboos and sensitivities which were perceived to be popular. This study identifies this range of press and party-political attempts to influence popular political opinion as representative of a specific 'propaganda network' which can be classified as 'republican discourse'.[44]

Personal connections between journalism and politics within this network were complex and often intertwined. As mentioned above, journalists tended to consider themselves political agitators and opinion makers, some without taking an active role in party politics.[45] *Vorwärts* journalist Artur Zickler, the cutting satirist Kurt Tucholsky, the author and journalist Erich Dombrowski (alias: Johannes Fischart), and the economist Alfons Goldschmidt are examples of journalists who did not hold a prominent political office in the Weimar period.[46] Yet many journalists were actively involved in republican politics on a regional, governmental, or administrative level, especially contributors to *Die Freiheit* and *Vorwärts*, and *Die Welt am Montag*.[47] Many prominent socialist politicians came from journalistic backgrounds and remained active publicists after their election to office.[48] Additionally, many republican journalists, among them Hellmuth von Gerlach, Emil Julius Gumbel, Erich Kuttner, Otto Lehmann-Russbüldt, Richard Witting, Lothar Persius, Ludwig Quidde, Heinrich Ströbel and Kurt Tucholsky were involved in a wide range of pacifist or republican organisations and pressure groups.[49] The active political engagement of journalists as well as the active journalistic engagement of politicians suggests that the realms of journalism and politics could not be clearly differentiated in the socialist and pacifist mileux of the Weimar Republic.[50]

The choice of the term 'republicanism' as a defining characteristic of the press analysed merits clarification. Unlike France, Germany in 1918 did not have a long-standing republican tradition and thus lacked a generally valid definition of the political

---

[44] In the context of this thesis the term propaganda is not perceived as an 'absolute opposite of the truth', as Bernd Hüppauf identified it, but according to a definition of Garth Jowett and Victoria O' Donnell which describes it as 'a form of communication that attempts to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist'. Bernd Hüppauf, 'Kriegsliteratur' in Gerhard Hirschfeld, Gerd Krumeich and Irina Renz, *Enzyklopädie Erster Weltkrieg* (Paderborn, 2004), p. 181; Garth Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion* (3, London, 1999), p. 5. A more detailed explanation of this analytical concept will follow a spart of the methodological section of this introduction.

[45] Fulda, *Press and Politics*, pp. 42, 203.

[46] See Appendix I, pp. 326f, 338, 340.

[47] Political positions held by journalists and editors included Landtag as well as Reichstag seats, high administrative positions in the civil service and diplomatic posts. For more detailed biographies of individual journalists see Appendix I, pp. 322-340.

[48] See for example Scheidemann, Eisner, Ebert, Bernstein, Breitscheid, Haase, Kautsky, Kuttner, Molkebuhr, Müller, Noske, Stampfer, Wissel in Appendix I, pp. 323ff, 328ff, 333f,336f, 339.

[49] See Appendix I, pp. 327f, 330ff, 334f, 337f.

[50] Bernhard Fulda, who considers this issue across the entire spectrum of Weimar politics comes to the same conclusion, arguing that in 1924 'thirteen per cent of the Reichstag's deputies were publicists by profession.' See Fulda, *Press and Politics*, p. 20.

structures associated with republicanism. Limited agitation for a republic in the French revolutionary sense, which defined republicanism as a synonym of democracy and an antonym of monarchism, was adopted by democratic factions in some German states in response to the French revolution and remained the political goal of a minority of intellectuals.[51] Germany's territorial fragmentation, the descent of the French revolution into violence and terror, and the German princes' readiness to implement moderate reform largely replaced such demands with the conviction that, given a separation of powers, a constitutional monarchy could also be envisaged as a successful implementation of the republican idea as Germany was not yet ready for a democratic republic.[52] Accordingly, the liberal majority of reformers merely sought to ensure moderate civic freedoms and limited political participation during the 1848 revolution, while distancing themselves from more radical demands.[53] In addition, communist ideology introduced another interpretation of republicanism in 1848, envisaging a break with bourgeois values in favour of a workers' republic.[54] The changing political attributes associated with republicanism, as well as the widespread toleration of parliamentary monarchy as an acceptable basis for reform, shifted the mainstream reform debate from anti-monarchist republicanism to moderate demands for democratisation.[55] This continued acceptance of the monarchy as a suitable framework for democratisation, even by the SPD, prevented the democratic political forces who laid claim to the republic in 1918 from falling back on a long standing republican tradition once the monarchy had collapsed. Changing interpretations of the word 'republicanism' and its association with mutually antagonistic political goals meant that its meaning in the 1918 revolution was limited to a rejection of the monarchy, without specifying a particular political agenda.[56] Within the framework of this analysis, 'republican' has thus been defined as encompassing those political forces who envisaged an inclusive, democratic state in accordance with the political values later reflected in the constitution of the Weimar Republic.[57] This focus on democratic republicanism justifies excluding the revolutionary shop stewards and the radical left-

---

[51] Wolfgang Mager, 'Republik' in Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, Reinhard Koselleck (eds.), *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland. vol. 5* (Stuttgart, 1984), pp. 598f, 601, 612f.

[52] Ibid, pp. 601-625; Reinhard Rürup, 'Revolution and Reform: Germany and the French Revolution in 1798' in Idem (ed.) *The Problem of Revolution in Germany, 1789-1989* (Oxford, New York, 2000), pp. 9-15.

[53] Mager, 'Republik' in Brunner, Conze, Koselleck (eds.), *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, pp. 632.639; Rüdiger Hachtmann, 'Success and Failure: The revolution of 1848' in Rürup (ed.) *The Problem of Revolution*, pp. 29ff.

[54] Mager, 'Republik' in Brunner, Conze, Koselleck (eds.), *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, p. 639.

[55] Ibid, pp. 639-645.

[56] Ibid, pp. 645-648.

[57] See 'Die Verfassung des deutschen Reichs, 11 August 1919' in Wolfgang Michalka and Gottfried Niedhart (eds.) *Dokumnete zur Innen- und Außenpolitik* (Frankfurt, 1992), pp. 53f.

wing supporters of a pure council system from this study, because they advocated a republican ideal which disregarded democratic principles.[58]

A number of comparative press-based monographs have already noted the difficulty of selecting a representative sample of Germany's vast and diverse press in the aftermath of the war.[59] Both Kaaren Moores and Burkhard Asmuss, for example, elaborately justify their selection of press sources as representative of political opinion in Weimar Germany, without being entirely convincing.[60] The research undertaken for this study has shown that the vast diversity of press coverage, which also often reflected personal opinions of individual journalists, renders the quest for representative information illusory. The selection of publications used here does not claim to be representative of republican propaganda as a whole, which was far too diverse for a project of this scope to encompass. Taking into account the difficulty of generalising from such diversity, the study aims instead to analyse the common and divergent strands of political debate available throughout republican discourse without claims of exclusivity.

In order to cover a broad range of republican opinion nevertheless, this study analyses one major broadsheet associated with each of the republican parties, (USPD, SPD, and DDP), as well as smaller publications with a similar party political agenda. As the DDP did not have a specific party organ, the *Frankfurter Zeitung* was chosen to represent left-wing liberal views rather than the *Berliner Tageblatt* or *Vossische Zeitung* in order to broaden the spatial scope of the analysis beyond Berlin.[61] The political proximity between the *Frankfurter Zeitung* and the DDP was evident in its support for the party's political programme and its regular reporting of party political issues and events.[62] The publication's print run of three daily editions, which fluctuated between 103,415 in 1918 and 84,000 in 1919, was purchased mainly by Germany's educated middle class.[63] It did not have an editor-in-chief, but was controlled by an editorial committee, and regularly featured articles by prominent DDP members such as professors Ernst Troeltsch, Max Weber, Ludwig Quidde, and Walther Schücking. As the scope of available material

---

[58] For a summary of the political framework of the revolutionary shop steward movement and the ideas of the pure council system see Peter von Oertzen, *Betriebsräte in der Novemberrevolution. Eine politikwissenschaftliche Untersuchung über Ideengehalt und Struktur der betrieblichen und wirtschaftlichen Arbeiterräte in der deutschen Revolution 1918/1919* (2, Bonn, 1976), pp. 71-78, 89-99.

[59] Asmuss, *Republik ohne Chance?,* p. 29; Moores, *Presse und Meinungsklima*, p. 48.

[60] Asmuss claims to represent press sources reflecting Germany's political landscape in the aftermath of the war, yet ignores the USPD publication *Die Freiheit*. Asmuss, *Republik ohne Chance?,* pp. 29f. Kaaren Moores, on the other hand, defines individual journalists as 'opinion leaders' representing Weimar's political landscape, thus disregarding the variety of opinion which different journalists contributed to each publication. Moores, *Presse und Meinungsklima*, pp. 50f.

[61] Asmuss, *Republik ohne Chance?*, p. 30; Moores, *Presse und Meinungsklima*, p. 36.

[62] Koszyk, *Deutsche Presse III*, p. 265; Heinz Dietrich Fischer, *Handbuch der politischen Presse in Deutschland 1480-1980* (Düsseldorf, 1981), pp. 258f.

[63] Asmuss, *Republik ohne Chance?,* p. 59; Moores, *Presse und Meinungsklima*, p. 61; Modris Eksteins, 'The Frankfurter Zeitung: Mirror of Weimar Democracy' in *Journal of Contemporary History* 6, 4 (1971), pp. 4f. When citing print runs of particular newspapers, it must be noted that information provided by publishers was not necessarily reliable, as they tended to exaggerate print runs to boost advertising revenue. See Fulda, *Press and Politics*, pp. 21f.

was too great to allow the inclusion of another major DDP affiliated paper, this analysis merely includes *Ulk*, the weekly satirical supplement of the *Berliner Tageblatt*, as a complementary source of liberal propaganda. According to Kurt Tucholsky's biographer Michael Hepp, *Ulk* was also delivered as part of Rudolf Mosse's left-wing liberal *Berliner Volkszeitung* and had a print run of roughly 600,000 in the post-war period.[64]

The SPD party organ *Vorwärts*, which came to represent party's more conservative wing after Friedrich Stampfer was appointed editor-in-chief in 1916 to reverse the publication's opposition to war credits, had a circulation between 300,000 and 440,000 in 1918.[65] It printed two daily editions with regular contributions from journalists such as Stampfer, Erich Kuttner, Bernhard Rausch and Victor Schiff, as well as prominent SPD politicians such as Philipp Scheidemann, Eduard Bernstein, Friedrich Ebert and Gustav Bauer.[66] In addition to *Vorwärts*, this study also assesses the biweekly satirical periodical *Der wahre Jacob*, which had 160,000 subscribers in 1919.[67] It was founded as the party's mouthpiece in 1879, adopting the SPD's pro-war stance during the conflict and continuing to follow the party line in its aftermath.[68] In order to include propaganda from the USPD, which split from the SPD in 1917 over the latter's pro-war stance, this research also analyses the Independent Socialist party organ *Die Freiheit*.[69] As USPD propaganda was severely censored during the war, the party's official mouthpiece was only founded on 15 November 1918 and printed 13 weekly editions with a circulation of 200,000.[70]

In addition to these (in the case of the liberal publications semi-) party-political press sources, this study will also evaluate three publications representing general pro-republican minority journalism. The first of these is the pacifist newspaper *Die Welt am Montag*, which was largely influenced by the views of its radically democratic editor-in-chief Hellmut von Gerlach.[71] Von Gerlach was among the founding members of the DDP and opposed the Marxist doctrine of the SPD.[72] Yet he and his publication, which had a

---

[64] See *Kurt Tucholsky. Biographische Annäherungen* (Reinbek near Hamburg, 1993), pp. 162.

[65] The numbers provided in the scholarly literature differ. While Burkhard Asmuss argues that the SPD paper had a circulation of 300,000 in 1918, Klaus Prädikow, referring to Kurt Koszyk and Kurt Kaiser-Blüth, estimates its circulation at 440,000 in late 1918, while suggesting that its print run decreased to 300, 000 in 1922/1923. See Asmuss, *Republik ohne Chance?*, pp. 30, 61f; Klaus Prädikow, *Der Weimarer VORWÄRTS.* Der *VORWÄRTS als Beispiel der Sozialdemokratischen Presse der Weimarer Republik* (Essen, 1998), pp. 78f.

[66] For detailed biographies of these SPD politicians and journalists see Appendix I, pp. 322-340.

[67] Hans J. Schütz (ed.), *Der wahre Jacob. Ein halbes Jahrhundert in Faksimiles* (Berlin, Bonn, 1977), p. X.

[68] Ibid, pp. VII, X.

[69] Roger Chickering, *Imperial Germany and the Great War, 1914-1918* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 158f; Walter Mühlhausen, 'Die Sozialdemokratie am Scheideweg – Burgfrieden, Parteikrise und Spaltung im Ersten Weltkrieg' in Wolfgang Michalka (ed.), *Der Erste Weltkrieg. Wirkung, Wahrnehmung, Analyse* (Munich, Zurich, 1994), pp. 660-662.

[70] *Ala Zeitungskatalog* (Berlin, 1920), p. 2; Aiga Seywald, *Die Presse der sozialen Bewegungen 1918-1933* (Essen, 1994), pp. 114f; Eugen Prager, *Geschichte der USPD. Entstehung und Entwicklung der unabhängigen sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands* (Berlin, 1921), pp. 144f, 171, 183.

[71] Franz Gerrit Schulte, *Der Publizist Hellmut von Gerlach (1866-1935)* (Munich, 1988), p. 157. For biographical information on Hellmut von Gerlach see Appendix I, p. 327.

[72] Ibid, pp. 164, 171-174.

circulation of 75,000, nevertheless subscribed to the radical pacifism of the USPD.[73] This study furthermore examines the weekly periodicals *Die Weltbühne* and *Das Tage-Buch*, which both had a circulation of approximately 16,000 in 1931.[74] Each commented on a wide range of social, political and cultural issues and featured different political views, although Siegfried Jacobsohn's *Die Weltbühne* was generally considered more left-wing than Stefan Grossmann's essentially left-liberal *Das Tage-Buch*.[75]

Even within the analytic parameters of democratic republicanism as outlined above, the decision to include *Die Freiheit* and exclude the Centre Party press from the selection of republican newspapers merits explanation. Riccardo Bavaj defines the left wing of the Independent Socialists as part of the Weimar Republic's antiparliamentary opposition.[76] Yet the USPD majority, which *Die Freiheit* represented, pledged its support for a democratic constitution until its Leipzig party conference in December 1919, as even Bavaj has had to concede.[77] The USPD can therefore be regarded as genuinely committed to democratic and republican principles for most of the period analysed here. The inclusion of a USPD publication is also merited by the fact that the political instrumentalisation of the war played a decisive role in the disputes between the SPD and the USPD.

The reasons for excluding Centre Party can also be elucidated with reference to the time-frame analysed. Although the party developed into a key defender of republican values throughout the 1920s, it was motivated by pragmatism rather than genuine republicanism in declaring its 'at least formal loyalty' to the new state in November 1918.[78]

---

[73] Koszyk, *Deutsche Presse*, p. 285.

[74] Ibid. Fritz J. Raddatz argues that neither *Die Weltbühne* nor *Das Tage-Buch* ever had a circulation of more than 15,000. See: *Das Tage Buch. Portrait einer Zeitschrift* (Königsstein/Ts., 1981), p. 5.

[75] Moores, *Presse und Meinungsklima*, pp. 65f; Koszyk, *Deutsche Presse*, p. 286; Alexander Lipping (ed.), *Der Traum der Republik: literarische Revue über die Zerstörung der Weimarer Republik* (Cologne, 1988), p. 16. Siegfried Jacobsohn (1881-1926) founded *Die Schaubühne* in 1905, having contributed theatre and concert reviews to *Die Welt am Montag* until 1904. *Die Schaubühne* initially contained nothing but cultural reviews, but began to publish economic and political commentary from 1913. The journal was renamed *Die Weltbühne* in 1918, after which it supported Germany's democratisation and remained committed to pacifist ideals. See Lothar Wieland, 'Siegfried Jacobsohn' in Helmut Donat und Karl Holl (eds.), *Die Friedensbewegung. Organisierter Pazifismus in Deutschland, Österreich und in der Schweiz* (Düsseldorf, 1983), p. 205. Professor of medicine Georg Friedrich Nicolai (1874-1964) was persecuted for his vehement criticism of Germany's wartime policies and his refusal to take up arms during the First World War. He eventually fled to Switzerland where he published his monograph *Die Biologie des Krieges* (The biology of war). After the revolution Nicolai joined the *Deutsche Friedensgesellschaft* (German Peace League) and the pacifist *Bund Neues Vaterland* (New Fatherland League). He actively promoted pacifist and democratic values as well as Franco-German reconciliation. Nicolai accepted a professorhip at the university of Córdoba after he was removed from his university teaching post because of nationalist protests. See Helmut Donat, 'Georg Friedrich Nicolai' in Ibid, pp. 281ff.

[76] See: Riccardo Bavaj, *Von links gegen Weimar. Linkes antiparlamentarisches Denken in der Weimarer Republik* (Bonn, 2005), pp. 183-201.

[77] Ibid, pp. 195-198. Hans Mommsen also defines the USPD as supportive of a parliamentary democracy. See *Die verspielte Freiheit: der Weg der Republik von Weimar in den Untergang 1918 bis 1933* (Berlin, 1989), p. 36.

[78] Elke Seefried, 'Verfassungspragmatismus und Gemeinschaftsideologie: "Vernunfts-republikanismus" in der deutschen Zentrumspartei' in Andreas Wirsching and Jürgen Eder (eds.),

It could be argued that in supporting a constitutional monarchy with strong democratic elements towards the end of the war, the Centre Party did not favour a radically different blueprint for Germany's democratisation to the SPD leadership, which was also prepared to uphold the monarchy in order to prevent revolution.[79] While the SPD's support for the monarchy was strategic rather than doctrinal, however, the Centre Party expressed genuine ideological commitment to Wilhelm II and the Hohenzollern monarchy. The Centre Party's mouthpiece *Germania* thus explicitly denounced Wilhelm's abdication as unnecessary, lauded his support for Germany's democratisation and remembered the great achievements of the monarchy immediately before the outbreak of the revolution.[80] Such political commentary permits the deduction that the Centre Party's allegiance to the monarchy was more fundamental than that of the SPD.

During the war, the Catholic Centre Party was deeply divided between its conservative wing, which was fundamentally opposed to Germany's move towards parliamentary democracy and a democratic faction led by Erzberger.[81] Yet even the party's more moderate wing still demanded a strong monarchy in June 1918, while remaining vague about plans to implement demands for democratic reform within its political framework.[82] These divisions, in addition to its desire to attract a broad range of voters in the National Assembly elections in February 1919, contributed to the Centre Party's reluctance to clearly define its political blueprint for the new state.[83] *Germania* expressed the party's fundamental opposition to the revolutionary change and its desire for political influence within the new state in the immediate post-war months, yet referred to republicanism solely as a social democratic ideal.[84] The fact that the party postponed formulating a programme clearly committing it to a 'democratic republic' until late December 1918 can thus be regarded as an indication that the Centre Party's republicanism was initially motivated by tactical considerations rather than conviction.[85] This study does not question the Centre Party's commitment to democratic values or its willingness to face Germany's wartime inheritance at great political cost. It merely

---

Vernunftrepublikanismus in der Weimarer Republik. Politik, Literatur, Wissenschaft (Stuttgart, 2008), pp. 57-67.

[79] Mühlhausen, for example, emphasizes Friedrich Ebert's explicit support for the monarchy which he justified by arguing that Germany was 'not ready for a republic'. See Mühlhausen, *Friedrich Ebert*, p. 98.

[80] 'Der Kaiser und das neue Deutschland' *Germania* 512 (1 November 1918); 'Berlin, 1. November' *Germania* 513 (2 November 1918); 'Berlin, 4. November' *Germania* 517 (5 November 1918). Also see Asmuss, *Republik ohne Chance*, pp. 104f.

[81] Rudolf Morsey, 'Die deutsche Zentrumspartei zwischen November-Revolution und Weimarer Nationalversammlung' in *Dona Westfalica. Georg Schreiber zum 80. Geburtstag* (Münster, 1963), pp. 242f. For biographical information on Erzberger see Appendix I, p. 325.

[82] Ibid, p. 73.

[83] Ibid, pp. 249ff, 254f, 265f.

[84] See for example 'Berlin, 8. November' *Germania* 525 (9 November 1918); 'Berlin, 21. November' *Germania* 545 (22 November 1918); 'Wahrheit und Klarheit' *Germania* 572/573 (7/8 December 1918); 'Versprechen und Halten bei der Sozialdemokratie' *Germania* (12 January 1919).

[85] Morsey, Die deutsche Zentrumspartei' in *Dona Westfalica*, pp. 265f; Seefried, 'Verfassungs-pragmatismus' in Wirsching and Eder (eds.), *Vernunftrepublikanismus*, pp. 57-67

suggests that the Centre Party's continued allegiance to the monarchy and its evident scepticism regarding the republican idea in the immediate post-war period merits its exclusion from a study seeking to investigate the propaganda produced by political forces which actively supported the establishment of a democratic republic.[86] This study's identification of 'republicanism' as a defining characteristic of the media analysed, does not aim to suggest that these republican forces had a definitive common or homogenous political vision. It rather considers their commitment to republicanism as a lowest common denominator in order to examine the extent to which it consolidated approaches to dealing with the legacy of the First World War.

The restrictions which a PhD imposed on the broad scope of source material outlined above necessitated placing a limit on the inquiry's temporal framework, as analysing a longer period would restrict the depth of research to mere survey work. Although the war and its consequences remained crucial to political debate throughout the Weimar era, as historians and literary scholars assessing the reception of *All Quiet on the Western Front* have shown, my analysis only focuses only on the revolutionary period.[87] Assuming that the phase of political and ideological unrest in which different factions contended for influence in defining the new state set the tenor of political discourse, my study encompasses the phase from the November revolution in 1918 to the *Reichstag* elections on 6 June 1920, which Peukert defines as the end of the 'post-revolutionary crisis'.[88]

Merely restricting the timeframe would not have reduced the available sources to a comprehensive yet manageable body of material. I had originally planned to include all articles referring to the war, in order to avoid missing the subtleties and side-strands of its perceived significance. Yet an initial review of the newspapers involved quickly suggested that this approach was distinctly overambitious. Existing literature analysing the press in the Weimar Republic has offered different approaches to condensing the vast amount of press reports to a representative yet manageable sample. While the historian Burkhard Asmuss focused exclusively on event-based newspaper coverage, the media studies scholar Kaaren Moores analysed a limited thematic sample of articles written by journalists she defined as 'opinion leaders' during the period.[89] Offering a more flexible approach, Bernhard Fulda defined his sampling as a 'commonsensical case-study approach'

---

[86] Koszyk refers to Morsey in claiming that there was no evidence in the Centre Party Press that 'any group within the *Zentrum* would have considered the declaration of a republic as desireable'. See Koszyk, *Deutsche Presse III*, p. 290.

[87] For literature on Remarque see Sontheimer, *Antidemokratisches Denken*, pp. 94-96; Bessel, *Germany*, pp. 267-269; Karl Prümm, *Die Literatur des Soldatischen Nationalismus der Zwanziger Jahre 1918-1933* (Kronberg/Ts., 1974), Michael Gollbach, *Die Wiederkehr des Weltkrieges in der Literatur. Zu den Frontromanen der späten Zwanziger Jahre* (Kronberg/Ts., 1978), Hans-Harald Müller, *Der Krieg und die Schriftsteller. Der Kriegsroman der Weimarer Republik* (Stuttgart, 1986), Herbert Bornebusch, *Gegen-Erinnerung. Eine formsemantische Analyse des demokratischen Kriegsromans der Weimarer Republik* (Frankfurt, Bern, New York, 1985). For biographical information on Remarque see Appendix I, p. 335.

[88] Peukert, *The Weimar Republic*, p. 4.

[89] Asmuss, *Republik ohne Chance?*, pp. 35ff; Moores, *Presse und Meinungsklima*, p. 69.

combining analysis of event and context based reporting.[90] None of these methods, however, provides a convincing sampling model for an exploratory assessment of republican propaganda regarding the First World War and its political legacy. The centrality of the conflict for the foundation period of the Weimar Republic and its diverse impact on post-war politics suggested that focussing on certain dates or events would provide distorted results. A random sample of newspaper coverage, which is customarily used in sociological research, would also fail to map the gradual development of certain argumentative structures.[91] In order to do justice to the complexity, diversity and changeability of republican discourse regarding the war, this study chose to limit its temporal and political framework rather than restricting its analysis to a sample of republican press coverage.[92]

So far, no systematic studies have been undertaken to assess the political instrumentalisation of the war in republican attempts to define the new state. As a result, this study could not draw on comprehensive research detailing themes that dominated the republican interpretation of the conflict and its consequences. This lack of pre-formed assumptions regarding the thematic and logical structure of republican discourse precluded a presumptive coding of analytical categories, which generally provides the basis for a quantitative analysis of press sources.[93] The analysis of the explorative (rather than leading) hypothesis that the war was a significant factor in shaping republican identity thus promised to yield more comprehensive results if its research foci evolved directly from the sources rather than pre-formed assumptions. Accordingly, this project began with an immensely time-consuming cover-to-cover examination of the republican press in order to identify the key themes and arguments dominating this political discourse. Having drawn up a database of 3626 relevant articles and 124 themes on the basis of this analysis, the most frequently and prominently debated issues defining a republican identity were selected as research foci of this thesis.

An initial assessment of the sources suggested that the following themes were expendable for the sake of a cohesive analysis. Although a number of publications raised the idea of unification with Austria, it will be excluded as it did not become a defining factor in Germany's relationship with her former enemies until September 1919. Likewise, while all republican parties supported the creation of a Greater German state including Austria, the issue was not cited in relation to the foundation narrative of the republic. The same applies to the loss of German colonies imposed by the Treaty of Versailles, which most republican articles only half-heartedly objected to. This analysis will also exclude political discourse on the territorial changes imposed by the Treaty of Versailles. Although

---

[90] Fulda, *Press and Politics*, p. 10.
[91] For a summary of sampling procedures see Andreas Diekmann, *Empirische Sozialforschung: Grundlagen, Methoden, Anwendungen* (6, Reinbek bei Hamburg, 2000), pp. 325-370.
[92] Hans Wagner (ed.), *Qualitative Methoden in der Kommunikationswissenschaft* (Munich, 2008), p. 335.
[93] Diekmann, *Empirische Sozialforschung*, pp. 489-496.

territorial disputes played a major role in the political debates of the immediate post-war period, they were not essential in creating a specifically republican image of the democratic state. The source material regarding territorial conflicts, especially in the East, would suffice for other research project and could not be integrated into this narrative without broadening it excessively. The debate on territorial questions and on the Allied occupation of German territory is far too complex to be treated adequately within this framework and has therefore been excluded. The same applies to the violent unrest within Germany which marked the extended post-war period. Although the language of newspaper reports detailing violent clashes between left-wing groups and republican troops was often reminiscent of war propaganda, the debate was not framed with particular reference to the war. While a linguistic comparison between wartime and post-war rhetoric in relating to violence would be fascinating, it cannot be undertaken as part of this inquiry. Beyond the preliminary quantification of data, however, a quantitative approach measuring the frequency of particular phrases or arguments would not provide sufficiently comprehensive data to reconstruct and contextualise the dynamic and diverse post-war republican discourse regarding the war.[94] Accordingly, this study's focus on the nuanced, evolving and cross-referential structures within republican discourse necessitated a detailed qualitative analysis.

In accepting 'discourse' as a defining concept for republican press and propaganda analysed here, this study acknowledges the theoretical foundation of the 'discourse analysis' school i.e. the idea that language is not merely descriptive but actively generates and legitimises social, political or scientific reality.[95] Far from resulting in a homogenous methodological approach, this assumption has been adopted by scholars across a number of different disciplines and still evokes significant methodological debate.[96] This study does not intend to involve itself in this abstract theoretical discussion or to adopt any one methodological approach from a diverse and often contradictory field.[97] It merely regards the theory of the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, who maintained that discourse seeks to assert authority by legitimising a particular interpretation of 'truth', as a useful

---

94 The significance of the war guilt question for the political identity of the Weimar Republic, for example, did not become evident in the fact that it was referred to in 429 of the articles analysed. Rather, it emerged from a nuanced analysis of its political role within republican propaganda.

95 For examples of such definitions see Achim Landwehr, *Historische Diskursanalyse* (Frankfurt, 2008), pp. 22ff; Paolo R. Donati, 'Die Rahmenanalyse politischer Diskurse' in Rainer Keller, Andreas Hirseland, Werner Schneider and Willy Viehöver (eds.), *Handbuch Sozialwissenschaftliche Diskursanalyse. Band I: Theorien und Methoden* (Opladen, 2001), p. 151; Gareth Steadman Jones, 'Introduction' in Idem, *Languages of Class. Studies in English Working Class History 1832-1982* (Oxford, 1983), pp. 21ff.

96 The diversity of this field is evident from the contributions to the *Handbuch wissenschaftlicher Diskursanalyse*, which cites contributions from linguists, historians, sociologists, political scientists, psychologists and gender studies scholars. See Ibid, pp. 5f.

97 Even the French philosopher Michel Foucault, who is regarded as one of the founding fathers of 'discourse analysis', did not introduce a clearly defined analytic framework but repeatedly reconsidered the scientific and political relevance of 'discourse'. See Landwehr, *Historische Diskursanalyse*, pp. 65-78.

analytical framework to assess the political communication processes in the context of this study.[98]

Theoretical definitions of the relevant terminology remain rather abstract. While the historian Gareth Steadman Jones' defines discourse as the attempted construction of 'common properties', the political scientist Paolo R. Donati identifies it as 'the social place where such attempts to define social reality take place in order for them to gain collective validity'.[99] In imposing this hypothetical theoretical construct on the republican press and republican propaganda, this study acknowledges republican discourse as a conscious attempt to define the identity of the new state by establishing a particular reality of the war and its consequences.[100] Furthermore it recognises this discourse as a constituting influence on the limits of what could be expressed within this political realm.[101] In combining such considerations with a more traditionally historical analysis of the content, context, logical structures and analogies within the republican interpretation of the war, this study is more concerned with assessing the attempted implementation of a republican identity than with describing its reality. At the same time, however, this analysis recognises 'republican discourse' as an analytical construct which does not aim to imply homogeneity or cohesion within the republican press and republican propaganda. Rather, it specifically traces the inconsistencies evident within this discourse, in order to offer a more nuanced analysis of the republic's ideological weaknesses.

The breadth and interlinked nature of the press sources posed significant difficulties in establishing a basic structure for this study, as the chronological order of events and their importance in the political debate were not necessarily concurrent. The genesis of the armistice, for example, was not much discussed in its immediate aftermath but played a central role in republican self-defence against right-wing attacks throughout 1919.[102] Similarly the envisaged peace was discussed continuously between armistice and the 1920 elections, albeit with different foci. This phenomenon complicated adherence to a chronological structure. Yet thematically coherent topics such as the portrayal of combat or the peace also linked to a number of different political debates. A strictly thematic structure would have resulted in a number of largely unrelated essays rather than a consistent narrative. Neither a purely chronological nor a purely thematic structure would have permitted a thematic analysis of the event-focused press which would have also taken into account the chronological sequence of war-related debates. My analysis will borrow from Detlev Peukert's methodology in combining a chronological and thematic approach

---

[98] Ibid, pp. 81ff.
[99] Steadman Jones, *Languages of Class*, p. 23; Donati, 'Die Rahmenanalyse politischer Diskurse' in Keller et. al. (eds.) *Handbuch Sozialwissenschaftliche Diskursanalyse*, p. 151.
[100] Landwehr, *Historische Diskursanalyse*, p. 21.
[101] Ibid.
[102] Fulda, *Press and Politics*, pp. 46f.

to evaluate attempts to create a republican identity through the representation and evaluation of the war.[103]

Employing the methodology as well as the source material outlined above, this thesis aims to discover how republican discourse sought to establish, define and defend the new state's political identity with reference to the First World War. The first chapter establishes the centrality of the war to the revolutionary foundation narrative, which intended to strengthen the questionable republican legitimacy to govern in November 1918 and to provide a moral justification for the new state. The trauma of Germany's military defeat, for which official war propaganda had left the German population unprepared, polarised the memory of war into glorification in right-wing propaganda and condemnation in republican discourse. These rival interpretations were linked to two divergent political cultures which right-wing and republican forces respectively sought to impose as the ideological foundation of the new state. Assessing a number of republican attempts to bolster the values the revolution by contrasting them with the horrors of the war experience, the first chapter suggests that the conflict was an essential consideration in conceptualising the republic's identity. The defensive nature of republican discourse and the government's inability to translate its revolutionary values into political reality, however, undermined the credibility of its legitimising narrative.

The second chapter will evaluate republican attempts to defend their unstable claim to govern by assessing their predecessors' moral credibility according to their wartime conduct. By stereotyping Germany's former political elite as cowardly warmongers and war profiteers, an image which could be applied to the imperial hierarchy from top to bottom, republican propaganda attempted to discredit representatives of Germany's wartime ideology in the aftermath of the war. Assessing the republican evaluation of Wilhelm II, Germany's military leadership and prominent right-wing politicians, the second chapter illustrates how republican discourse utilised Germany's war experience to deflect right-wing allegations against the republic. The political upheaval which forced individual republican parties to justify their position within the new state obstructed a shared republican focus on the former elite as the republic's main enemy, as did the general reluctance to dethrone the wartime hero Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg.

The third chapter assesses the war guilt debate and the republican response to the reactionary 'stab in the back' myth in two detailed case studies, using them to portray key conflicts of interest which prevented a constructive republican utilisation of the war. In defining the Allies rather than the republic's domestic enemies as the gravest threat to the republic, republican discourse upheld the wartime sense of unity against an external enemy, thus obstructing a thorough exploitation of the war guilt question to reveal the

---

[103] Peukert, *The Weimar Republic*, p. xiv.

failures of Germany's imperial regime. Fearing its impact on the Treaty of Versailles, republican discourse failed to genuinely explore the issue, indirectly upholding a selective wartime censorship which prevented the German population from assessing Germany's wartime conduct critically. In addition, the aggressive response to Allied accusations of German war guilt resembled right-wing rhetoric, making the latter more acceptable as a means of political expression. On the other hand republican attempts to assert that Germany's democratic forces were in no way responsible for defeat did not fail because of political misjudgements. Rather the irrational nature of the 'stab in the back' allegation, which could not be combated by reason, prevented the creation of a stringent republican narrative blaming Germany's former elite for the nation's military defeat. The third chapter demonstrates that the increasing glorification of the war throughout the Weimar era developed in spite of, rather than because of, republican propaganda.

Assessing Germany's military demobilisation as an occasion to mark the transition from war to peace, the fourth chapter suggests that republican discourse remained unable to impose a corresponding cultural demobilisation in accordance with republican values. A comparison of the demobilisation of ordinary war veterans, war victims and prisoners of war reveals different republican weaknesses in dissociating political discourse from Germany's wartime values. Arguing that ceremonies for returning soldiers showed a failure to create a distinctively republican code of commemoration, this chapter suggests that fear of soldiers and a common recognition of traditional ceremonial elements infiltrated republican propaganda with remnants of official wartime rhetoric and symbolism. By promising support for Germany's war victims, the republic also accepted a responsibility it proved unable to fulfil, while failing to provide the increasingly dissatisfied war victims with an alternative means of ideological recognition. Republican discourse was thus dysfunctional: while the soldiers, who were keen to return into their civilian lives, could have been re-integrated in accordance with the republican foundation narrative, war victims could be reconciled by a ceremonial acknowledgement of their sacrifice. The debate regarding the return of Germany's prisoners of war consciously fuelled popular antagonism towards the Allies, thus preventing the disarmament of political discourse in Germany.

The fifth chapter argues that the devastating impact of the Treaty of Versailles on the political legitimacy of the republic was partly shaped by republican peace propaganda between the revolution and Germany's acceptance of the treaty on 28 June 1919. The chapter assesses Germany's expectations regarding the peace terms before arguing that republican discourse, while not pursuing the same foreign policy aims as the imperial regime, based its considerations on equally illusory foundations. Following the republic's self-definition as a peacemaker, the Allied refusal to meet the German demands for a just Wilsonian peace made many question its ability to fulfil its revolutionary promises. Thus forced to restore its political credibility within Germany, republican propaganda relied on

threats of rejection to coerce the Allies into amending the treaty. Yet this antagonistic stance towards Germany's former enemies neither secured a substantial amendment of the draft treaty nor stabilised the republican government. It was regarded instead as a provocation by the Allies, while encouraging a remobilisation of political discourse modelled on wartime atrocity propaganda.

The concluding chapter shows that Germany's decision to sign the Treaty of Versailles was a catalyst for right-wing opposition to the republic, because it revealed both the limitations of the government's power and its inability to implement its revolutionary promises. In consequence the government's inability to avert the harsh peace settlement overwrote the positive republican foundation narrative as a foundation myth for the Weimar Republic. Focusing on the political debate in response to Allied demands for extradition, chapter six demonstrates the divergent national and international pressures which limited the government's freedom of action in shaping Germany's foreign policy. In spite of a republican semi-return to rational political pragmatism in the aftermath of the peace, republican foreign policy had to deal with the consequences of the nationalist outrage it had previously fanned. Contextualising reactionary opposition to the republic in response to the Treaty of Versailles, the second part of this chapter assesses the restoration of the army's political power as a destabilising influence on republican legitimacy to govern. The inappropriate republican response to the mutiny of the German *Freikorps* in the Baltic States (who disobeyed the government's orders to return to Germany) and the Kapp-Putsch (aimed at preventing the reduction of the army imposed by the Treaty of Versailles) eventually eroded the revolutionary assurance that the republic had learned its lessons from the war.

CHAPTER 1: WAR AND REVOLUTION

DEFINING REVOLUTION

> A nation, gone wild, is overrunning itself to reach the abyss first. Alas!, we will all get there and the war only speeded us up. The monarchy showed us path and aim. The German Reich's nature and moral justification could not lead anywhere else; it bore defeat from the beginning. Defeat did not come in just any but the only appropriate way in these circumstances: not in a position of self-defence but as a result of the last of all unsuccessful military offensives. Its time came because the list of miscalculations, of moral and technical errors, was finally exhausted. With the last quick lie 'We have not been defeated' the truth broke out with all force, matching the degree of the pressure - as revolution.[104]

Unlike his brother Thomas, who was merely prepared to admit in 1919 that 'it would certainly be wrong to see nothing but collapse and rot in the revolution', the social critic Heinrich Mann was significantly more committed to the new democracy that he

[104] Heinrich Mann, 'Das Ende' *Vorwärts* 507/508 (4 October 1919).

envisaged as esteeming justice above power.[105] The above quotation, which concludes an article by Heinrich assessing the social consequences of Germany's wartime policies, illustrates that he did not regard the revolution uncritically but rather saw it as a logical outcome of the war experience. Arguing that German victory or a conciliatory peace would have prevented revolution, he declared in December 1918 that it would now be necessary to consolidate the 'coincidental offering arising from defeat' by enlisting support from all republicans who regarded ideas and people as more important than gain and power.[106]

This assessment of the revolution did not only represent the personal viewpoint of a prominent but individual republican. It embodied, rather, the difficult task facing all republican propaganda. Namely, to legitimise a new ideology, the very birth of which was intrinsically entangled with defeat. According to the historian Detlev Peukert, the foundation of the Weimar Republic lacked, furthermore, 'an heroic act, or [...] an act which national mythology could represent as heroic [...]'.[107] This lack of perceived heroism was not merely due to the nature of the revolution but also its divergent interpretations in republican propaganda which this chapter will elaborate on in more detail. These two factors significantly inhibited any depiction of the revolution as a dramatic rebirth of the nation, free from the influences of the past. Yet Peukert's logical deduction that the Weimar Republic was therefore 'not conceived as a brave new world' only becomes accurate in retrospect. In the revolutionary period republican propaganda repeatedly attempted to establish an inspirational foundation narrative to provide moral justification for the new state.[108]

Overly euphoric depictions of the revolution and its ideals, particularly though not exclusively in SPD propaganda, however, also proved problematic. Complaining about the lack of true republicans in Germany, Kurt Tucholsky suggested in 1926 that:

> Fritz Ebert invented a 'republican idea' which had only one excellent characteristic: it did not hurt anybody. [...] It was a republican creed roughly like the Ninth Symphony.

---

[105] Thomas Mann, 'Für das neue Deutschland' in Hermann Kurzke and Stephan Stachorski (eds.), *Thomas Mann. Essays für das neue Deutschland 1919-1925* (Frankfurt, 1993), p. 11; Heinrich Mann, 'Sinn und Idee der Revolution (Ansprache im Politischen Rat geistiger Arbeiter, München, Dezember 1918)' in Peter-Paul Schneider (ed.), *Heinrich Mann. Macht und Mensch. Essays* (Frankfurt, 1989), pp. 159, 161. The brothers Heinrich and Thomas Mann were important literary figures in Germany. Heinrich, whose novel *Der Untertan* was banned on the outbreak of war, was a fervent democrat and republican. His younger brother Thomas was more conservatively nationalistic and only reconciled himself to the republican idea in the early 1920s. His studies of the bourgeois milieu *Buddenbrooks* and *Der Zauberberg* are still regarded as major works of German literature. See Bernd Hüppauf, 'Mann, Heinrich' and 'Mann, Thomas' in Wolfgang Benz and Hermann Graml (eds.), *Biographisches Lexikon zur Weimarer Republik* (Munich, 1988), pp. 218f.

[105] Mann, 'Sinn und Idee der Revolution' in Schneider (ed.), *Macht und Mensch*, pp. 158, 160f.

[105] Peukert, *The Weimar Republic*, p. 6.

[106] Mann, 'Sinn und Idee der Revolution' in Schneider (ed.), *Macht und Mensch*, pp. 158, 160f.

[107] Peukert, *The Weimar Republic*, p. 6.

[108] This analysis uses the term revolution with regard to its political as well as its ideological implications. It should not be understood as only referring to the overthrow of the old system but also to the revolutionary attempts to create a new republican ideology.

> Everybody listens to it in his particular way and the interpretation of the sound is a private affair.[109]

This attack on the republic implied that the revolution had not made a sufficient impact on Germany's social and political structures because Friedrich Ebert, (representing SPD politics), had failed to clarify and enforce its ideological principles. A similar judgement could also be applied to the initial literary and political attempts at promoting the revolution by evoking poetic yet vague humanitarian ideals. A number of articles in *Vorwärts*, for example, described the political developments in November 1918 as 'a great historical event', a 'spring of change', and the 'beginning of a completely new epoch'.[110] The political leaflets of all republican parties listed truth, justice, and freedom as moral aspirations of the new state.[111] These high ideals, however, were too abstract to provide tangible solutions for the war-related problems inherited by the revolution. The analysis of articles printed in *Die Weltbühne* after the government's repeated employment of troops against left-wing unrest in 1919 even suggests that the idealistic expectations placed in the revolution contributed to a growing intellectual disillusionment with its reality.[112] Abstract revolutionary aims have to be seen as part of a political tradition

---

[109] Kurt Tucholsky, 'Der Sieg des Republikanischen Gedankens' in Mary Gerold-Tucholsky and Fritz J. Raddatz (eds.), *Kurt Tucholsky: Gesammelte Werke 1925-1926* (Reinbek, 1996), p. 495. For biographical information on Ebert and Tucholsky see Appendix I, pp. 324, 338.

[110] 'Geschichte - Keine Greuelgeschichten' *Vorwärts* 309 (9 November 1918); Klare Bohm-Schuch, 'An die Frauen!' *Vorwärts* 29/30 (17 January 1919); Dr. Arnold Metzger, 'Für das neue Deutschland' *Vorwärts* 29/30 (17 January 1919). The writer and politician Klara Bohm-Schuch (1879-1936) wrote political propaganda for the SPD and for German trade unions from 1904. She was employed by the Central Council of People's Representatives and acted as a secretary for the National Assembly and the Reichstag until 1933. She also worked as an editor for the journal *Gleichheit* from 1919 to 1922, while publishing widely on socio-political issues. See Wilhelm Heinz Schröder, *Sozialdemokratische Parlamentarier in den deutschen Reichs- und Landtagen 1867-1933. Biographien – Chronik – Wahldokumentation. Ein Handbuch* (Düsseldorf, 1995), p. 378. Having concluded a philosophical dissertation in Jena, Dr. Arnold Metzger (1892-1974) volunteered for service during the war, briefly leading the cultural department of the *Reichszentrale für Heimatdienst* after the revolution. He wrote a number of philosophical works on phenomenology during the Weimar period, yet failed to finish his habilitation because his Jewish background brought his academic career to a close in 1933. Metzger emigrated in 1938 and continued to lecture in American universities before returning to lecture in Munich in 1952. See Wolfhart Henckmann, 'Metzger, Arnold' in *Neue Deutsche Biographie* 17 (1994), pp. 254f: http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/artikelNDB_pnd118581562.html

[111] Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung, Archiv der sozialen Demokratie, Bonn (FES), NUR 1918 Undatiert III: *Den Heimgekehrten!* (n.p., 1918); FES, 6/FLBL005114: Arbeiter und Soldatenrat der Stadt und des Kreises Helmstedt, *Warum Umsturz, warum Revolution?* (Helmstedt, 1918); FES, 6/FLBL005542: Arbeiter und Soldatenrat Groß-Berlin, *An die heimgekehrten Soldaten! Kameraden!* (Berlin, 1918); Bibliothek für Zeitgeschichte, Stuttgart (BfZ), Flugblätter 1918-1933, DDP, A-D, Braunschweig: DDP, *An die deutschen Frauen!* (Braunschweig, n.d. but 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DDP, E-J, Frankfurt, 1918: DDP, *Wilkommen!* (Frankfurt, 1918); FES, NUR 1918 Dezember II: USPD, *Wilkommen, Soldaten der Freiheit!* (Berlin, 1918).

[112] Ludwig Jurisch, 'Die Kehrseite' *Die Weltbühne* 11 (6 March 1919), pp. 241f; Otto Lehmann-Russbüldt, 'Deutschlands letzte Hoffnung' *Die Weltbühne* 14 (27 March 1919), pp. 348f; Kurt Tucholsky, 'Wir Negativen' *Die Weltbühne* 12 (13 March 1919), p. 280. In protest against the majority socialists' unilateral decision to use military violence against rebellious naval troops in December 1918, the USPD representatives left the provisional and the Prussian government. The subsequent refusal of the USPD chief of police in Berlin, Emil Eichhorn, to leave his post in accordance with his party comrades sparked off the January unrest between workers and government troops. The often falsely named Spartacus putsch was no communist attempt to overthrow the government but merely a demonstration of popular discontent which got out of

developed in the aftermath of the French Revolution, which acknowledged that claiming to fight for noble ideals could be used to legitimise illegal and violent revolutionary acts.[113] Yet republican definitions of the political framework created by the revolution suggested that the supporters of the new state grasped the limitations of such traditional revolutionary rhetoric. In order to legitimise the new state, republican propaganda also explored the close link between war and revolution, which Heinrich Mann outlined in the newspaper article quoted as an introduction to this chapter.

Naturally, the legacy of the First World War was not the only factor obstructing the creation of a more positive legitimising narrative for the Weimar Republic. Rather the unplanned nature of the revolution and the imprecise and varying interpretations of the envisaged republican state added greatly to the political complexity of the immediate post-war period in Germany. The separate declaration of a 'German republic' by Philipp Scheidemann and a 'free socialist republic' by the leader of the more radically left-wing Spartacus League Karl Liebknecht on 9 November 1918 showed that the effort to define the new state's political parameters was by no means just a contest between old and new, monarchy and democracy, war and peace.[114] While the SPD supported elections to a national assembly, in line with the bourgeois parties and the right-wing of the USPD, those to the left of these groupings envisaged more or less radically different political structures.[115]

After the war the Spartacus League and the revolutionary shop stewards in Berlin, which initially belonged to the USPD's left wing, sought to fan revolutionary unrest in

---

hand. The popular uprising was ultimately defeated with excessive military violence which destabilised the government's position by aggravating left-wing opposition against it. A strike wave in the first months of 1919 furthermore contributed to further unrest, which the government responded to with excessive military force. See Mommsen, *Die verspielte Freiheit*, pp. 48f; Heinrich A. Winkler, *Von der Revolution zur Stabilisierung. Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung in der Weimarer Republik 1918 bis 1924* (Berlin, Bonn, 1984), pp. 120-131; Idem, *Weimar 1918-1933* (Munich, 1993), pp. 72-76; Wolfram Wette, *Gustav Noske. Eine politische Biographie* (Düsseldorf, 1987), pp. 297-301, 304-321, 410-428; Reinhard Rürup, *Probleme der Revolution in Deutschland 1918/19* (Berlin, 1968), p. 44.

[113] Vera Nünning, 'Exkurs: Revolution' in Hildegard Hogen (ed.), *Welt- und Kulturgeschichte. Epochen, Fakten, Hintergründe in 20 Bänden. Band 10: Zeitalter der Revolutionen* (Hamburg, 2006), p. 419.

[114] 'Ausrufung der Republik durch Scheidemann, 9. 11. 1918' and 'Ausrufung der sozialistischen Republik durch Liebknecht, 9. 11. 1918' in Wolfgang Michalka and Gottfried Niedhart (eds.), *Deutsche Geschichte 1918-1933. Dokumente zur Innen- und Aussenpolitik* (Frankfurt, 1992), pp. 20f. Karl (1871-1919) the son of the SPD's founder Wilhelm Liebknecht, initially followed in his father's political footsteps and was interned for his anti-militarist publications before the First World War. Although he had initially welcomed SPD support for war credits in 1914, Liebknecht reversed his position on war credits and began to agitate against the war. He was expelled from the SPD and imprisoned for treason during the conflict. Freed by the amnesty, Liebknecht became a co-founder of the KPD and its mouthpiece *Rote Fahne*. He was murdered by *Freikorps* soldiers during the January unrest 1919. For biographical information on Scheidemann see Appendix I, p. 336.

[115] Eberhard Kolb, *Die Arbeiterräte in der deutschen Innenpolitik 1918-1919* (Frankfurt, Berlin, Vienna, 1978), pp. 24-56, 138-183; Oertzen, *Betriebsräte*, pp. 247-251. Some representatives of the USPD's right wing, such as Kurt Eisner, Hugo Haase and Heinrich Ströbel sought to integrate the councils into a parliamentary system. See Ibid, pp. 199f; Grau, *Kurt Eisner*, pp. 421-439. For biographical information on Eisner, Haase and Ströbel see Appendix I, pp. 324f, 330, 337f.

order to establish a Bolshevik-style proletarian dictatorship.[116] Lacking sufficient popular support as well as a feasible strategy to secure their claim to political leadership, these radical left-wing groups failed to control the initial revolutionary momentum, however.[117] Following a failed attempt to radicalise the USPD, Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht merged the Spartacus League with unaffiliated left-wing radicals from Bremen to found the communist KPD (German Communist Party) in late December 1918.[118] Although it lacked a broad base of popular support and a cohesive political strategy, the party's aggressive rhetoric and putschist tactics magnified the widespread fear of Bolshevism in Germany, convincing the SPD and the bourgeois parties that the radical left posed a greater threat to the republic than the reactionary forces.[119] Attempting to seize upon popular discontent with the lack of immediate revolutionary reforms, the KPD demanded the deposition of Ebert and Scheidemann during the January unrest in 1919, strengthening the SPD's resolve to rely on the army to uphold both public order and their own political position.[120] In the first years of the republic, such fundamentally divergent interpretations of Germany's revolutionary goals and their implementation repeatedly led to violent clashes and severely fragmented the working class movement.

Concerned that renewed unrest would accompany the implementation of further revolutionary measures, the SPD prevented wide-ranging administrative and military reform and suggested that such decisions must be left to a democratically elected government.[121] The consolidation of this political blueprint against the radical left as well as significant political rivalry prevented the provisional government from exploiting the democratic potential of the workers' and soldiers' councils.[122] Apart from the small group of revolutionary shop stewards in Berlin, who had been preparing for a revolutionary uprising since the summer of 1918, the soldiers' and workers' councils, developed spontaneously during the revolution and represented varied interests (albeit much less radical interests than their Russian predecessors).[123] On a basic level, the councils perceived themselves as guardians of the revolution's achievements, taking over a varying range of supervisory rather than executive administrative functions after the

---

[116] For a summary of the political framework of the Spartacus League and the revolutionary shop stewards see Kolb, *Arbeiterräte*, pp. 36-55, 138-159.
[117] Ibid, pp. 47, 138
[118] Ibid, pp. 217ff. Rosa Luxemburg (1817-1919) fled from Poland as a teenager fearing persecution. She joined the SPD after moving to Berlin and contributed to its party press and propaganda. She favoured a proletarian dictatorship and strongly opposed the SPD's support for the war. She was imprisoned in 1914 and 1916. She was released after the revolution and co-founded the KPD and *Die rote Fahne*. Like Liebknecht, she was murdered by the army during the unrest of January 1919. See Ruth Körner, 'Rosa Luxemburg' in Benz and Graml, *Biographisches Lexikon*, p. 215.
[119] Ibid, pp. 145-153, 231f, 237-240, 312-316.
[120] Ibid, pp. 233-240.
[121] Ibid, pp. 99f, 171-176.
[122] Ibid, p. 408.
[123] Ibid, pp. 60ff, 83-87; Ulrich Kluge, *Die deutsche Revolution 1918/1919* (Frankfurt, 1985), pp. 58ff; Karl Dietrich Erdmann, *Die Weimarer Republik* (11, Stuttgart, 1993), p. 29.

revolution.[124] Some of the councils, as well as the leading representatives of the revolutionary shop stewards in Berlin, issued radical demands for a council republic instead of a parliamentary democracy.[125] Attempts of radical councils to seize political control, however, remained largely unsuccessful.[126] By December the SPD held a majority in most of the councils' executive committees including the executive council in Berlin, suggesting that the workers' and soldiers' councils might have provided an ally against the largely conservative administration and army.[127] Despite the decision of the executive workers' and soldiers' council to depose itself *de facto* by voting for elections to a national assembly, the provisional government regarded the councils as a threat, dismissing their demands for military reforms and vehemently seeking to destroy their political position.[128] This conflict between demands for revolutionary reforms, (whose advocates ranged from the radical left to the SPD's grass roots), and the SPD's insistence on co-operating with representatives of the old regime heavily mortgaged the revolutionary legitimacy of the new state. The division between moderate and radical socialists was also evident within the trade union movement. While its leadership considered the Stinnes-Legien agreement to be an adequate implementation of workers' rights, more radical factions pursued a council republic and socialisation.[129] Political disputes arising from demands to extend the influence of workers' councils within the Ruhr area, which separated the political as well as the trade union leadership from grass roots opinion, also led to strikes and violent clashes in the first half of 1919.[130] Within republican discourse, the political framework of Germany's democratisation was not predominantly discussed with reference to the war and has thus been excluded from this analysis. It is nevertheless useful to regard these ideological conflicts which resulted in a significant number of violent clashes on varying scales, as contextual background to the analysis of the republican instrumentalisation of the war and its consequences.

The revolution provides a suitable starting point for analysis of the impact of the war on the Weimar Republic, because it established freedom of expression and abolished press censorship, thus enabling, for the first time, an unrestricted public and political debate on issues related to the conflict.[131] With Germany's entry into the war, the monarchy had declared a state of siege prohibiting freedom of expression in order to

---

[124] Kolb, Arbeiterräte, p. 101; Kluge, *Revolution*, p. 66.
[125] Ibid, pp. 287-302; Oertzen, *Betriebsräte*, pp. 71-78.
[126] Kolb, Arbeiterräte, pp. 292-300.
[127] Ibid, p. 113, 370f. In this context Reinhard Rürup explicitly stressed that the German soldiers' and workers' councils were 'democratic' rather than 'socialist'. See Rürup, *Probleme der Revolution*, p. 22.
[128] Kolb, *Arbeiterräte*, pp. 244-256; Rürup, *Probleme der Revoution*, p. 22, Kluge, *Revolution*, p. 66.
[129] Arno Klönne and Hartmut Reese, *Kurze Geschichte der deutschen Gewerkschaftsbewegung* (Frankfurt, 1986), pp. 131f, 136; Freya Eisner, *Das Verhältnis der KPD zu den Gewerkschaften in der Weimarer Republik* (Frankfurt, 1977), pp. 47-62; Oertzen, *Betriebsräte*, pp. 187-193.
[130] Oertzen, *Betriebsräte*, pp. 110.118.
[131] Heinz Dietrich Fischer, *Handbuch der politischen Presse in Deutschland, 1480-1980: Synopse rechtlicher, struktureller und wirtschaftlicher Grundlagen der Tendenzpublizistik im Kommunikationsfeld* (Düsseldorf, 1981), pp. 91f.

restrain the flow of any information concerning the country's military situation.[132] Censorship was not only restricted to military and political matters but also affected reporting of mundane issues such as food shortages, because news of this kind was perceived as a threat to public morale.[133] In addition press coverage of military developments was severely distorted in order to fuel patriotic enthusiasm.[134] The democratic pacifist Hellmut von Gerlach characterised this official approach to the truth by describing instructions given to journalists during a military press conference in 1914: '[e]ven if half of the troops had been lost before Liège, you would still have to write that victory was accomplished with astonishingly few losses'.[135]

Promoted in such a fashion, euphemistic and glorifying accounts of the war soon permeated cultural and political life in Germany, while any dissent from this official interpretation of the war was silenced.[136] *Die Weltbühne*, in 1918, defined wartime public opinion as a product of the propaganda office, which discouraged any thought about the war beyond the fact that it was going well.[137] The post-war memory of the conflict therefore developed out of a period of severe censorship and was considerably influenced by war propaganda. The prohibition of any critical evaluation of the conflict until the collapse of the imperial regime contributed significantly to the central role of the war in the political discourse of the Weimar Republic. The continuation of these propaganda efforts right up until the last days of the war, furthermore, meant that the majority of the German population remained largely unaware of Germany's military situation and unprepared for defeat and its consequences.[138] The unexpected nature of the military collapse and the insecurity that marked the revolutionary period consequently traumatised many Germans, who reacted by seeking explanations for the perceived breakdown of values and taking refuge in irrational beliefs and denials of reality.[139] During this period of instability, contradictory interpretations of the war and its legacy provided frames of reference for both republican and anti-democratic conceptions of the new

---

[132] Koszyk, *Deutsche Presse*, pp. 14f; Jens Albes 'Zensur' in Hirschfeld, Krumeich and Renz (eds.), *Enzyklopädie*, p. 975.

[133] Modris Eksteins, *The limits of reason: the German Democratic press and the collapse of Weimar democracy* (London, 1975), p. 28.

[134] Jeffrey Verhey, *Der "Geist von 1914" und die Erfindung der Volksgemeinschaft* (Hamburg, 2000), pp. 239f.

[135] Helmut Donat and Adolf Wild (eds.), *Hellmut von Gerlach: Die grosse Zeit der Lüge. Der Erste Weltkrieg und die deutsche Mentalität (1871-1921)* (Bremen, 1994), p. 124. For biographical information on Hellmut von Gerlach see Appendix I, p. 327.

[136] Hellmut von Gerlach, 'Die große Lügenzeit' *Die Welt am Montag* 33 (18 August 1919); Siegfried Jacobsohn, 'Vor, in und nach dem Kriege' *Die Weltbühne* 16 (10 April 1919), p. 412; Georg Friedrich Nicolai, 'Warum ich aus Deutschland ging' *Die Freiheit* 7 (4 January 1919); Andreas Ziesenitz, 'Der Vater der Lüge' *Die Weltbühne* 31 (29 July 1920), pp. 139f.

[137] 'Kriegs-Presse-Amt' *Die Weltbühne* 46 (14 November 1918), pp. 457f.

[138] Wolfgang J. Mommsen, *Der Erste Weltkrieg. Anfang vom Ende des bürgerlichen Zeitalters* (Bonn, 2004), pp. 58, 82.

[139] Wilhelm Deist, 'Der militärische Zusammenbruch des Kaiserreichs. Zur Realität der Dolchstoßlegende' in Ursula Büttner, *Das Unrechtsregime. Internationale Forschung über den Nationalsozialismus* (Hamburg, 1986), p. 121; Sontheimer, *Antidemokratisches Denken*, pp. 54f; Andreas Wirsching, *Die Weimarer Republik. Politik und Gesellschaft* (2, Munich, 2008), p. 1.

political order. Republican interpretations of Germany's political collapse as indicative of a military and moral defeat of the old system therefore became a central issue in political discussions regarding the legacy of the war and formed the basis of a republican foundation narrative for the revolution.[140]

In order to promote the democratic idea, the republican government promised that after years of war and deprivation the revolution would bring 'peace, freedom and bread' to Germany.[141] And to some degree, particularly considering the adverse circumstances that faced the German nation in November 1918, it can be claimed that the revolutionary government did not fare too badly in fulfilling these promises.[142] In the first months after the revolution, most SPD leaflets defined the concept of peace as a termination of warfare and military and social demobilisation, rather than along the lines of a definitive peace settlement.[143] The revolutionary government succeeded in securing a relatively smooth demobilisation and reintegration of the soldiers returning from combat.[144] The political enfranchisement of the entire population over 20 and the prevention of starvation in the cities, in spite of the continuation of the Allied sea blockade, can also be seen as successful implementations of the revolutionary promises.[145]

Right-wing propaganda nevertheless vehemently attacked the revolutionary slogan of 'peace, freedom, bread' by comparing the post-revolutionary conditions unfavourably with a romanticised war experience. One DNVP leaflet stated, for example, that during the war, there was bread, order, and the enemy was far from German soil, while the revolution had brought the threat of famine, disintegration of the Reich and enemy occupation.[146] This criticism of the republic's attempts to deal with the legacy of the conflict was largely based on a set of unrealistic expectations which seemed to ignore that Germany had just

---

[140] See for example 'Die Vorgänge in Berlin' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 313 (11 November 1918); 'An die Partei!' *Die Freiheit* 1 (15 November 1918); 'Wie es kam!' *Vorwärts* 314a (14 November 1918).

[141] FES, 6/FLBL005117: Arbeiter und Soldatenrat beim stellvertretenden General-Kommando XVIII, *Aufruf - Kameraden von der Front!* (Frankfurt, 1918); FES, NUR 1918 Undatiert III: *Den Heimgekehrten* (n. p., 1918); 'Brot, Friede, Freiheit! Ein Mahnwort an die Heimkehrenden' *Die Freiheit* 51 (12 December 1918); Friedrich Ebert, 'Frieden!' *Vorwärts* 354 (25 December 1918); Otto Landsberg, 'Freiheit!' *Vorwärts* 354 (25 December 1918); Philipp Scheidemann, 'Brot!' *Vorwärts* 354 (25 December 1918). For biographical information on Landsberg see Appendix I, p. 331.

[142] Reinhard Rürup, Probleme der Revolution in Deutschland 1918/19 (Berlin, 1968), pp. 32f.

[143] FES, 6/FLBL005108: Friedrich Ebert, *Mitbürger!* (Berlin, 1918); FES, 6/FLBL005782: Philipp Scheidemann, *Rede des Volksbeauftragten Scheidemann beim Einzug der Truppen am Brandenburger Tor am 12. Dezember 1918* (Berlin, 1918); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, SPD, 1918, Berlin: SPD, *Soldaten! Brüder im grauen Rock!* (Berlin, 1918).

[144] Bessel, *Germany*, pp. 90, 165, 194, 218; Mühlhausen, *Friedrich Ebert*, pp. 150f.

[145] Bessel, *Germany*, p. 218; Mühlhausen, Ibid.

[146] FES, 6/FLBL005037: DNVP, *Deutsches Volk wache auf!* (Berlin, 1919). The following leaflets vilified the republic in a similar manner: BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, 9 November 1918: Deutsche Zeitung, *Vier Wochen Revolution.* (Berlin, 1918); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DNVP, 1919, o.O.: DNVP, *Deutscher Bauer und Landarbeiter! Deutsche Landfrau!* (n.p., 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DNVP, 1919, o.O.: DNVP, *Deutscher Bürger: Wie wählst Du?* (n.p., 1919); Flugblätter 1918-1933, DDP, o.O: DNVP, *Mitbürger! Deutsche Männer und Frauen!* (n.p., 1918/1919); FES, 6/FLBL005041: DVP, *Was hat die Revolution gebracht?* (Berlin, 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DVP, Berlin, 1919: DVP, *Worte und Taten!* (Berlin, 1919).

lost a war.[147] A combination of unachievable demands and constant criticism of republican attempts to deal with the practical consequences of defeat ultimately restricted the government's freedom of movement and challenged the legitimacy of the new state.

Recognising the need to create a broad basis for the new state to overcome such allegations, republican propaganda initially emphasised the inclusive nature of the revolution and encouraged all those who were willing to accept its values to participate in strengthening them.[148] The publications analysed here acknowledged the vulnerability of the republic, arising out of adverse post-war conditions. Hellmut von Gerlach, for example, explicitly argued that the consequences of armistice, peace, and demobilisation could lead to a potentially catastrophic popular disillusionment with the revolution.[149] In order to counteract right-wing exploitation of the economically difficult and politically unstable situation, republican propaganda defined Germany's difficulties as a consequence of the war and the politics of the old regime rather than an outcome of the revolution.[150]

Almost all articles dealing with the adverse political and economic post-war conditions in Germany refer to right-wing allegations, thus emphasising the need to protect the revolution against the accusation of having worsened Germany's situation.[151] This defensive nature of republican propaganda weakened the revolutionary accusations against the political conduct of the old regime, because they appeared to be made by the accused rather than the prosecutor. Right-wing challenges to its legitimacy consequently prevented the new regime's representatives from portraying themselves as an untainted and unbiased authority. The *Frankfurter Zeitung* addressed this problem explicitly by

---

[147] BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933: Alldeutscher Verband, *Erklärung des Alldeutschen Verbandes* (Bamberg, 1919); FES, 6/FLBL005856: DNVP, *Achtung Kameraden!* (Berlin, 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DNVP, 1918, o.O.: DNVP, *Wahlaufruf der Deutschnationalen Volkspartei* (n.p., 1918); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DNVP, 1919, o.O.: DNVP, *Wähler und Wählerinnen!* (n.p., 1919); FES, 6/FLBL005036: DVP, *Die 14 Punkte. Was will die Deutsche Volkspartei?* (Berlin, 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DVP, Berlin, 1919: DVP, *Aufruf der deutschen Volkspartei* (Berlin, 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DVP, Berlin, 1919: DVP, *Für Recht und Freiheit! Für Volk und Vaterland!* (Berlin, 1919).

[148] 6/FLBL005124: DDP, *Soldaten!* (Berlin, 1918); Dr. Arnold Metzger, 'Für das neue Deutschland' *Vorwärts* 29/30 (17 January 1919).

[149] Hellmut von Gerlach, 'Nationalversammlung und Gegenrevolution' *Die Welt am Montag* (13 November 1918).

[150] BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, USPD, 1920, Berlin: Ernst Däumig and Walter Stoecker, *Warum müssen wir uns der 3. Internationale anschließen?* (Berlin, 1920); FES, NUR 1919 Undatiert II DDP, *Deutsche Männer, deutsche Frauen! Mitbürger in Stadt und Land!* (Berlin, 1919); FES, 1919 VI: DDP, *Wahlaufruf!* (n.p., 1919); FES, 6/FLBL005034: SPD, *Das Handwerk und die Nationalversammlung* (Berlin, 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, SPD, 1919, Berlin: SPD, *Masken herunter! Zeigt, wer ihr seid* (Berlin, 1919); FES, N 252, Nachlass Wilhelm Dittmann (from Russisches Zentrum für die Aufbewahrung und Erforschung von Dokumenten der neuesten Geschichte, Moscow (RZNG) FONDS 215, OPIS 1, 196/45): SPD, *Frauen, ihr dürft nicht vergessen!* (Berlin, n.d.).

[151] For example 'Berliner Pressestimmen' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 314 (12 November 1918); 'Eberts Rede' *Vorwärts* 69 (5 February 1919); 'Frankfurt, 6. Dezember' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 338 (6 December 1918); 'Frankfurt, 7. Dezember' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 338 (7 December 1918); 'Die Reichswehrdebatte' *Vorwärts* 555 (30 October 1919); Gustav Bauer, 'Ein Jahr Republik' *Vorwärts* 574 (9 November 1919). For biographical information on Gustav Bauer see Appendix I, pp. 322f.

arguing that the government's failure to stop such agitation implied weakness.[152] Attempts to deconstruct right-wing propaganda by clarifying causes and effects of the post-war situation in more detail, however, remained less generally accessible than right-wing conspiracy theories because they were less in line with the anti-rational war propaganda.[153]

This ideologically fractured memory of the war created two irreconcilable political cultures and resulted in an ideological exchange of blows which obliged the republican forces to reinforce their claim to power. In a session of the National Assembly, the SPD deputy Heinrich Schulz, for example, responded to allegations that the revolution had not achieved anything to improve Germany's situation by countering that neither had those denouncing it when they hid out of fear upon its outbreak.[154] As such discourse failed to provide a constructive definition of the new state's ideology, right wing challenges to the republic additionally led to the creation of various republican narratives and myths intending to legitimise the new state.

'REVOLUTIONARY' WAR EXPERIENCE AND SOLDIERS' SACRIFICE

In order to justify, defend and rally support for the new democracy, republican propaganda codified and promoted a distinctly republican interpretation of the war experience and redefined war-related ideological concepts. In August 1914 the Franco-Prussian war, which had led to Germany's unification, was the only immediate reference on which expectations of the kind of war now facing the German nation could be based.[155] Its memory shaped a popular consensus that the anticipated conflict would not only be short and victorious but would also induce a moral regeneration of German society, bridge political divisions, and create a cohesive national community.[156] Cultural justifications of

---

[152] 'Frankfurt, 7. Dezember' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 339 (7 December 1918).
[153] 'Frankfurt, 6. Dezember' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 338 (6 December 1918); 'Eberts Rede' *Vorwärts* 69 (5 February 1919).
[154] 'Nationalversammlung zu Weimar' *Vorwärts* 160 (28 March 1919). The teacher Heinrich Schulz served as the second chairman of the *Freie Volksbühne* in Berlin in 1897-1901 and edited the *Tribüne*, the *Volksstimme*, and the *Bürgerzeitung* in subsequent years in addition to *Gleichheit*, in 1917-1919. He became a personal aide to Friedrich Ebert in 1919, and was appointed as vice chancellor of the National Assembly. He represented the SPD in the Reichstag from 1912-1930, actively contributing to the party's education policy. See Schröder, *Sozialdemokratische Parlamentarier*, pp. 740f.
[155] Helmut Fries, *Die grosse Katharsis: der Erste Weltkrieg in der Sicht deutscher Dichter und Gelehrter* (Konstanz, 1994), pp. 95f; Wolfgang J. Mommsen, *Bürgerliche Kultur und politische Ordnung: Künstler, Schriftsteller und Intellektuelle in der deutschen Geschichte 1830 - 1933* (Frankfurt, 2000), p. 202.
[156] Fries, *Katharsis*, p. 96; David Welch, *Germany, propaganda and total war, 1914-1918: The sins of omission* (London, 2000), pp. 12, 16-19. Although Stig Förster argues convincingly that Germany's military leadership did not share the view that a future conflict would resemble the Franco-Prussian war, the Kaiser still prophecised to the German soldiers that 'they would return before the leaves would fall from the trees'. Förster argues that throughout public discourse doubts were voiced that the coming war could be ended soon. He does not, however, provide sufficient evidence to prove that the two critical voices he cites as realistic evaluations of the future conflict represented mainstream

the war, stressing its purifying and regenerating nature, were therefore central to official war propaganda throughout the conflict.[157] In the aftermath of the world's first 'total war', which lasted 51 months, cost almost 2.8 million military and civilian German lives, destroyed Germany's economy and ended in political and military collapse, the deceptive nature of such expectations had become evident.[158]

A limited number of articles in all of the republican newspapers analysed attempts to illustrate this divergence between war propaganda and its reality by assessing the psychological legacy of the war in Germany's post-war society.[159] Addressing a range of negative effects of the war on social interaction, these articles suggested that the conflict and the old regime's oppressive hierarchy had psychologically scarred the people and destroyed their moral integrity.[160] This notion was most aptly captured by a caricature in

---

'public'/'published' opinion. See 'Der deutsche Generalstab und die Illusion des kurzen Krieges 1871-1914. Metakritik eines Mythos' in Johannes Burkhardt, Joseph Becker, Stig Förster and Günther Kronenbitter (eds.), *Lange und kurze Wege in den Ersten Weltkrieg. Vier Augsburger Beiträge zur Kriegsursachenforschung* (Munich, 1996), pp. 115-117, 132f,144-151.

[157] Mommsen, *Bürgerliche Kultur*, p. 197.

[158] John Horne defines the concept of 'total war' to reflect the all-encompassing approach to impose wartime necessities onto the economic structure as well as political and cultural value systems in the belligerent countries. John Horne, 'Introduction: mobilising for 'total war', 1914-1918' in John Horne, *State, society and mobilization in Europe during the First World* War (Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, 1997), pp. 1-5; Chickering, *Imperial Germany*, p. 65. Richard Bessel and Bruce Kent deal with economic consequences of war in Bessel, *Germany*, pp. 91f; Bruce Kent, 'Der Preis des Kriegs. Wie Deutschland den Ersten Weltkrieg bezahlte' in Bernd Hüppauf, *Ansichten vom Krieg. Vergleichende Studien zum Ersten Weltkrieg in Literatur und Gesellschaft* (Königstein/Ts., 1984), p. 233. For numbers of military and civilian casualties see Rüdiger Overmans, 'Kriegsverluste' in Hirschfeld, Krumeich and Renz (eds.), *Enzyklopädie*, pp. 664f.

[159] See 'Neujahrsgruß allen Schaffenden!' *Vorwärts* 1 (1 January 1919); '"Not des Tags"' *Vorwärts* 163 (29 March 1920); Anton Erkelenz, 'Die kranke deutsche Seele' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 100 (7 February 1919); Dr. Frosch, 'Der Tanztaumel' *Die Welt am Montag* 12 (24 March 1919); Konrad Haenisch, 'Sie töten den Geist nicht, ihr Brüder' *Vorwärts* 202 (20 April 1919); Guido Knoerzer, 'Die Blockade' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 774 (16 October 1919); Guido Knoerzer, 'Müssen wir verzweifeln?' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 419 (8 June 1919); Dr. Walther Lessing, 'Der Zahlenwahnsinn' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 180 (8 March 1919); Dr. Julius Moses, 'Auch eine Bilanz des Krieges' *Die Freiheit* 130 (18 April 1920); Rudolf Wissel, 'Sollen wir zugrunde gehen?' *Vorwärts* 60 (2 February 1919). The liberal politician Anton Erkelenz (1878-1945) was a member of the workers' and soldiers' council in Neuss in 1918 and was heavily involved in trade union politics. As a pre-war supporter of Naumann, Erkelenz joined the DDP in 1918, representing the party in the National Assembly and the Reichstag and serving on its executive committee from 1921 to 1929. He co-edited the *Hilfe* and worked as editor-in-chief of the newspaper of the metal workers' union, and was involved in the foundation of the republican war veterans' organisation *Reichsbanner Schwarz-Rot-Gold* in 1924. Erkelenz joined the SPD in 1930 in protest at the DDP's move to the right. He retired into private life in 1933 and was stabbed to death while attempting to defend his housekeeper against a Russian soldier in 1945. See Hellmuth Auerbach, 'Anton Erkelenz' in Benz and Graml, *Biographisches Lexikon*, pp. 76f. Conrad Haenisch (1876-1925) was interned in a mental institution for socialist subversion in 1893 and worked for a number of socialist newspapers after fleeing from Bethel in 1894. Prior to the war he worked as an editor for the *Pfälzische Post*, the *Sächsische Arbeiterzeitung*, the *Arbeiterzeitung* in Dortmund and the *Volkszeitung* in Leipzig before being arrested for another year. Haenisch was responsible for the SPD's political propaganda until 1915 and worked as an editor for the journal *Die Glocke* after a short stint as a soldier. He served as Prussian Minister of Science, Arts and Education in 1918-21 and as temporary chairman of the local parliament in Wiesbaden in 1923. See 'Haenisch, Benno Fritz Paul Alexander Conrad' in Joachim Lilla, *Der Reichsrat. Vertretung der deutschen Länder bei der Gesetzgebung und Verwaltung des Reichs 1919-1934. Ein biographisches Handbuch* (Düsseldorf, 2006), p. 240. For biographical information on Dr. Frosch and Rudolf Wissel see Appendix I, pp. 326, 339.

[160] See particularly 'Neujahrsgruß allen Schaffenden!' *Vorwärts* 1 (1 January 1919); Anton Erkelenz, 'Die kranke deutsche Seele' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 100 (7 February 1919); Dr. Frosch, 'Der

the weekly satirical newspaper supplement of the *Berliner Tageblatt*, *Ulk*. It suggested that 2913 years of human development, from prehistoric man sitting in a tree to a general director being driven around in a car in 1913, had been almost entirely reversed by 1920 as a consequence of the war.[161] The final, undated, image in the cartoon's historical sequence suggested that complete regression back into the tree would be concluded sometime in the future.[162] Press criticism furthermore linked a whole range of social problems, such as hopelessness and apathy, lack of motivation to work and a frantic desire for dancing and debauchery to the war experience, implying that only moral reform in accordance with humanitarian revolutionary values could save Germany.[163]

It is evident, however, that the press referred significantly less frequently to the impact of the war on people's social interaction in the post-war period than to its political and demographic consequences.[164] The political dimension of the press commentary, linking required reform to revolutionary values, provides a possible explanation for the newspapers' disinclination to address the moral legacy of the war more forcefully. Although the reasons for this reluctance can only be speculated upon, it seems plausible that the moral implications of the conflict remained an ideological taboo because they threatened to alienate the population from the republic. Press discussions emphasizing demographic shifts due to war-related deaths, Germany's post-war impoverishment or the grave consequences of its wartime policies tended to portray the German people as victims of their circumstances.[165] Criticism of their moral integrity, however, implied that they were co-responsible for their misery even if the articles stressed that the moral decline had evolved as a consequence of the war.

Tanztaumel' *Die Welt am Montag* 12, (24 March 1919); Rudolf Wissel, 'Sollen wir zugrunde gehen?' *Vorwärts* 60 (2 February 1919).

[161] Fritz Wolff, 'Kreislauf des Lebens' *Ulk* 12/13 (2 April 1920). See Illustration I, p. 69. The graphic designer and publisher Fritz Wolff was editor of the *Neue Revue* from 1907 to 1908 and member of the *Assoziation Revolutionärer Bildender Künstler* (Association of Revolutionary Artists). See 'Wolff, Fritz' in Joachim Bergmann (ed.), *Die Schaubühne. Die Weltbühne 1905-1933: Bibliographie und Register mit Annotationen* (Munich, 1991), p. 262.

[162] Ibid.

[163] 'Neujahrsgruß allen Schaffenden!' *Vorwärts* 1 (1 January 1919); Anton Erkelenz, 'Die kranke deutsche Seele' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 100 (7 February 1919); Konrad Haenisch, 'Sie töten den Geist nicht, ihr Brüder' *Vorwärts* 202 (20 April 1919); Dr. Julius Moses, 'Auch eine Bilanz des Krieges' *Die Freiheit* 130 (18 April 1920); Rudolf Wissel, 'Sollen wir zugrunde gehen?' *Vorwärts* 60 (2 February 1919).

[164] The complex nature of the articles, many of which comment on a number of issues, makes it impossible to provide definitive numbers for this claim. It may suffice, however, to outline that only 10 articles deal exclusively with the psychological impact of the war, while the press discussions of its political legacy provide the source material for chapters 2 and 3 of this thesis.

[165] 'Der Hungerblockadetod der Kinder' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 444 (19 June 1919); 'Das Los der Zivil- und Kriegskrüppel' *Die Freiheit* 335 (16 July 1919); 'Ministerpräsident Eisner über die Lage' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 325 (23 November 1918); Paul Enderling, 'Der Blick unter die Dächer' *Der wahre Jacob* 843 (8 November 1918); Rudolf Wissel, 'Sollen wir zugrunde gehen?' *Vorwärts* 60 (2 February 1919). The freelance author and translator Paul Enderling (1880-1938) published novellas, short stories and poems which often dealt with his home town Danzig. In 1922/23 he became editor-in-chief at the socialist *Der wahre Jacob*. See Walther Killy (ed.), *Deutsche Biographische Enzyklopädie. Band 3* (Darmstadt, 1996), p. 110.

It is also significant that of all republican newspapers, the USPD publication *Die Freiheit* contributed least to this debate. Considering that most of the articles in question were published during or after the political unrest that took place in the first months of 1919, this fact can be explained in relation to differing party political conceptions of the revolution.[166] For SPD and DDP, the replacement of the monarchy with a provisional government represented an end to the role of civil disobedience in the foundation of the new state.[167] They consequently regarded continuing revolutionary activity, particularly in the form of strikes, as obstructive to Germany's political development.[168] The USPD, on the other hand, saw the revolution as a continuing process and was reluctant to reject traditional means of socialist protest, such as strikes, while other publications saw strikes as manifestations of moral decline.[169] These politically motivated interpretations of the conflict's legacy indicated that party-political rivalry posed a significant difficulty in creating a coherent republican narrative of the war and of its legacy for the republic.

Commentary on the moral effects of the war therefore proved somewhat counter-productive for the creation of an ideological republican identity and mainly succeeded in

---

[166] Subsequently to the January unrest, military campaigns against left-wing radicals in Bremen and Munich increased political tensions in the first half on 1919, while workers' strikes for socialisation and the implementation of a workers' council system between December 1918 and March 1919 also destabilised the political situation. Winkler, *Weimar 1918-1933*, pp. 60f, 72-76, 78-81.

[167] Heinrich Winkler argued that the SPD's commitment to the National Assembly has to be regarded as an attempt to conclude the revolution. It can therefore be assumed that the DDP leaflets stressing the importance of the formation of a National Assembly can be interpreted in a similar manner. Winkler, *Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung*, pp. 102f; BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DDP, E-J, Hamburg, 1918: DDP, *Arbeiter und Soldaten!* (Hamburg, 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DDP, A-D, Braunschweig, 1918: DDP, *Handwerker, Gewerbetreibende, Kaufleute!* (Braunschweig, 1918). The provisional government's refusal to give the councils a constitutional role in the parliamentary democracy further suggests that it regarded these revolutionary organisations as counter-productive to Germany's political development. Bavaj, *Von links gegen Weimar*, p. 186.

[168] 'Die Arbeit muß uns retten!' *Vorwärts* 325 (26 November 1918); 'Frankfurt, 1. April' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 246 (1 April 1919); Walther Kabisch, 'Und wieder: Generalstreik?' *Ulk* 15 (11 April 1919); Carl Lidow, 'Revolution verpflichtet!' *Vorwärts* 351 (22 December 1918); Rudolf Wissel, 'Sollen wir zugrunde gehen?' *Vorwärts* 60 (2 February 1919).

[169] Wilhelm Dittmann, 'Die Unabhängige Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands' in USPD, *Handbuch für die Wähler der Unabhängigen Sozialdemokratischen Partei. Reichstagswahl 1920* (n.p., 1920), pp. 28, 34f. 'Frankfurt, 1. April' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 246 (1 April 1919); 'Die regierenden Militärs' *Die Freiheit* 519 (27 October 1919); 'Wo bleibt die Demobilisierung?' *Die Freiheit* 374 (7 August 1919); Ernst Däumig, 'Eine Station auf dem Passionswege der Revolution' *Die Freiheit* 547 (11 November 1919); Dr. Walther Lessing, 'Der Zahlenwahnsinn' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 180 (8 March 1919); Carl Lidow, 'Revolution verpflichtet!' *Vorwärts* 351 (22 December 1918); Rudolf Wissel, 'Sollen wir zugrunde gehen?' *Vorwärts* 60 (2 February 1919). Having served in the French Foreign Legion from 1887 to 1893, Ernst Däumig (1866-1922) joined the German officer corps before becoming a member of the SPD in 1898. He worked briefly as an editor for a number of regional SPD newspapers over the next decade and joined the *Vorwärts* editorial in 1911. He supported the publication's initial opposition to the war credits and was therefore dismissed when it changed its position in 1916. Däumig subsequently left the SPD to join the USPD and edit its political organ. He represented the revolutionary shop stewards in the Central Soldiers' and Workers' council as a vehement advocate of the establishment of a council republic rather than a parliamentary democracy. Elected to the Reichstag for the USPD in 1920, he appealed for the party to join the Communist International and was elected to the executive commission of the United Communist Party in 1920. As a consequence of political disagreements with the communists, he rejoined the SPD in 1922. See 'Däumig, Ernst' in Hermann Weber and Andreas Herbst, *Deutsche Kommunisten. Biographisches Handbuch 1918 bis 1945* (Berlin, 2004), pp. 140f.

identifying potential threats to the new state. The construction of a distinctively republican interpretation of the nature of war, dissociating the republic from the aggressive war ideology of the former elite, presented a more unifying means by which to define the new state's ethical and political principles. While acknowledging that the desire for renewal had motivated many soldiers to fight, press depictions of the war experience strongly rejected any understanding of war as a cathartic force.[170] Instead the seemingly senseless human and topographical destruction, as a defining characteristic of modern warfare, featured prominently.[171] Republican portrayals of combat noted that the war had transformed beautiful landscapes into splintered trees and rubble and people's homes into burning ruins.[172] Fritz von Unruh, for example, described a soldier's impressions of a sunset in a destroyed village:

> [l]imy, senseless, and orphaned chimneys protrude between the ruins of destroyed human settlements and bear witness to the places where people had once broken bread. [...] Gables of houses are collapsing like mirages. High walls collapse into nothing, fire is burning through the stones.[173]

Republican discourse thus reinterpreted wartime images of destruction, which had expressed the soldiers' fascination with the potential of human destruction or functioned as propaganda material against the enemy during the war, into an abstract symbol for its horrific consequences.[174]

The contrast between apocalyptic images and memories of peaceful human interaction - evoked by descriptions of the devastation which repeated shelling wreaked in inhabited areas - particularly reflected the prescribed ideological return from wartime captivation with destruction to a compassionate peacetime mentality.[175] A focus on the destruction of family homes attempted to draw attention to a human aspect of the war, which most German civilians would not have witnessed first hand. This appeal for empathy was intended to undermine any abstract interpretation of war as a constructive force which could only be upheld if human suffering was taken out of the equation.[176] The moral implications of this human dimension to the destruction were most strongly evoked

---

[170] 'Ein Lustrum' *Die Weltbühne* 33 (7 August 1919), p. 173.
[171] Ernst Klaar, 'Friede' *Der wahre Jacob* 843 (8 November 1918); Hermann Molkebuhr and Richard Müller, 'Appell an die Ententevölker' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 317 (15 November 1918). The typesetter Ernst Klaar (1861-1920) joined the SPD during the era of Bismarck's anti-socialist laws and published his first work in social democratic publications. Klaar earned his income exclusively as a freelance journalist for the *Süddeutscher Postillon* and *Der wahre Jacob* from 1888. See Walther Killy and Rudolf Vierhaus (eds.), *Deutsche Biographische Enzyklopädie. Band 5* (Darmstadt, 1997), p. 562. For biographical information on Molkebuhr see Appendix I, p. 333.
[172] 'Heil Dir im Siegerkranz' *Vorwärts* 599 (23 November 1919); 'Kamerad Levi' *Das Tage-Buch* 12 (24 March 1923); Arno Voigt, 'Das Schaukelpferd' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 308 (6 November 1918); 'Aus dem Tagebuch' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 390 (30 May 1920).
[173] 'Aus dem Tagebuch' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 390 (30 May 1920). For biographical information on von Unruh see Appendix I, p. 339.
[174] For a summary of the different wartime functions of the depiction of devastation see Kramer, *Dynamic of Destruction*, pp. 234-237.
[175] Ibid; Arno Voigt, 'Das Schaukelpferd' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 308 (6 November 1918).
[176] Andreas Latzko, *Menschen im Krieg* (Zurich, 1918), p. 84.

with reference to children as victims of war. Although the war had, to some extent, desensitised society to human suffering the distress of innocent children was perceived as a strong moral influence on political decisions.[177] Portrayals of children, having left behind traces of formerly peaceful lives in burnt out villages, would elicit a particularly strong condemnation of war.[178]

In response to a right-wing tendency to portray combat through the stylised and sanitised lens of traditional warfare - evident in war propaganda and post-war officers' memoirs - republican narratives of the soldiers' experience at the front also focused on human suffering.[179] Independent of the location or of the type of warfare being portrayed in the newspapers, soldiers' descriptions of the war experience consistently reflected want for the most basic provisions such as food, drink, or sufficient shelter.[180] They were depicted as sleeping in their own faeces, literally drowning in their trenches, being infested by lice, and suffering unbearable hunger and thirst. [181] Additionally, soldiers' accounts give evidence of the disturbing nature of constant shell detonations and gunfire and of the overbearing stench of decomposing corpses.[182] Press accounts also illustrated the devastating nature of modern warfare by portraying its destruction of human life. Republican war narratives frequently described mutilated, decapitated and decaying corpses as part of the landscape surrounding the soldiers.[183] The extent to which death was depicted as an integral part of the soldiers' existence was especially evident in accounts of

---

[177] The perceived appeal of the suffering of children was evident in almost all newspaper coverage dealing with the effects of the blockade, which expressed a strong condemnation of inflicting harm on children. While the actual levels of empathy cannot be established in retrospect, it can nevertheless be assumed that children's suffering was at least perceived to have a strong emotional and moral impact. 'Die Hungerblockade der Kinder' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 444 (19 June 1919); 'Der Krieg gegen Kinder und Greise' *Vorwärts* 58 (1 February 1919); 'Das neugeborene Kriegskind' *Vorwärts* 398 (6 August 1919).

[178] Arno Voigt, 'Das Schaukelpferd' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 308 (6 November 1918); 'Aus dem Tagebuch' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 390 (30 May 1920).

[179] Ther, "Humans are cheap and the bread is dear" in Jones, O'Brien, Schmidt-Supprian (eds.), *Untold War*, pp. 364f, 367f; Mosse, *Fallen soldiers*, pp. 128f.

[180] 'Es war einmal' *Die Welt am Montag* 7 (14 February 1921); 'Episode' *Das Tage-Buch* 21 (26 May 1923); Paul Zech, 'Der See Genezareth' *Vorwärts* 335 (6 December 1918); 'Briefe aus dem Felde' *Die Freiheit* 23 (27 November 1918); 'Heil Dir im Siegerkranz' *Vorwärts* 599 (23 November 1919); 'Kamerad Levi' *Das Tage-Buch* 12 (24 March 1923); 'Es geht uns gut' *Die Weltbühne* 6 (6 February 1919), pp. 139f; 'Worauf ihr stolz sein müßt' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 326 (24 November 1918); Arno Voigt, 'Die Marketenderei' *Die Weltbühne* 31 (24 July 1919), p. 94; 'Aus dem Roman das Feuer von Henri Barbusse' *Freie Jugend* (15 July 1919). For biographical information on Paul Zech see Appendix I, pp. 339f.

[181] 'Briefe aus dem Felde' *Die Freiheit* 23 (27 November 1918), Paul Zech, 'Der See Genezareth' *Vorwärts* 335 (6 December 1918); 'Episode' *Das Tage-Buch* 21 (26 May 1923); Arno Voigt, 'Die Marketenderei' *Die Weltbühne* 30 (17 July 1919), p. 94; 'Heil Dir im Siegerkranz' *Vorwärts* 599 (23 November 1919); Henry Barbusse, 'Das Morgengrauen' *Vorwärts*, 1, 4, 6, 8, 25-29, 33/34, 43 and 45 between 1 and 25 January 1919.

[182] 'Aus dem Tagebuch' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 390 (30 May 1920); 'Der Mann am Baum' *Die Welt am Montag* 3 (20 January 1919); 'Heil Dir im Siegerkranz' *Vorwärts* 599 (23 November 1919); Paul Zech, *Das Grab der Welt. Eine Passion wider den Krieg auf Erden* (Hamburg, Berlin, 1919), pp. 55, 61.

[183] For example 'Episode' *Das Tage-Buch* 4, 21 (26 May 1923); 'Heil Dir im Siegerkranz' *Vorwärts* 599 (23 November 1919).

soldiers literally stepping on corpses or body fragments.[184] In this context, the sheer number of victims and the horrible disfigurement of many corpses were dominant themes throughout the press.[185]

Although most of the interpretations of war analysed were stylistically anecdotal or literary, their political dimension should not be underestimated. The literary critic Paul Fussell has attributed an emphasis on the shocking aspects of war in German war novels to an artistic tradition focusing on the portrayal of horror.[186] Interpreting these narratives exclusively as the result of a particular literary tradition, however, fails to contextualise them as an integral part of the wider political and cultural framework within Weimar Germany. For Germany, unlike for the victorious nations, the armistice did not bring the conflict to a close. The war was constantly politicised at a domestic level which prevented the ideological demobilisation of public discourse.

In response to right-wing glorifications of combat, some *Vorwärts* articles explicitly defined carnage on the battlefield as the 'embarrassing truth' of the war.[187] This claim to represent the 'true' nature of warfare implied that any attempt to sanitize the conflict was necessarily based on lies. A USPD election leaflet rendered this version of the war narrative in visual form, depicting a large pile of dead soldiers under a caption of a Hindenburg quote, declaring that the war 'agreed with [him] like a visit to a health resort'.[188] The leaflet then commented, referring to the war dead, that 'this was what the visit to a health resort looked like for the people'.[189] Juxtaposing war propaganda and the 'reality of war' clearly intended to fan popular resentment at having been deceived and exploited by their former leaders. The graphic portrayal of war death and destruction in republican publications can therefore be regarded as an attempt to challenge the moral and ideological authority of the former political and military elite. It also suggested that republicans had a monopoly on the truth regarding the war, resulting in the exclusive right to make decisions regarding its legacy. Sabine Behrenbeck argues that during the Weimar Republic a truthful depiction of death and the subsequent admission of the pointlessness

---

[184] 'Heil Dir im Siegerkranz' *Vorwärts* 599 (23 November 1919); 'Aus dem Tagebuch' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 390 (30 May 1920). Otto Dix visualised these expressions of horror in his images of the war which depicted death and destruction on the battlefield very graphically. See: Kramer, *Dynamics of Destruction*, pp. 265f. For examples of such images see Otto Dix, 'Der Schützengraben' or 'Verwundeter' in Fritz Löffler, *Otto Dix. Leben und Werk* (Wiesbaden, 1960), Illustrations 62 and 65; Otto Dix, 'Toter Sappenposten' or 'Sterbender Soldat' in Tate Gallery (ed.), *Otto Dix 1891-1969* (London, 1992), Illustrations E and F, p. 158.

[185] 'Episode' *Das Tage-Buch* 21 (26 May 1923); 'Heil Dir im Siegerkranz' *Vorwärts* 599 (23 November 1919); 'Kamerad Levi' *Das Tage-Buch* 12 (24 March 1923); 'Deutsche Jugend' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 840 (12 November 1920); 'Es war einmal' *Die Welt am Montag* 7 (14 February 1921).

[186] Paul Fussel, 'Der Einfluss kultureller Paradigmen auf die literarische Wiedergabe traumatischer Erfahrungen' in Klaus Vondung (ed.), *Der Erste Weltkrieg in der literarischen Gestaltung und symbolischen Deutung der Nationen* (Göttingen, 1980), pp. 177f.

[187] 'Denkwürdigkeiten' *Vorwärts* 453 (5 September 1919), 'Heil Dir im Siegerkranz' *Vorwärts* 599 (23 November 1919).

[188] FES, NUR 1920 Undatiert II USPD, *Hindenburg erklärte: 'Der Krieg bekommt mir wie eine Badekur!'* (n.p., 1920). See Illustration II, p. 70.

[189] Ibid.

of war was prohibited by fear that it would undermine values necessary to uphold the state.[190] The analysis of the republican press illustrates, however, that the realistic depiction of death on the battlefield was by no means regarded as damaging to the republic.

The uniformly horrific portrayal of the war experience in republican discourse also reveals its innate political dimension.[191] Although republican parties and interest groups were deeply divided on many political issues arising from the war, they had remarkably similar approaches to portraying the conflict. A letter from the *Reichsarchiv* in 1924 particularly illustrates this uniformity by complaining that democratic and left-wing newspapers refused to print official, non-pacifist narratives of the war experience.[192] Given this highly politicised context, even war narratives which were not ostensibly political can be evaluated as part of the political debate, rather than simply personal accounts or artistic interpretations of the conflict. The unanimous republican interpretation of war as destruction and suffering was therefore essential in creating a revolutionary identity, because it reflected a unifying focus for divergent party political interests. This analysis challenges Richard Bessel's assumption, which related the controversial debate following the publication of Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* merely to the 'inability of many Germans to come to terms with the war'.[193] The political controversy about the 'true' nature of the First World War rather reflected each side's respective commitment to a political vision of the new state. It furthermore disproves Ulrich Linse's assumption that conceptual perceptions rejecting the war were not, to the same extent, linked to institutions and organisations as those supporting it.[194]

In order to contextualise the political dimension inherent in the republican adoption of a traditionally pacifist narrative, one needs to consider the ideological significance of the war experience in political discourse, which was particularly evident in party-political leaflets. A comparative analysis of press articles and political leaflets particularly shows the political relevance and application of different interpretations of the war. While DVP and DNVP, representing the right-wing viewpoint, largely referred to the war as a time of national greatness and heroism, republican leaflets universally described the conflict as 'bloodshed', 'carnage' and 'a bloody orgy of genocide' causing immense suffering to both soldiers and civilians.[195]

---

[190] Behrenbeck, 'Heldenkult und Opfermythos' in Linden and Mergner (eds.), *Kriegsbegeisterung und mentale Kriegsvorbereitung*, p. 149.

[191] The SPD reconciled its previous support for the war with this pacifist interpretation of the conflict by claiming to have sought a conciliatory peace all along. See chapter 2, pp. 106f.

[192] Bernd Ulrich and Benjamin Ziemann (eds.), *Krieg im Frieden: Die umkämpfte Erinnerung an den Ersten Weltkrieg. Quellen und Dokumente* (Frankfurt, 1997), p. 70.

[193] Bessel, *Germany*, p. 267. For biographical information on Remarque see Appendix I, p. 335.

[194] Linse, 'Das wahre Zeugnis' in Vondung (ed.), *Kriegserlebnis*, p. 97.

[195] FES, NUR 1919 Januar III DDP, *Deutsche Frauen!* (Berlin, 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DNVP, 1919, o.O.: DNVP, *Deutsche Krieger!* (n.p., 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DNVP, Satzungen, Manifeste, Personen: DNVP, *Nationales Manifest der Deutschnationalen Volkspartei*

These opposing evaluations of the conflict suggest that diverging perceptions of the First World War represented different ideological blueprints for the future state. The specifically 'revolutionary' interpretation of the war, which one SPD leaflet summarised as '51 months of suffering and deprivations' portrayed war and revolution as complete opposites. USPD and SPD leaflets, for example, conceptualised war as militarism, murder, and oppression while the revolution was characterised by peace and freedom.[196] A number of SPD and republican publications additionally stressed that in comparison to the massive loss of life during the war, the revolution had been almost bloodless.[197] *Vorwärts* journalist Erich Kuttner expressed this sentiment most tangibly in a pamphlet explaining the implications of the revolution, arguing that it 'had not even claimed as many lives as a single average quarter of an hour of the world war'.[198]

The basic assumption of moral superiority that derived from this republican rejection of violence was also used to deflect right-wing attacks. *Vorwärts*, *Die Weltbühne*, and the *Frankfurter Zeitung* all denounced allegations against the allegedly disordered revolution by questioning the moral values of the accusers. *Die Weltbühne*, for example, quoted the critical journalist, editor and playwright Karl Kraus in order to express the belief that bourgeois criticism of political unrest following the revolution was an absurd reversal of values:

> I declare that I consider the wildest procession of freed slaves as a more orderly and godly spectacle than the regimented drive of human cattle into death for other people's idiocy, other people's crimes.[199]

An officer in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* expressed a similar value judgement when claiming that it was not the revolutionary disorder but rather the ordered slaughter of the war that was the real crime.[200]

In *Fallen Soldiers* the historian George Mosse has interpreted such a traditionally pacifist understanding of war as 'the inability of the left to forget the reality of the war and

---

(n.p., 1920); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DVP, Berlin, 1921: DVP, *Deutsche Jugend!* (Berlin, 1921); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DVP, Berlin, 1920: DVP, *"Vergessen"* (Berlin, 1920); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, KPD, 1921, Berlin: KPD, *Frauen der Arbeiterklasse! Wollt ihr den Krieg?* (Berlin, 1921); FES, NUR 1919 Undatiert IV: SPD, *Kameraden!* (Hannover, 1919); FES, NUR 1919 Undatiert II USPD, *Männer und Frauen in Stadt und Land!* (Hamburg, 1919).

196 FES, NUR 1918 Undatiert III: *Den Heimgekehrten!* (n.p., 1918); FES, 6/FLBL005457: Oscar Cohn, *An die Soldaten!* (Berlin, 1918); FES, NUR 1919 Undatiert IV: SPD, *Kameraden!* (Hannover, 1919).

197 'Die Kaiserfrage' *Vorwärts* 309 (9 November 1918); FES, 6/FLBL005560: Arbeitsgemeinschaft für staatsbürgerliche und wirtschaftliche Bildung, *Was hat uns die Revolution gebracht?* (n.p., 1918/1919); Dr. Frosch, 'Das heilige Leben' *Die Welt am Montag* 3 (20 January 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, SPD, 1918, Berlin: SPD, *Arbeiter, Genossen!* (Berlin, 1918); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, SPD, 1918, Berlin; SPD, *Soldaten!* (Berlin, 1918); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, SPD, 1918, Berlin: SPD, *Soldaten! Brüder im grauen Rock!* (Berlin, 1918).

198 FES, 6/FLBL005560: Arbeitsgemeinschaft für staatsbürgerliche und wirtschaftliche Bildung, *Was hat uns die Revolution gebracht?* (n.p., 1918/1919). For biographical information on Kuttner see Appendix I, p. 330.

199 Olf, 'Ruhe, Sicherheit und Ordnung' *Die Weltbühne* 6 (6 February 1919), p. 127. For biographical information on Rudolf Leonard see Appendix I, pp. 331f.

200 Generalmajor L., 'Heimat und Oberste Heeresleitung' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 97 (6 February 1919).

enter into the Myth of the War experience'.[201] The analysis of republican leaflets illustrates, however, that their focus on the horrific nature of war was by no means apolitical or a failure to recognise the symbolic importance of the conflict. Instead, the positive contrast of the peaceful revolution with the soldiers' bloody war experience was consciously aimed at seizing upon the war weariness of the population in order to promote the values of the revolution. The fact that Germany's Communist Party (KPD) shared this republican interpretation of war as destruction and suffering, however, may have limited its influence as a stabilising factor for republican values.[202]

The logical consequence of portraying the revolution as the complete antithesis of the bloody war experience implied that the movement emerged out of opposition to the principles of force and belligerence which had been the dominant political creed during the conflict.[203] This perception of moral regeneration leading Germany back on the 'godly' path was used not just to defend and rally support for the republic, but also to announce its policy-making principles. It clearly identified active revolutionary violence as the acts of radical criminal elements and appealed for order to reflect the revolutionary regard for human life, which was portrayed as its distinguishing and legitimising feature.[204] An article in *Die Welt am Montag* explicitly stressed that the revolution could not enforce its ideals through violence.[205] The government's employment of military force against political unrest in the first half of 1919, however, made it apparent that these revolutionary creeds could not be translated into political reality and consequently weakened the credibility of the republican ideals.[206] The breach of the proclaimed peaceful aspirations of the revolution, evident in the use of violence against the radical left from December 1918 thus subverted the government's own legitimising narrative.

Diverging republican and reactionary interpretations of the war experience were also defined by codifying a particular narrative of the soldiers' war experience at the front.

---

[201] Mosse, *Fallen soldiers,* p. 106.

[202] BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, KPD, 1919, o.O.: KPD, *Der Soldat am Scheidewege* (n.p., 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, KPD, 1919, Berlin: KPD, *An die Soldaten der Freiwilligenregimenter!* (Berlin, 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, KPD, 1918, Berlin: Spartakusbund, *Was will der Spartakusbund?* (Berlin, 1918).

[203] 'Frankfurt, 11. November' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 313 (11 November 1918); FES, NUR 1918 Dezember II Hans Georg von Beerfelde, *Die Waffen nieder! Kameraden von der Front!* (Berlin, 1918); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DDP, A-D, Braunschweig: DDP, *An die deutschen Frauen!* (Braunschweig, n.d. but 1919); Dr. Frosch, 'Das heilige Leben' *Die Welt am Montag* 3 (20 January 1919); Robert Breuer, 'Das Ergebnis' *Die Weltbühne* 41 (10 October 1918), pp. 327f; Berta Lask, 'Anruf an die Frauen!' *Vorwärts* 327 (28 November 1918); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, SPD, 1918-19, o.O.: SPD, *Arbeiter mit und ohne Waffenrock hör mich an!* (n.p., 1918/1919); FES, NUR 1918 Dezember II SPD, *Frauen und Mädchen! Hütet euch vor falschen Freunden!* (n. p., 1919).The dramatist and political propagandist Bertha Lask became involved in the working class movement after witnessing deprivation amongst Berlin workers through her husband's work as a doctor. She joined the KPD in 1923 and emigrated to the Soviet Union in 1933. See 'Lask, Berta' in Weber and Herbst, *Deutsche Kommunisten*, pp. 441f. For biographical information on Robert Breuer see Appendix I, pp. 323f.

[204] 'Geschichte - Keine Greuelgeschichten' *Vorwärts* 309 (9 November 1918); Dr. Frosch, 'Das heilige Leben' *Die Welt am Montag* 3 (20 January 1919); Hans Leuß, 'Das Soldatenparlament' *Die Welt am Montag* 50 (16 December 1918). For biographical information on Leuß see Appendix I, p. 332.

[205] Hans Leuß, 'Gewaltherrschaft oder Volksregierung?' *Die Welt am Montag* 3 (20 January 1919).

[206] Winkler, *Weimar 1918-1933*, pp. 56-61, 72-76, 78-81.

The soldiers' interpretation of the conflict was a crucial component of revolutionary discourse as post-war propaganda attempted to appropriate the soldiers' morale in order to legitimise each party's respective political agenda. Both the immense number of war dead, affecting a large proportion of the German population, and continued popular esteem for the soldiers' sacrifice, (which was evident in the 'Cult of the Fallen Soldier'), reflected the central role of these soldiers in political designs for the new state.[207]

Wartime right-wing propaganda constructed a myth of military strength, discipline, and voluntary sacrifice ascribed to soldiers at the front.[208] Reactionary forces subsequently upheld this imaginary idea of the heroic warrior in the post-war period, proclaiming it as the ideal for which Germany should strive. A DVP leaflet, for example, describes the 'proud German army, which victoriously withstood the enemy for 4 ½ years like a wall of stone and granite'.[209] The revolutionary reality, which the right perceived as disorder, was compared unfavourably to the 'order' of war.[210] Through their interpretation of warfare, German nationalists promoted a martial ideal, de facto a new war order, as a means for the restoration of Germany's power.[211] In order to integrate the soldiers into their reactionary agenda, right-wing rhetoric could straightforwardly evoke the soldiers' sacrifice, suggesting that they had fought for the old regime which should therefore be revived.[212] Both DVP and DNVP consequently strove to imply that they represented the ideals of the soldiers and therefore derived legitimacy from their sacrifice.

This reactionary attempt to extend Germany's wartime ideology beyond the collapse of the old regime illustrated the necessity for a republican narrative of the war reflecting the values of the revolution. Yet republican attempts to utilise the ideals for which the soldiers had fought proved more problematic. If one assumes that the soldiers fought for the values of either the monarchy or the military leadership, no logical deduction can derive republican legitimacy from their sacrifice. Responding to this

---

[207] Mosse, *Fallen soldiers*, p. 106. Also see Kai Kruse and Wolfgang Kruse, 'Kriegerdenkmäler in Bielefeld. Ein lokalhistorischer Beitrag zur Entwicklungsanalyse des deutschen Gefallenenkultes im 19. Und 20. Jahrhundert' in Reinhart Kosselleck, Michael Jeismann (eds.), *Der Politische Totenkult. Kriegerdenkmäler in der Moderne* (Munich, 1994), p. 105.

[208] Anne Lipp provides a concise account of the propagandistic transformation of the front soldier into a human fighting machine in the course of the war. See Anne Lipp, *Meinungslenkung im Krieg: Kriegserfahrungen deutscher Soldaten und ihre Deutung, 1914-1918* (Göttingen, 2003), pp. 150-156. For a contemporary view of the 'fighting spirit' see 'Mit Gott für König und Vaterland' (1914/1915) in Digitale Bibliothek, *Der erste Weltkrieg in Deutschen Bildpostkarten* 66 (Berlin, 2002), p. 1091.

[209] BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DVP, Berlin, 1919: DVP, *Erwachet deutsche Männer! Erwachet deutsche Frauen!* (Berlin, 1919).

[210] See for example FES, 6/FLBL005037: DNVP, *Deutsches Volk wache auf!* (Berlin, 1919); Flugblätter 1918-1933, DDP, o.O: DNVP, *Mitbürger! Deutsche Männer und Frauen!* (n.p., 1918/1919).

[211] Ibid; BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, 9 November 1918: Deutsche Zeitung, *Vier Wochen Revolution.* (Berlin, 1918); FES, 6/FLBL005856: DNVP, *Achtung Kameraden!* (Berlin, 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DNVP, 1919, o.O.: DNVP, *Deutscher Bürger: Wie wählst Du?* (n.p., 1919); FES, 6/FLBL005037: DNVP, *Deutsches Volk wache auf!* (Berlin, 1919); Flugblätter 1918-1933, DDP, o.O: DNVP, *Mitbürger! Deutsche Männer und Frauen!* (n.p., 1918/1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DNVP, 1918, o.O.: DNVP, *Wahlaufruf der Deutschnationalen Volkspartei* (n.p., 1918).

[212] BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DNVP, 1919, o.O.: DNVP, *An das deutsche Heer und die deutsche Marine!* (n.p., 1919); FES, NUR 1918 Dezember II: DNVP, *Deutsche Jugend!* (Berlin, 1918); FES, 6/FLBL005036: DVP, *Die 14 Punkte. Was will die Deutsche Volkspartei?* (Berlin, 1919).

dilemma, republican leaflets depicted soldiers at the front as mere cogs in the military machinery without rights or the freedom to express their will.[213] This portrayal of the soldiers implied that they did not fight out of ideological conviction but under coercion and deception.[214] The soldiers' disillusionment with the war, manifesting itself in a rejection of officially-prescribed values, was also a universal theme of republican war narratives in the press.[215] Articles in *Die Freiheit* and the *Frankfurter Zeitung* alike reported that soldiers had hated the war, while an article in *Vorwärts* even described them as envying the dead because they no longer had to experience the horrors of combat.[216] Paul Zech's description of the soldiers' emotions towards those continuing the war was also summarised in *Vorwärts*:

> [w]e longed to fuck up the down-feathered nights of those prolonging the war with our lice, with the scabies-revolts of our skin, with our stumps, the festering eye-sockets, [and] the massive fear of our brothers in Flanders, Reims and at the dried out watering holes in Eastern Africa.[217]

This republican portrayal of soldiers' lack of commitment to officially-ascribed motivations to fight signified that the post-revolutionary reactionary forces had no right to appropriate their spirit, because men at the front had not fought to defend right-wing

---

[213] FES, 6/FLBL005542: Arbeiter und Soldatenrat Groß-Berlin, *An die heimgekehrten Soldaten! Kameraden!* (Berlin, 1918); FES, NUR 1918 Dezember II Hans Georg von Beerfelde, *Die Waffen nieder! Kameraden von der Front!* (Berlin, 1918); FES, 6/FLBL005457: Oscar Cohn, *An die Soldaten!* (Berlin, 1918); FES, 6/FLBL005876: SPD, *Deutsch-nationale Lügenmanöver!* (n.p., 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, SPD, 1919, Berlin: SPD, *Wofür haben wir gekämpft?* (Berlin, 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, USPD, 1919, Berlin: USPD, *Gegen die Lügenpest!* (Berlin, 1919); FES, NUR 1919 Undatiert II USPD, *Männer und Frauen in Stadt und Land!* (Hamburg, 1919).

[214] In depicting these descriptions of warfare as soldiers' eyewitness accounts, republican discourse sought to utilise the public regard for their authority to judge such matters which Ziemann identified as a characteristic of the post-war period. See Ziemann, 'Republikanische Kriegserinnerung', p. 378.

[215] Fritz Reck-Malleczewen, 'Die ersten Toten' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 1 (1 January 1919); 'Aus dem Tagebuch' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 390 (30 May 1920); 'Franz T.' *Die Weltbühne* 6 (6 February 1919), p. 147; 'Preußische Presse' *Die Weltbühne* 23 (29 May 1919), pp. 647f; Arno Voigt 'Die Kriegsberichterstatter' *Die Weltbühne* 17 (28 April 1921), pp. 466f; 'Nicolai' *Die Weltbühne* 49 (5 December 1918), pp. 531f; 'Es war einmal!' *Die Welt am Montag* 7 (14 February 1921); Paul Zech, 'Der See Genezareth' *Vorwärts* 335 (6 December 1918); Dr. Frosch, 'Heimkrieger' *Die Welt am Montag* 31 (1 August 1921). For biographical information on Dr. Frosch see Appendix I, p. 326. The physician Fritz Reck-Malleczewen (1884-1945) was exempted from military duty on medical grounds during the First World War and worked as a freelance author and journalist near Munich. He is described as an eccentric figure and pathological liar, who tended to assume false identities. Reck-Malleczewen's most famous novel *Bomben auf Monte Carlo* was turned into a film starring Heinz Rühmann in 1931. He eventually died of typhoid in Dachau after being denounced. See Carl-Ludwig Reichert, 'Reck-Mallczewen' in *Neue Deutsche Biographie* 21 (2003), p. 233 on htttp://www.deutsche-biographie.de/artikelNDB_pnd118598821.html

[216] Fritz Reck-Malleczewen, 'Die ersten Toten' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 1 (1 January 1919); 'Hedwig Dohm' *Die Freiheit* 273 (8 June 1919); Erich Tross, 'Das Buch der 256. J.D.' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 951 (23 December 1920); Ernst Toller, 'Totentanz' *Die Freiheit* 287 (20 June 1919); 'Heil Dir im Siegerkranz' *Vorwärts* 599 (23 November 1919). The First World War volunteer Ernst Toller turned to pacifism due to his experience at the front. He was actively involved in the Bavarian council republic in November 1919 and was sentenced to 5 years in prison in its aftermath. His expressionist post-war plays were widely acknowledged and made him one of the most renowned representatives of German expressionist drama. In 1939 he committed suicide in exile in New York. See Martin Rooney, 'Ernst Toller' in Donat and Holl (eds.), *Die Friedensbewegung*, pp. 388f.

[217] Paul Zech, 'Der See Genezareth' *Vorwärts* 335 (6 December 1918).

values. Otto Lehmann-Russbüldt summarised this phenomenon by claiming that he never met a Pan-German at the front, while *Die Freiheit* mocked Ludendorff's dedication of his memoirs to the fallen, claiming that they had cursed him with their last breath.[218] Yet only one article in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, explicitly applied this argument to political tensions in post-war society. It argued that the post-revolutionary youth misinterpreted the legend of Langemarck as a motivation to support reactionary values. Instead, the article suggested that the legacy of the soldiers of Langemarck really called Germany's youth to support the republic because the loyalty of the soldiers had been with Germany and not with the old regime.[219] These attempts to appropriate the soldiers' spirit illustrate, that in order to legitimise democratisation, republican propaganda needed to create a narrative of the war experience dissociating the soldiers from the values of the old elite. DDP propaganda also evoked the soldiers' sacrifice in a call for order, arguing that they did not suffer throughout the war to return to disunity and disorder.[220]

In addition, SPD and USPD propaganda attempted to evoke the memory of the fallen on behalf of the republic by suggesting that the revolutionary achievements of peace, equality, and freedom represented the soldiers' true objectives and were a worthwhile reward for their sacrifice.[221] The social democratic *Der wahre Jacob*, for example, printed an image of the war dead rising in support of the revolution, suggesting that their sacrifice had given rise to freedom.[222] This claim implies as its logical conclusion that not just the living but also the dead soldiers had helped to bring about the revolution.[223] In a commemorative speech for the fallen, an article in *Vorwärts* reasoned that the sacrifice of the fallen could only be commemorated through establishing a democratic and just state teaching its children that justice is the only ideal worth dying for.[224] This interpretation of

---

[218] 'Ludendorffs Kriegserinnerungen' *Die Freiheit* 407 (25 August 1919); Otto Lehmann-Russbüldt, *Warum erfolgte der Zusammenbruch and der Westfront* (Berlin, 1919), p. 12. A similar rejection of the claim that the soldiers died for the monarchy is expressed in 'Deutschnationale Leichenschändung' *Vorwärts* 495 (27 September 1919). For biographical information on Lehmann-Russbüldt see Appendix I, p. 331.

[219] 'Deutsche Jugend' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 840 (12 November 1920). For details of the right-wing version of the legend of Langemarck, which depicted the soldiers' sacrifice as a heroic proof of the German fighting spirit see Bessel, *Germany*, p. 266.

[220] BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DDP, Berlin, 1919: DDP, *Laßt wehen die Fahne schwarz-rot-gold!* (Berlin, 1919); FES, 6/FLBL005124: DDP, *Soldaten!* (Berlin, 1918).

[221] 'Den Opfern des Krieges' *Vorwärts* 600 (24 November 1919); FES, NUR 1918 Dezember II: Hans Georg von Beerfelde, *Die Waffen nieder! Kameraden von der Front!* (Berlin, 1918); Delegation der Ostfront, *Kameraden!* (n.p., 1918/1919); FES, 6/FLBL005550: Frankfurter Arbeiter- und Soldatenrat, *Aufruf Kameraden von der Front* (Frankfurt, 1918); H. G., 'Den Gefallenen' *Vorwärts* 487 (23 September 1919); FES, NUR 1918 Dezember II: USPD, *Wilkommen, Soldaten der Freiheit!* (Berlin, 1918).

[222] 'Memento Mori' *Der wahre Jacob* 869 (17 November 1919). See Illustration III, p. 71.

[223] This argument backs up George Mosse's claim that the myth of paligenesis (the notion of 'rebirth after death and renewal of the people after decay and near destruction') was not merely a proto-fascist concept but was also used by republican forces to defend the revolutionary values. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers*, p. 78. For a definition of paligenesis see Kramer, *Dynamics of Destruction*, pp. 166, 243.

[224] H. G., 'Den Gefallenen' *Vorwärts* 487 (23 September 1919).

the legacy of the dead aimed to legitimise the republic by suggesting that opposition to revolutionary values would render the soldiers' wartime sacrifice meaningless.[225]

This depiction of the war as a revolutionary learning experience was not entirely constructive in shaping a united republican narrative. On the one hand, USPD election propaganda turned the soldiers' alleged commitment to peace against the SPD, arguing that it could exclusively be expressed in electoral support for the Independent Socialists as the only party who had opposed the war from the beginning.[226] On the other hand, the DDP as a republican but not revolutionary party had no interest in linking the soldiers' wartime sacrifice to the revolution. This was evident in the fact that their political leaflets portrayed the soldiers' wartime sacrifice as demanding the preservation of order and avoidance of unrest rather than support for revolutionary values.[227] The rather constructed nature of propagandist attempts to call the war dead to defend the revolution was also apparent in elegies to those who died during the revolution in both *Die Freiheit* and *Vorwärts*. Both publications stressed that the few victims of the revolution had not died in vain because they had died for freedom, which appeared more logically defensible than the rather laboured imposition of revolutionary values onto the fallen of the war.[228] This impression was reinforced by the fact that *Die Freiheit*, in opposition to USPD leaflets, claimed that the wartime victims had died in vain.[229] Negating the value of wartime sacrifices reflected the most radical break with Germany's war ideology, but it can be assumed that this view was not readily accepted by a nation seeking to justify losses of such an unprecedented scale that it affected almost every family in some manner.[230]

REVOLUTIONARY ROLE OF THE SOLDIERS

The perceived importance of soldiers in post-war rhetoric delineating the political ideology of the new state was also evident in depictions of their role in the revolutionary movement. A large proportion of soldiers, who were still at the front during the revolution, had to rely on second-hand accounts of political events at the home front. All parties therefore took particular care to present them with a portrayal of the revolution that accorded with their specific party-political interests. Right-wing leaflets, for example, alleged that the revolution lacked legitimacy because it was carried out by a navy which had been largely inactive during the war, unsavoury elements at the home front, and

---

[225] Delegation der Ostfront, *Kameraden!* (n.p., 1918/1919); FES, NUR 1918 Dezember II: USPD, *Wilkommen, Soldaten der Freiheit!* (Berlin, 1918).
[226] FES, NUR 1919 Undatiert II USPD, *Männer und Frauen in Stadt und Land!* (Hamburg, 1919).
[227] BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DDP, Berlin, 1919: DDP, *Laßt wehen die Fahne schwarz-rot-gold!* (Berlin, 1919); FES, 6/FLBL005124: DDP, *Soldaten!* (Berlin, 1918).
[228] 'Das Begräbnis der Novembertoten' *Vorwärts* 320a (20 November 1918); 'Opfer und Preis' *Vorwärts* 320 (20 November 1918); 'Schuld und Sühne' *Die Freiheit* 10 (20 November 1918).
[229] 'Schuld und Sühne' *Die Freiheit* 10 (20 November 1918).
[230] Mosse, *Fallen soldiers*, p. 6, Jay Winter, *Sites of memory, sites of mourning: the Great War in European cultural history* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 2.

deserters.[231] This claim insinuated that soldiers at the front were essentially opposed to the revolution and especially to the socialist parties, who had broken their determination and fighting spirit.[232] Right-wing descriptions of the revolution as a treacherous and illegal coup attempted to rally the traditional conservative elite against the revolution and appealed to soldiers to oppose the new regime. The notion that the revolution did not have the soldiers' support, who were regarded as a significant political force because their sacrifice for the fatherland entitled them to determine its post-war fate, implied that the revolution could not be sustained once demobilisation was completed.[233]

Republican narratives of the revolution, on the other hand, portrayed the soldiers as an integral part of the revolutionary movement. Initial newspaper accounts assessing the situation stressed that soldiers were not only supportive of the revolutionary demands but also prepared to defend the revolutionary achievements with their lives.[234] An article in *Vorwärts*, detailing soldiers' enthusiasm to become part of the revolutionary organisation, described their mood on 9 November:

> [s]erious news reached us that bloody fighting had started in the royal stables. Immediately a number of cars were called and rushed away with brothers in their field uniforms, who are willing to sacrifice their lives again, this time for their own goal of freedom.[235]

Such proof of the soldiers' support for the revolution reinforced the understanding that it could not be reversed by force without violent opposition and chaos, warning the old elite to refrain from attempting just that.

Efforts to transfer respect for the soldiers, derived from their patriotic achievements during the war, to the revolution were even more evident in narratives identifying soldiers as the main force behind the revolution. All of the analysed newspapers, even the *Frankfurter Zeitung* which was somewhat critical of the revolution's timing, stressed that the main impetus for the movement came from the soldiers.[236] This

---

[231] FES, 6/FLBL005451: *Das verlorene Paradies* (Berlin, 1918/1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DNVP, 1919, o.O.: DNVP, *An das deutsche Heer und die deutsche Marine!* (n.p., 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DNVP, 1919, o.O.: DNVP, *Deutscher Bürger: Wie wählst Du?* (n.p., 1919); FES, NUR 1919 Januar III: DNVP, *Lügen, Phrasen, Wahrheit!* (n.p., 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DNVP, 1919, o.O.: DNVP, *Preussens Baumeister!* (n.p., 1919).

[232] BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DNVP, 1919, o.O.: DNVP, *Deutscher Bürger: Wie wählst Du?* (n.p., 1919); FES, NUR 1919 Januar III: DNVP, *Lügen, Phrasen, Wahrheit!* (n.p., 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DVP, Berlin, 1919: DVP, *Worte und Taten!* (Berlin, 1919).

[233] FES, 6/FLBL005457: Oscar Cohn, *An die Soldaten!* (Berlin, 1918); FES, 6/FLBL005481: Ernst Däumig, Hugo Haase et al., *An das werktätige Volk Deutschlands!* (Berlin, 1918); FES, 6/FLBL005122: Rat der Volksbeauftragten, *Kameraden!* (Berlin, 1918).

[234] 'Revolutiontage - Augenblicksbilder' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 315 (13 November 1918); 'Der rote Sonnabend in Berlin' *Vorwärts* 310 (10 November 1918); 'Die Soldaten für Einigkeit' *Vorwärts* 312 (12 November 1918). Also see FES, 6/FLBL005560: Arbeitsgemeinschaft für staatsbürgerliche und wirtschaftliche Bildung, *Was hat uns die Revolution gebracht?* (n.p., 1918/1919); FES, 6/FLBL005118: Der Soldatenrat, *An alle Kameraden des Feldheeres!* (n.p., 1918).

[235] 'Der rote Sonnabend in Berlin' *Vorwärts* 310 (10 November 1918).

[236] 'Der rote Sonnabend in Berlin' *Vorwärts* 310 (10 November 1918); 'Wie es kam' *Vorwärts* 314a (14 November 1918); 'Frankfurt, 19. November' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 321 (19 November 1918);

portrayal of political change as an expression of the soldiers' ideological ambitions aimed to replace the revolution's lack of legal legitimacy with a moral one. Similarly to the attribution of revolutionary significance to the losses during the war, the equation of revolution with soldiers' aims and desires depicted it as the logical consequence of the German people's wartime sacrifices. Portraying soldiers and workers as one class, who had suffered equally from inequality and mistreatment within the different frameworks of workplace and military system, republican propaganda furthermore created a myth of a united and coherent revolutionary force.[237] This argument implied that even soldiers at the front who were not actively involved in the revolutionary movement had wanted and supported the ideological change and had not been willing to defend the old system.[238]

Already in early December 1918, however, *Vorwärts* reversed this perception of unity, arguing that soldiers who had 'made' the revolution and supported the creation of a National Assembly, had more right to determine Germany's fate than the more politically radical workers demanding the establishment of a council-system.[239] The article asserted that:

> The workers' strike on 9 November would have been nothing but an impressive demonstration failing to lead to such a massive revolution had not the soldiers [...] acted as its most active part.[240]

This interpretation of the soldiers' role illustrated how the SPD paper sought to appropriate the soldiers' voice in order to contain the revolutionary momentum in the same manner it had previously been used to legitimise it. The political unrest which followed the soldiers' radical demands in December 1918 and its evaluation in the republican press suggest that although the soldiers' revolutionary impetus was conceptualised as a legitimisation of the republic, it was no longer desired as an active political force beyond the revolution.[241]

'Revolutiontage - Augenblicksbilder' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 315 (13 November 1918); 'Die Soldaten für die Nationalversammlung' *Vorwärts* 330 (1 December 1918); 'Die Vorgänge in Berlin' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 313 (11 November 1918); Oskar Cohn, 'An die Soldaten!' *Die Freiheit* 1 (15 November 1918). The lawyer and journalist Oscar Cohn (1869-1934) worked as solicitor in Berlin, representing the Russian embassy amongst others, and taught law at a workers' college in the city. The SPD politician, who joined the USPD in 1917, was a city councillor in Berlin from 1909 to 1922 and a permanent under-secretary in the Ministry of Justice from November to December 1918. Having rejoined the SPD in 1922, Cohn was appointed as director of the Russo-German Trade Bureau in Berlin and supported Jewish and Zionist organisations from the mid-1920s. See Schröder, *Sozialdemokratische Parlamentarier*, p. 401.

[237] FES, 6/FLBL005532: Der Vollzugsrat des Arbeiter- und Soldatenrats Groß-Berlin, *Genossen! Kamerade! An alle Arbeiter- und Soldatenräte Deutschlands* (Berlin, 1918); FES, 6/FLBL005122: Rat der Volksbeauftragten, *Kameraden!* (Berlin, 1918); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, SPD, 1918, Berlin: SPD, *Kameraden!* (Berlin, 1918); FES, 6FLBL006197 SPD, *Soldaten, Kameraden!* (Berlin, 1919).

[238] FES, 6/FLBL005560: Arbeitsgemeinschaft für staatsbürgerliche und wirtschaftliche Bildung, *Was hat uns die Revolution gebracht?* (n.p., 1918/1919).

[239] 'Die Soldaten für die Nationalversammlung' *Vorwärts* 330 (1 December 1918).

[240] Ibid.

[241] Winkler, *Weimar 1918-1933*, pp. 49f. Also see chapte 6, pp. 303f.

This analysis is not primarily concerned with the historical truth of the narratives analysed, but with their political motivations to define a particular depiction of the war and its impact on both revolution and republic. Ulrich Kluge argues that military forces were indeed the driving force behind the initial revolutionary movement.[242] Yet, neither republican leaflets nor the press actually reflected historical events, but rather created an abstract concept of the revolutionary soldier, comparable to the heroic warrior of the political right. By associating the soldiers with the political values of the revolution, republican propaganda intended to give birth to a revolutionary foundation narrative of the republic. This conceptual evaluation of the soldiers as a republican force was also evident in the lack of political acknowledgement of counter-revolutionary tendencies among soldiers until the government began to employ troops against threats from the radical left in December 1918.[243] Only one *Die Freiheit* article on 3 December warned that soldiers had attacked the red flag, but qualified the perceived danger of this counter-revolutionary threat by stressing that only a small minority of soldiers held reactionary values and those who did had been influenced by deceptive propaganda denouncing the revolution.[244]

While imposing revolutionary values on the soldiers, republican propaganda clearly labelled officers as a serious counter-revolutionary threat from the outset. Although the provisional republican government actively prevented the implementation of KPD demands to remove all officers from their positions in order to secure an ordered demobilisation, republican publications nevertheless presented a very negative image of the officer corps.[245] This was particularly evident in the socialist press, which stylised officers as archetypal antagonists of both soldiers and the revolution. During the revolution and its immediate aftermath, individual officers opposed the political change most publicly, with bullets from the royal stables on 9 November and attacks on red flags in the post-revolutionary months.[246] This open defiance of the revolution and its symbols as well as the danger inherent in their potential influence on the soldiers made the officer class an ideal republican scapegoat, easily identified as representatives of the old regime's ideology.

---

[242] Ulrich Kluge, *Soldatenräte und Revolution. Studien zur Militärpolitik in Deutschland 1918/1919* (Göttingen, 1975), p. 105.
[243] Winkler, *Weimar 1918-1933*, pp. 49f.
[244] 'Reaktionäre Wühlereien an der Front' *Die Freiheit* 34 (3 December 1918).
[245] FES, 6/FLBL005167: Armee Soldatenrat, *An alle Soldaten der Armee-Abteilung B* (n.p., 1918); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, Roter Soldatenbund, 1918: Der Rote Soldatenbund, *Kameraden!* (n.p., 1918); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, Roter Soldatenbund, 1919: Der Rote Soldatenbund, *Kameraden!* (Berlin, 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, Roter Soldatenbund, 1918: Der Rote Soldatenbund, *Kameraden! Augen auf!* (n.p., 1918); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, KPD, 1918, Berlin: Spartakusbund, *Was will der Spartakusbund?* (Berlin, 1918).
[246] 'Achtung! Militärische Gegenrevolution!' *Vorwärts* 323 (24 November 1918); 'Gegen die renitenten Offiziere' *Die Freiheit* 61 (18 December 1918); 'Die Hetze geht weiter' *Die Freiheit* 7 (4 January 1919); 'Provozierende Offiziere!' *Vorwärts* 326 (27 November 1918); 'Der rote Sonnabend in Berlin' *Vorwärts* 310 (10 November 1918); 'Rotkollerige Offiziere' *Vorwärts* 348 (19 December 1918); 'Wieder ein General, der rote Abzeichen verbietet' *Vorwärts* 331 (2 December 1918).

Both the origin of this perception of officers as an embodiment of counter-revolutionary values and its political purpose are most obvious in press narratives of the war experience. Republican accounts addressing the relationship of soldiers and officers identified the superiors' conduct as one of the main causes of the soldiers' disillusionment with the war, depicting officers as incompetent, corrupt, depraved, and cruel towards their inferiors.[247] Accusations brought against them particularly focused on the officers' abuse of their position by mistreating their men and living an excessively decadent lifestyle at the soldiers' expense.[248] In an article, which reflects a summary of republican allegations against German officers, Kurt Tucholsky synopsised the relationship between officers and men thus:

> [the] officer strutted along the front line with a bored look, greeted carelessly or not at all when he saw a common man and fundamentally adopted the contempt which a German soldier deserved from his superior. [...] Officers never considered that they should carry the burden of war in the same manner as each of their men – they claimed and received at least twenty times more in terms of pay and provisions, and their accommodation was out of all proportion in comparison to the mostly miserable ones of the troops.[249]

Although the *Frankfurter Zeitung* also criticised the treatment of officers in the aftermath of the revolution and called for a more nuanced view of their conduct, it nevertheless agreed that the inequality of the war experience had affected the soldiers' morale adversely.[250] Such narratives stressed the soldiers' impotence in face of their superiors' arbitrary abuse of their position, evident in insults, pointless orders, and physical torture.[251]

This notion of officers' wartime misconduct, which remained an unaltered theme in republican propaganda, was an essential part of the revolutionary legitimation narrative

---

[247] For a selection of the accusations against officers see 'Admiral v. Schroeder unter Mordanklage' *Vorwärts* 55 (30 January 1919); 'Anklage gegen Admiral Jasper' *Die Welt am Montag* 5 (3 February 1919); 'Aus großer Zeit' *Die Freiheit* 636 (31 December 1919); 'Das ist Militarismus' *Die Freiheit* 607 (14 December 1919); 'Militaristische Korruption' *Die Freiheit* 65 (20 December 1918); 'Der Offiziershaß' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 664 (7 September 1919); F. M., 'Eine lehrreiche Geschichte' *Der wahre Jacob* 857 (23 May 1919); Kurt Tucholsky, 'Militaria - Offizier und Mann' *Die Weltbühne* 2 (9 January 1919), pp. 38-40; Tucholsky, 'Na, mein Sohn?' *Die Weltbühne* 28 (3 July 1919), pp. 25f.

[248] 'Abrechnung der Kriegsgefangenen mit ihren Vorgesetzten' *Die Freiheit* 491 (9 October 1919); 'Anklage gegen Admiral Jasper' *Die Welt am Montag* 5 (3 February 1919); 'Militaristische Korruption' *Die Freiheit* 65 (20 December 1918); Kurt Tucholsky, 'Militaria - Verpflegung' *Die Weltbühne* 4 (23 January 1919), pp. 87-89.

[249] Kurt Tucholsky, 'Militaria - Offizier und Mann' *Die Weltbühne* 2 (9 January 1919), p. 38; see similar accusations in 'Militaristische Korruption' *Die Freiheit* 65 (20 December 1918); Arno Voigt, 'Offiziersvereinigungen' *Die Weltbühne* 3 (15 January 1920), pp. 78-80.

[250] 'Der Offiziershaß' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 664 (7 September 1919).

[251] Alfred Richard Meyer-Hambruch, 'Der Mann am Baum' *Die Welt am Montag* 3 (20 January 1919); Kurt Tucholsky, 'Olle Kamellen?' *Vorwärts* 107 (27 February 1919); Arno Voigt, 'Die Kerle' *Die Weltbühne* 30 (17 July 1919), pp. 69-71. The freelance author and poet Alfred Meyer (1882-1956), who used the name Meyer-Hambruch as a pseudonym, also worked as a publisher and editor in Lübeck and Berlin. See Gero von Wilpert, *Lexikon der Weltliteratur. Band I: Autoren* (2, Stuttgart, 1975), p. 1095.

appealing for the soldiers' support.[252] Although republican propaganda had depicted them as the most essential revolutionary force, there was a clear awareness that the troops nevertheless had to be convinced of the revolution's values. A leaflet issued by one soldiers' council, for example, specifically defined the instruction of returning soldiers in the revolutionary spirit of freedom and democracy as an essential duty of the councils.[253] The deliberate confrontation of the oppressive war experience with the freedom offered by the new political system attempted to win the soldiers' support for the new state by adopting their grievances.[254]

Soldiers and those supporting the new state were thus identified as allies in a common crusade against the old order, personified by the officer corps, in order to channel the soldiers' resentment into a political identification with the republic. Leaflets of the republican left, therefore, stressed that the republic had immediately terminated the officers' special status by determining that soldiers and officers would receive the same provisions.[255] This revolutionary narrative aimed to signify a republican victory over militarism, illustrating the power of the new state to implement its goals. The failure of the state to gain significant influence to change the officers' position of power within the army in the long term, however, soon illustrated that the perceived necessity to employ the army to oppose political unrest severely obstructed the implementation of the revolution's promises.[256]

In addition, USPD, SPD, and DDP leaflets addressed the soldiers, asking them to defend the revolutionary achievements in exchange for the welcome gift of peace and freedom.[257] Responding to right-wing claims that the soldiers were disappointed to return to political upheaval rather than to the life they had left in 1914, several republican leaflets

---

[252] FES, 6/FLBL005527: Armee-Soldatenrat, *An alle Soldatenräte* 1918); FES, 6/FLBL005733: Friedensbund der Kriegsteilnehmer, *Weitersagen, Kameraden!* (Berlin, 1919); FES, 6/FLBL005876: SPD, *Deutsch-nationale Lügenmanöver!* (n.p., 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, SPD, 1918, Berlin: SPD, *Deutschland als freie Volksrepublik. Den aus dem Felde heimkehrenden Volksgenossen!* (Berlin, 1918); FES, NUR 1919 Undatiert II USPD, *Männer und Frauen in Stadt und Land!* (Hamburg, 1919).

[253] FES, 6/FLBL005167: Armee Soldatenrat, *An alle Soldaten der Armee-Abteilung B* (n.p., 1918).

[254] FES, NUR 1918 Undatiert III: *Den Heimgekehrten!* (n.p., 1918); FES, 6/FLBL005457: Oscar Cohn, *An die Soldaten!* (Berlin, 1918); FES, 6/FLBL005118: Der Soldatenrat, *An alle Kameraden des Feldheeres!* (n.p., 1918); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, SPD, 1918, Berlin: SPD, *Deutschland als freie Volksrepublik. Den aus dem Felde heimkehrenden Volksgenossen!* (Berlin, 1918).

[255] FES, 6/FLBL005167: Armee Soldatenrat, *An alle Soldaten der Armee-Abteilung B* (n.p., 1918); FES, 6/FLBL005124: DDP, *Soldaten!* (Berlin, 1918); BfZ, 1919 Undatiert I: Hans Ostwald, *Sind wir Bolschewisten?* (Berlin, 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, SPD, 1918, Berlin: SPD, *Die alte und die neue Regierung* (Berlin, 1918); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, SPD, 1918, Berlin: SPD, *Deutschland als freie Volksrepublik. Den aus dem Felde heimkehrenden Volksgenossen!* (Berlin, 1918).

[256] This failure to control officers was particularly evident with regard to the German *Freikorps* in the Baltic States who openly disobeyed the government's orders and the government's inability to reform the army in the aftermath of the Kapp-Putsch. See chapter 6, pp. 286-293.

[257] FES, NUR 1918 Undatiert III: *Den Heimgekehrten!* (n.p., 1918); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DDP, E-J, Frankfurt, 1918: DDP, *Wilkommen!* (Frankfurt, 1918); FES, 6/FLBL005782: Philipp Scheidemann, *Rede des Volksbeauftragten Scheidemann beim Einzug der Truppen am Brandenburger Tor am 12. Dezember 1918* (Berlin, 1918); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, SPD, 1918, Berlin: SPD, *Kameraden!* (Berlin, 1918); FES, NUR 1918 Dezember II: USPD, *Wilkommen, Soldaten der Freiheit!* (Berlin, 1918).

apologised that the republic could not offer soldiers adequate financial or material compensation for their sacrifice.[258] In this context the republican focus on the horrific war experience insinuated that the establishment of revolutionary values was a worthwhile compensation for the soldiers' endurance and suffering. The Austrian intellectual and satirist Alfred Polgar called on people to remember 'what was' as a 'consolation for what is' in order to validate the new state and described Germany's post-war situation thus:

> [t]he tree of time is standing bare: but see the rotting lies, stupidity, force, malice on the ground which the wind has blown out of the branches! Your soul will dance for its bareness...[259]

Appeals for patience with the new state still being shaped also emphasised the positive characteristics that distinguished the revolutionary period from the soldiers' war experience. Purposefully stressing that the military hierarchy - overcome by the republic - had only allowed submission, republican leaflets depicted the revolutionary call for soldiers' involvement as a chance to actively participate in shaping a nation according to their ideals.[260] Republican propaganda therefore half annexed and half courted the political ideology of the soldiers in order to integrate them into the new state. It somewhat contradictorily appealed to the soldiers for support and implied to the rest of the population that the republic derived legitimacy from the soldiers' support.

The scope of this PhD and its methodology do not allow an in-depth analysis of soldiers' reactions to republican post-war propaganda and the revolution. Yet in the light of a general lack of soldiers' active opposition to the revolution, it can be tentatively argued that in the immediate aftermath of the war democratic propaganda seems to have fallen on more fertile ground than implicit right-wing calls to arms against the republic.[261]

---

[258] FES, NUR 1918 Undatiert III: *Den Heimgekehrten!* (n.p., 1918); FES, 6/FLBL005856: DNVP, *Achtung Kameraden!* (Berlin, 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DNVP, 1919, o.O.: DNVP, *Soldaten! Kameraden!* (n.p., 1919); FES, 6/FLBL005122: Rat der Volksbeauftragten, *Kameraden!* (Berlin, 1918).

[259] Alfred Polgar, 'Es geht uns gut' *Die Weltbühne* 6 (6 February 1919), p. 140. Alfred Polgar (1873-1955) was a prominent Austrian journalist and theatre critic who wrote for *Die Weltbühne* and *Das Tage-Buch* in Berlin. Wilpert, *Lexikon der Weltliteratur I*, p. 1291.

[260] FES, NUR 1918 Undatiert III: *Den Heimgekehrten!* (n.p., 1918); 'Frankfurt, 19. November' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 321 (19 November 1918); FES, 6/FLBL005117: Arbeiter und Soldatenrat beim stellvertretenden General-Kommando XVIII, *Aufruf - Kameraden von der Front!* (Frankfurt, 1918); FES, 6/FLBL005114: Arbeiter und Soldatenrat der Stadt und des Kreises Helmstedt, *Warum Umsturz, warum Revolution?* (Helmstedt, 1918); FES, 6/FLBL005432: Adolf Deißmann, Samuel Saenger and Ernst Troeltsch, *An die deutsche Jugend!* (n.p., 1918); FES, 6/FLBL005118: Der Soldatenrat, *An alle Kameraden des Feldheeres!* (n.p., 1918); FES, 6/FLBL005122: Rat der Volksbeauftragten, *Kameraden!* (Berlin, 1918); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, SPD, 1918-19, o.O.: Vorstand der SPD, *Hinein ins Verderben?* (n.p., 1918/1919).

[261] Although right-wing propaganda denounced the revolution from the beginning reactionary forces did not explicitly threaten the republic until after the publication of the Treaty of Versailles. Once the terms of the treaty were made public, a number of officers called for an active opposition against the new government should it accept the terms of the treaty. Even then, *Vorwärts* and *Die Freiheit* reported that soldiers and NCOs continued to support the government. 'Frankfurt, 26. Juni' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 465 (26 June 1919); 'Die Offiziersfronde' *Die Freiheit* 295 (25 June 1918); 'Die Verschwörung des Korps Lüttwitz' *Vorwärts* 318 (24 June 1919).

Increasing disillusionment with the state resulting from violent unrest, the Versailles Treaty, and the influence of an intensely reactionary officer corps, however, counteracted initial successes made in democratising the spirit of the army.[262]

REVOLUTIONARY IMPETUS

While the publications analysed interpreted the war experience and its implications for the republic in a relatively cohesive manner, there was no unified or definitive narrative explaining the ideological origins of the German revolution. Immediate right-wing attacks on the revolution claiming that it was responsible for Germany's military defeat made it difficult to legitimise the new state through such a narrative. The 'stab in the back' myth, which had been formulated and nurtured within the army from July 1917, interchangeably blamed the home front, the government, or the political left for having caused the dire military situation by failing to support the army and spreading the 'poison of Spartacist-socialist ideas'.[263] Once military defeat was apparent, the 'stab in the back' theory was adopted quite readily throughout conservative and nationalist circles and served as a useful intellectual construct to deflect the reality of defeat.[264] Throughout 1919, this myth became the official doctrine of the right, as Ludendorff published an open letter distancing himself from the armistice, while in the government's investigation into the reasons for defeat Hindenburg publicly blamed revolutionary influences in the army for the military collapse.[265] Like most of the nationalist propaganda, the 'stab in the back' legend originated with the elite, but quickly reached a wide public audience through a multitude of associated groups and publications.[266]

---

[262] BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, Republikanischer Führerbund, 1920: Republikanischer Führerbund, *Nachrichten des republikanischen Führerbundes* (Berlin, 1920). See chapter 6, pp. 283-285.

[263] Gerd Krumeich, 'Die Dolchstoß-Legende' in Etienne François and Hagen Schulze (eds.), *Deutsche Erinnerungsorte* (Munich, 2001), p. 588; Holger Afflerbach, 'Die militärische Planung des Deutschen Reiches im Ersten Weltkrieg' in Michalka (ed.), *Der Erste Weltkrieg*, pp. 308f; Gerald D. Feldman, *Army, Industry and Labour in Germany* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 502, 504; Michael Hughes, *Nationalism and Society, Germany 1800-1945* (Kent, 1988), p. 123; Siegfried A. Kaehler (ed.), *Albrecht von Thaer: Generalstabsdienst an der Front und in der O.H.L* (Göttingen, 1958), pp. 234f.

[264] Evidence for the unquestioned acceptance and distribution of precursors of the 'stab in the back' legend can, for example, be found in the *Bayerisches Vaterland*, which stated in December 1918 that Eisner's revolution 'completely broke Germany's military strength and with it Wilson's politics'. *Bayerisches Vaterland* 283 (6 December 1918); Arden Bucholz, *Hans Delbrück & The German Military Establishment* (Iowa City, 1985), p. 124. While Bernhard Fulda is thus correct in emphasising that the 'stab in the back' myth predated Hindenburg's declaration at the parliamentary commission, its appearance in the press is already evident in early rather than mid-December. Its origin within the army also challenges his assumption that it was a 'press invention. Fulda, *Press and Politics*, pp. 48, 52.

[265] 'Aussage des Generalfeldmarschalls von Hindenburg vor dem Ausschuß zur Untersuchung der Ursachen des Deutschen Zusammenbruchs, 18 November 1919' in Peter Longerich, *Die Erste Republik: Dokumente zur Geschichte des Weimarer Staates* (Munich, 1992), pp. 134f; Ulrich Heinemann, *Die verdrängte Niederlage* (Göttingen, 1983), p. 23; Bucholz, *Delbrück*, p. 128.

[266] Apart from the DNVP, the DVP, the Bavarian People's Party (BVP), the officer corps, and the *Freikorps* were likely to adopt the 'stab in the back' legend. Kurt Sontheimer furthermore names 36

Although this allegation initially held the parties of the *Reichstag* peace coalition responsible for Germany's deteriorating military situation, the accusations were swiftly adapted to revolution and republic in order to divert attention away from the fact that the military elite had requested the armistice.[267] The 'stab in the back' theory did not reflect a fixed idea, but an all-encompassing formula for shifting responsibility, into which any versatile culprit could be added according to necessity.[268] The basic idea of defeat through betrayal was the most persistent right-wing accusation against revolution and republic.[269] The prevalence of this propaganda from an early stage of the republic is evident from a commentary in *Vorwärts*, printed only a week after the revolution, denouncing the Pan-German lie that the 'democratic government had broken the spine of the glorified militarism'.[270] The revolutionary government was hence forced to deal with the consequences of defeat while simultaneously fighting politically dangerous allegations from the right, which aimed to discredit the political change. The nationalist forces, on the other hand, simply had to continue the flow of accusations and wait their turn to 'swing[...] into the saddle again and rule on according to the old prescription'.[271]

These allegations complicated the creation of a consistent narrative of revolutionary events, because they prohibited republican propaganda from portraying the revolution as an unreservedly positive achievement. Any party claiming to have provided an active impetus for the revolution rendered itself vulnerable to accusations of treachery. This political impasse deprived republican propaganda of the possibility to derive political credit from having 'made' the revolution and to portray the overthrow of the monarchy as a foundation myth providing inspirational symbolism for republican ideals. Although the USPD portrayed itself as the most revolutionary of the republican parties, it initially acknowledged that the war, rather than political agitation, had been a decisive factor in

---

nationalist groups whose members supported and spread anti-democratic ideas. Considering that many of these parties and groups either owned or influenced a large range of publications it seems plausible that propaganda like the 'stab in the back' myth would reach a wide audience. According to Buchholz it was also 'preached from church pulpits, school- and university textbooks'. Sontheimer, *Antidemokratisches Denken*, p. 27; Bucholz, *Delbrück*, p. 145.

[267] This approach also seems have been adopted by the Foreign Ministry. Both army and Foreign Ministry blankly refused to hand over any documents to the government's inquiry into the causes of the collapse. See Holger Herwig, 'Clio deceived: Patriotic Self-Censorship in Germany after the Great War' in Keith Wilson (ed.), *Forging the Collective Memory: Government and International Historians through two World Wars* (Providence, Oxford, 1996), p. 110. The military responsibility for the armistice is evident in the fact that Hindenburg rather than the government authorised the German armistice commission to sign the terms in spite of the fact that no significant concessions had been made by the Allies. Rainer Wohlfeil, *Handbuch zur deutschen Militärgeschichte 1648-1939. Band VI: Reichswehr und Republik (1918-1933)* (Frankfurt, 1970), p. 19.

[268] For a random selection of different versions of the 'stab in the back' myth see BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, 9 November 1918: Deutsche Zeitung, *Vier Wochen Revolution.* (Berlin, 1918); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, Antisemitismus: Deutschvölkischer Bund, *Von der Hohenzollern- zur Judenherrschaft* (Hamburg; BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DNVP, 1919, o.O.: DNVP, *An das deutsche Heer und die deutsche Marine!* (n.p., 1919); FES, NUR 1919 Januar III: DNVP, *Lügen, Phrasen, Wahrheit!* (n.p., 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DVP, Berlin, 1919: DVP, *An Alle!* (Berlin, 1919).

[269] Krumeich, 'Dolchstoßlegende' in Hirschfeld, Krumeich and Renz (eds.), *Enzyklopädie*, pp. 444f.

[270] 'Prinz Max zur Vorgeschichte der Revolution' *Vorwärts* 316 (16 November 1918).

[271] *OHL* Report from 7 October 1918, in Feldman, *Army*, p. 516.

bringing about the revolution.[272] Increasing opposition to the SPD, however, also induced a desire to project a radically different political profile from that of the majority socialists and led to a more pronounced focus on the revolutionary agitation of the USPD.[273]

The failure to compose a consistent revolutionary narrative was particularly striking in SPD portrayals of the revolution, which fluctuated between portraying the revolution as a consequence of defeat and depicting the political change as a premeditated achievement of the social democratic forces.[274] In response to right-wing accusations of treachery and ideological undermining of the army as well as left-wing accusations of insufficient revolutionary conviction, SPD propaganda remained contradictory.[275] While political leaflets claimed that the SPD had actively prepared the revolution, *Vorwärts* articles explained that the party had in fact opposed the popular uprising and done everything in its power to contain it in the light of the difficult military situation.[276] It can be assumed that the largest republican parties' admission of having embraced the revolution reluctantly rather than enthusiastically did not aid attempts to legitimise the new state. Prohibited by right-wing allegations from portraying itself as a revolutionary force, SPD propaganda argued that the revolution had been an outbreak of popular discontent, similar to a force of nature, which could neither have been created nor contained.[277] This attempt to attribute the genesis of the revolution solely to the will of the people rather than depicting it as an achievement of the new political leaders insinuated, however, that the revolutionary parties lacked leadership qualities and control over the masses. In order to meet two very different sets of accusations questioning their political legitimacy the majority socialists thus failed to establish a definitive narrative of the revolution which could have stabilised the democratic idea.

Unable to assert ideological 'ownership' of the revolution, republican propaganda focused on disentangling the perceived causality between military defeat, the monarchy's

---

[272] 'Friede auf Erden' *Die Freiheit* 74 (25 December 1918); 'Die Ursachen des Zusammenbruchs' *Die Freiheit* 413 (28 August 1919); Job, 'Wer hat den großen Fehler gemacht?' *Die Freiheit* 279 (12 June 1919).

[273] 'Der Einzug der Jäger Division' *Die Freiheit* 49 (11 December 1918); 'An die Partei!' *Die Freiheit* 1 (15 November 1918); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, USPD, 1919, Berlin: USPD, *Vor der Entscheidung!* (Berlin, 1919).

[274] BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, SPD, 1918, Berlin: SPD, *Arbeiter, Genossen!* (Berlin, 1918); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, SPD, 1919, Berlin: SPD, *An die Beamten im öffentlichen Diensten!* (Berlin, 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, SPD, 1918, Berlin: SPD, *Deutschland als freie Volksrepublik. Den aus dem Felde heimkehrenden Volksgenossen!* (Berlin, 1918); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, SPD, 1918, Berlin: SPD, *Kameraden!* (Berlin, 1918); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, SPD, 1920, Berlin: SPD, *Reichstagswähler!* (Berlin, 1920); FES, 6/FLBL005076: SPD, *Das "rote" Gespenst* (n.p., 1918); FES, 6/FLBL005868: SPD, *Soldaten!* (Berlin, 1918/1919).

[275] For left-wing allegations see BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, KPD, 1920, Berlin: KPD, *Arbeiter, Angestellte, Beamte!* (Berlin, 1920); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, Januaraufstand 1919: KPD, *Soldaten!* (Berlin, 1919); FES, 1919 Undatiert I: USPD, *Heimgekehrte Kriegsgefangene, Genossen, Brüder!* 1919). Rainer Sammet also describes the SPD's precarious situation but only concludes - incorrectly – that the SPD did not try to rally electoral support through its revolutionary role beyond 1919. See Sammet, *"Dolchstoss"*, pp. 262f; SPD, 'Was ist erreicht?' *Vorwärts* 276 (1 June 1920).

[276] 'Nationalversammlung zu Weimar' *Vorwärts* 160 (28 March 1919); Victor Schiff, 'Winnigs Bekenntnis' *Vorwärts* 447 (2 September 1919). For biographical information on Schiff see Appendix I, p. 336.

[277] '"Seine" Revolution' *Vorwärts* 257 (21 May 1919); 'Unsere Marschroute' *Vorwärts* 14 (8 January 1920); Bernhard Rausch, 'Zum Jahrestag der Kieler Matrosenerhebung' *Vorwärts* 564 (4 November 1919). For biographical information on Rausch see Appendix I, p. 335.

collapse, and the revolution.[278] Press and propaganda of all republican parties upheld that, contrary to right-wing claims, the revolution had chronologically followed military defeat, concluding that the war experience and defeat had been foundation impulses for the revolution.[279] This depiction of the revolution as purely motivated by war-weariness and frustration undermined its significance as a creative ideological force warranting political dedication and involvement. This dilemma was recognised in the *Frankfurter Zeitung,* which defended the revolution against accusations that it had merely been a result of military collapse rather than of strong ideological ideals.[280] This analysis challenges Rainer Sammet's claim that 'there was no immediate connection between the right-wing 'stab in the back' agitation and the failure of the democratic parties' because it illustrates that the allegation distinctly obstructed the creation of a legitimising narrative of the revolution which would have been necessary to stabilise the new state.[281]

The DDP affiliated *Frankfurter Zeitung* also stressed that the revolution had not actually deposed but merely replaced the old regime after it had collapsed as a consequence of defeat.[282] This evaluation reflected that, although prepared to defend the values of the republic, the liberal forces remained critical of revolutionary aspirations, claiming that both people and politicians had been opposed to a violent overthrow of the old regime which had only been possible because the old regime had bankrupted itself and collapsed.[283] Playing down the impact of the revolution, these articles predominantly aimed to defend the republic against right-wing allegations holding the revolution responsible for Germany's dire situation. Additionally, however, they represented an interpretation of the revolution which significantly contributed to the fact that it failed to be remembered as a heroic act.[284]

Depictions of the revolution as a manifestation of war-related popular discontent nevertheless allowed the republican publications to reverse allegations of democratic treachery by holding the old regime responsible for the explosion of political

---

[278] 'Konservative Legenden' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 5 (3 January 1919); 'Die Vorgänge in Berlin' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 313 (11 November 1918); FES, 6/FLBL005457: Oscar Cohn, *An die Soldaten!* (Berlin, 1918); Robert Breuer, 'Die große Stunde' *Die Weltbühne* 46 (14 November 1918), p. 449; Robert Breuer, 'Die deutsche Revolution' *Die Weltbühne* 47 (21 November 1918), pp. 476f; Hermann Molkebuhr and Richard Müller, 'Appell an die Ententevölker' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 317 (15 November 1918); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, SPD, 1919, Berlin: SPD, *An die Beamten im öffentlichen Diensten!* (Berlin, 1919); SPD, 'Rüstet zum 9. November!' *Vorwärts* 524 (13 October 1919).

[279] FES, 6/FLBL005560: Arbeitsgemeinschaft für staatsbürgerliche und wirtschaftliche Bildung, *Was hat uns die Revolution gebracht?* (n.p., 1918/1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DDP, Berlin, o.D.: DDP, *Das deutsche Volk ist antinational!* (Berlin, n.d.); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, Reichsfreunde, Berlin, 1919: Reichsfreunde, *Kaiser und Reich* (Berlin, 1919); FES, 6/FLBL005868: SPD, *Soldaten!* (Berlin, 1918/1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, USPD, 1919, Berlin: USPD, *Vor der Entscheidung!* (Berlin, 1919). The historian Reinhard Rürup also suggested that the revolution had initially been an unplanned, spontaneous reaction to Germany's military defeat. See *Probleme der Revolution in Deutschland 1918/19* (Berlin, 1968), pp. 11f.

[280] 'Der Weltgedanke unserer Revolution' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 106 (9 February 1919).

[281] Sammet, *"Dolchstoss"*, p. 275; Peukert, *The Weimar Republic*, pp. 5f.

[282] '9. November' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 840 (9 November 1919); Leopold Schwarzschild, 'Gespräch der Bürger' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 193 (13 March 1919). For biographical information on Schwarzschild see Appendix I, pp. 336f.

[283] Leopold Schwarzschild, 'Gespräch der Bürger' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 193 (13 March 1919).

[284] Peukert, *The Weimar Republic*, p. 6.

dissatisfaction manifesting itself in the revolution. Republican allegations against the imperial regime ranged from having obstructed moderate democratisation to prolonging the war and other general accusations of incompetence and inner rot.[285] In a detailed description of the causes of the naval unrest, *Vorwärts* even claimed that by ordering the sailors to defend the honour of the German fleet in a suicide mission the treacherous Pan-Germans became the founding fathers of the revolution.[286]

This narrative, attributing the revolution to the mistakes of the former regime, was reinforced by claims that the representatives of the old regime had not been willing to defend their state and had run away without resistance.[287] Kaiser Wilhelm's flight to Holland in particular was a crucial component of the legitimising revolutionary narrative.[288] The monarch's desertion of the German people, which one republican leaflet compared unfavourably with Wilhelm's demands that the soldiers should fight obediently until their death, was used to portray the rotten nature of the old regime and the necessity of revolution.[289] To some extent this interpretation legitimised the revolution as necessary in order to replace the allegedly morally and politically bankrupt imperial regime. Yet justifying the revolution as a failure of the former leadership rather than an achievement of the new one failed to provide a legitimising myth, the lack of which Peukert has defined as a definitive weakness of the republic.[290] Related claims that the monarchy had collapsed without much effort or opposition reflected similar intentions, but also insinuated that the new regime assumed power without having to assert itself and therefore lacked the strength to enforce its ideals.[291] The right-wing ideological construct of the 'stab in the

---

[285] 'Es lebe die Freiheit!' *Die Freiheit* 1 (15 November 1918); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DDP, Berlin, o.D.: DDP, *Das deutsche Volk ist antinational!* (Berlin, n.d.); Robert Breuer, 'Die große Stunde' *Die Weltbühne* 46 (14 November 1918), p. 449; Olf, 'Die Reaktion' *Die Weltbühne* 48 (28 November 1918), p. 499; Bernhard Rausch, 'Zum Jahrestag der Kieler Matrosenerhebung' *Vorwärts* 564 (4 November 1919); SPD, 'Rüstet zum 9. November!' *Vorwärts* 524 (13 October 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, USPD, 1919, Berlin: USPD, *Vor der Entscheidung!* (Berlin, 1919).

[286] 'Wie es kam!' *Vorwärts* 314a (14 November 1918).

[287] 'Gegenrevolution?' *Vorwärts* 333a (4 December 1918); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DDP, Berlin, o.D.: DDP, *Das deutsche Volk ist antinational!* (Berlin, n.d.); Paulchen, 'Der Neunte' *Vorwärts* 574 (9 November 1919); Paulchen, 'Schwarz-weiß-rot' *Vorwärts* 340 (6 July 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, Reichsfreunde, Berlin, 1919: Reichsfreunde, *Kaiser und Reich* (Berlin, 1919). Rürup argues that the old regime's failure to defend the monarchy impeded the creation of a revolutionary legitimation, because the necessity to enforce it against active opposition would have justified revolutionary change. See Rürup, *Probleme der Revolution*. p. 20.

[288] FES, 6/FLBL005560: Arbeitsgemeinschaft für staatsbürgerliche und wirtschaftliche Bildung, *Was hat uns die Revolution gebracht?* (n.p., 1918/1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DDP, Berlin, 1920: DDP, *Die Parteien des Zusammenbruchs - ihr Sündenregister* (Berlin, 1920); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, Reichsfreunde, Berlin, 1919: Reichsfreunde, *Kaiser und Reich* (Berlin, 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, SPD, 1921, Berlin: SPD, *Wollt ihr Wilhelm eine Milliarde nachschicken?* (Berlin, 1921).

[289] FES, 6/FLBL005560: Arbeitsgemeinschaft für staatsbürgerliche und wirtschaftliche Bildung, *Was hat uns die Revolution gebracht?* (n.p., 1918/1919).

[290] Peukert, *The Weimar Republic,* pp. 5f.

[291] 'Das Begräbnis der Novembertoten' *Vorwärts* 320a (20 November 1918); 'Eine Erklärung Eberts' *Vorwärts* 311 (11 November 1918); 'Es lebe die Freiheit!' *Die Freiheit* 1 (15 November 1918); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DDP, Berlin, o.D.: DDP, *Das deutsche Volk ist antinational!* (Berlin, n.d.); L. Gold, 'Die Fassade der Demokratie' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 302 (24 April 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, Reichsfreunde, Berlin, 1919: Reichsfreunde, *Kaiser und Reich* (Berlin, 1919).

back' myth thus prevented the republican forces from creating a strong foundation narrative of the revolution, symbolising political strength and revolutionary ideals.

As a replacement for the confused and unspectacular representation of the revolutionary events and as a continuity of the pacifist interpretation of the war experience, republican propaganda sought alternative means to legitimise the revolution. In response to right-wing rhetoric, which claimed that the revolution broke Germany's fighting spirit and left it defenceless, republican propaganda countered that the revolution brought peace to Germany.[292] Right-wing propaganda, on the other hand, identified continued military aggression as an immediate measure that could have achieved a better peace, while consequently promoting rearmament and a strong army as the basis for future foreign policy.[293] Depicting militarism and war as the cause of suffering and destruction, all republican parties used these right-wing calls for a resumption of warfare and rearmament in order to discredit the political goals of the right. An SPD election poster for the National Assembly in 1919, for example, depicted a field of crosses looming before a blood-red sky with the caption 'Shall this happen again?' No!', suggesting that only electoral support for the majority socialists could prevent more bloodshed.[294]

Claiming that the DVP and DNVP were actively planning a new war, which would bring more misery to the German people, USPD, SPD and DDP leaflets implied that only the democratic parties were interested in securing and preserving peace.[295] Related claims throughout republican publications - that only a democratic government would be granted an acceptable peace - proved counter-productive in the long run.[296] Although the argument may have convinced a section of the republic's opposition to reluctantly tolerate

---

[292] FES, 6/FLBL005856: DNVP, *Achtung Kameraden!* (Berlin, 1919); Flugblätter 1918-1933, DDP, o.O: DNVP, *Mitbürger! Deutsche Männer und Frauen!* (n.p., 1918/1919); FES, 6/FLBL005041: DVP, *Was hat die Revolution gebracht?* (Berlin, 1919); FES, 6/FLBL005116: Sonderabdruck aus Nr. 350 der Deutschen Zeitung, *Ist kein Yorck da?* (Berlin, 1918).

[293] BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933: Alldeutscher Verband, *Erklärung des Alldeutschen Verbandes* (Bamberg, 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DNVP, 1919, o.O.: DNVP, *An das deutsche Heer und die deutsche Marine!* (n.p., 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DNVP, Satzungen, Manifeste, Personen: DNVP, *Nationales Manifest der Deutschnationalen Volkspartei* (n.p., 1920); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DNVP, 1918, o.O.: DNVP, *Wahlaufruf der Deutschnationalen Volkspartei* (n.p., 1918); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DVP, Berlin, 1919: DVP, *Erwachet deutsche Männer! Erwachet deutsche Frauen!* (Berlin, 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DVP, Berlin, 1919: DVP, *Was wir wollen!* (Berlin, 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, Versailles: H. E. von Lindeiner-Wildau, *Wie der Gewaltfriede aussieht* (Berlin, n.d.).

[294] Udo Achten, Siegfried Krupke (eds.), *An Alle! Lesen! Weitergeben! Flugblätter der Arbeiterbewegung von 1848 bis 1933* (Berlin, Bonn, 1982), p. 187. See Illustration IV, p. 72.

[295] BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DDP, o.D, o.O: DDP, *Die Wahrheit!* (n.p., n.d.); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DDP, Berlin, 1920: DDP, *Wen wählen wir?* (Berlin, 1920); FES, NUR 1918 Dezember II SPD, *Frauen und Mädchen! Hütet euch vor falschen Freunden!* (n. p., 1919); FES, N 252, Nachlass Wilhelm Dittmann (from RZNG, FONDS 215, OPIS 1, 196/45): SPD, *Frauen, ihr dürft nicht vergessen!* (Berlin, n.d.); FES, März 1921 II SPD, *Laßt mich in Ruhe mit der Politik!* (Berlin, 1921); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, SPD, 1919, Berlin: SPD, *Der völkische Volksbetrug* (Berlin, 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, USPD, 1921, Berlin: USPD, *Wähler und Wählerinnen!* (Berlin, 1921); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, USPD, 1920, Berlin: USPD, *Wir und die Anderen!* (Berlin, 1920).

[296] 'Frankfurt, 11. November' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 313 (11 November 1918); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DDP, Berlin, 1919: DDP, *Brief an einen deutschnationalen Wähler* (Berlin, 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DDP, Berlin, 1918: DDP, *Soldaten!* (Berlin, 1918); FES, 6/FLBL005070: DDP, *Wie wähle ich?* (Potsdam, Berlin, 1919); FES, 6/FLBL005876: SPD, *Deutsch-nationale Lügenmanöver!* (n.p., 1919).

or even tacitly support the republic in the immediate aftermath of the revolution, it provided strong propagandist ammunition to Germany's right-wing once the terms of the settlement were publicised. Attempts to legitimise the republic by referring to its commitment to peace ultimately weakened the new state, as the Versailles treaty seemingly legitimised right-wing allegations that the new government had promised peace but only achieved Germany's strangulation by the enemy.[297]

The enthusiasm of republican visions outlining the potential of the German revolution to reform moral and political values did not prevail for long, as all of the publications analysed soon began to question the successes of the revolution.[298] From March 1919 first doubts about the implementation of the revolutionary values, and the genuine nature of the political change, were voiced. While Kurt Tucholsky criticised that the civil war was fought according to the same principles as the World War, Hellmut von Gerlach commented that the refusal of SPD politician Eduard David to celebrate the revolution would encourage the Entente impression that the revolution had been merely camouflage.[299] An article in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* even denounced plans to celebrate the revolution which it defined as a disaster.[300] The same article also falsely attributed the acceptance of the armistice to the same day and declared that it would be more suitable to turn 9 November into a day of mourning.[301] This imprecise meddling of dates illustrates that the liberal paper was not as concerned to separate revolution and armistice as SPD and USPD.

In spite of the fact that articles in the immediate aftermath of the conflict recognised the influence of the war on the revolution, disillusioned evaluations of the democratisation 6 to 12 months later bemoaned the fact that the revolution had not been a genuine change but merely a sign of war-weariness, exhaustion or the monarchy's collapse.[302] Only the SPD, which had done everything in its power to control and contain the revolutionary movement, attempted to derive political gain from the revolution in the 1920 elections by depicting the party as the architect of the revolutionary achievements.[303] The majority socialists, whose political survival was most interlinked with perceptions of the revolution, consequently lost 13.2% of votes in comparison with their performance in

---

[297] FES, 6/FLBL005037: DNVP, *Deutsches Volk wache auf!* (Berlin, 1919).
[298] 'Frankfurt, 11. Januar' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 29 (11 January 1919); L. Gold, 'Die Fassade der Demokratie' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 302 (24 April 1919); Ludwig Jurisch, 'Geist und Güte' *Die Weltbühne* 4 (23 January 1919), p. 74; Dr. Julius Moses, 'Auch eine Bilanz des Krieges' *Die Freiheit* 130 (18 April 1920).
[299] Hellmut von Gerlach, 'Das Revolutiönchen' *Die Welt am Montag* 16 (22 April 1919); Kurt Tucholsky, 'Wir Negativen' *Die Weltbühne* 12 (13 March 1919), pp, 280-284.
[300] 'Der neunte November' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 780 (18 October 1919).
[301] Ibid.
[302] For example Hans Leuß, 'Revolutionsunterbilanz' *Die Welt am Montag* 1 (5 January 1920); Kurt Tucholsky, 'Wir Negativen' *Die Weltbühne* 12 (13 March 1919), p. 280. Reinhard Rürup emphasises the recognition that the perception of the revolution as a collapse developed retrospectively, implying an increasing disillusionment with its achievements. See Idem, 'Problems of Revolution in Germany, 1525-1989' in Rürup (ed.), *The Problem of Revolution in Germany*, p. 193; Idem, *Probleme der Revolution*, p. 5.
[303] SPD, 'Was ist erreicht?' *Vorwärts* 276 (1 June 1920).

elections to the National Assembly in 1919, while the DDP lost 10.2%.[304] Although election results only allow the assessment of general trends rather than of definitive facts, this decreasing support suggests that the republican translation of the revolutionary ideals into reality was not strong enough to sustain the level of public support that the initial revolutionary zeal had promised. The argument that this development was at least partly motivated by a perception of an insufficient implementation of revolutionary values is backed up by the fact that the USPD, which had steadily increased its revolutionary agitation throughout the period discussed here, gained 10.3% in the 1920 elections.[305]

The politically and ideologically chaotic nature of the revolutionary period produced a wide range of complex portrayals of the revolution which do not necessarily lend themselves to inclusion within a stringent or exclusive historical narrative. Unlike historical survey literature, which generally tries to establish a coherent and logical chronology of events, the reflection of a historical period in its contemporary press reveals a biased, event focused, and often contradictory evaluation of political events. Press coverage of the German revolution in November 1918 most of all reflects the difficulty of simultaneously defining, promoting, and defending a set of ideological values, while reconciling those values with the difficult political reality of defeat, upheaval, and economic deprivation.[306] No assessment of these sources can therefore claim to represent a complete and comprehensive analysis of the intricacies of the political discourse, but can merely pick out the essential themes of a particular narrative.

One central problem in defining the political framework of the republic was constant right-wing attempts to attribute defeat, insecurity, and the difficult economic consequences of the war to the revolution. Right-wing attacks on the legitimacy and achievements of the revolution led to inconsistencies and misjudgements within the narrative of the revolution which made the republic more vulnerable. As a logical consequence of these allegations, the republican foundation narrative was largely defensive rather than offensive. The necessity to react to rather than control political discourse regarding the revolution thus weakened republican attempts to legitimise the republic.

Contrary to assumptions made by previous scholars, it can nevertheless be established that the war was not merely used as an anti-democratic propaganda device to undermine the republic, but was also utilised as an essential frame of reference in order to conceptualise a republican identity. In spite of the fact that republican evaluations of the nature of war and the war experience in the revolutionary period have so far been

---

[304] Kolb, *Weimar*, p. 194.
[305] Ibid; Bavaj, *Von links gegen Weimar*, pp. 198f.
[306] Reinhard Rührup suggests that the difficulty of securing the revolutionary achievements while dealing with the inheritance of the war was a significant factor in limiting the political reforms that could be implemented. See *Probleme der Revolution*, p. 24ff.

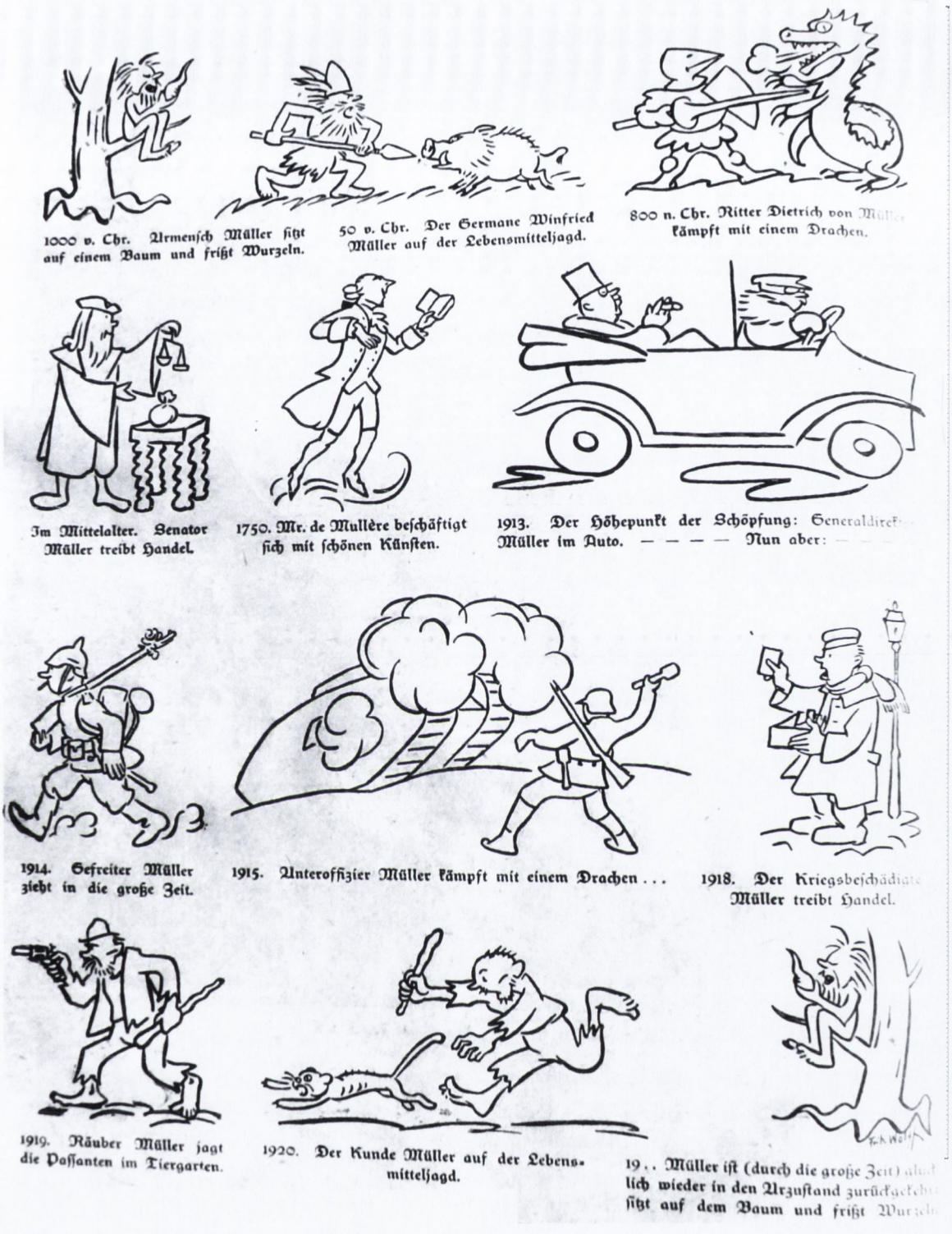
neglected or underestimated, their pacifist nature did not merely reflect a republican inability to exploit the political potential of the war.[307] The depiction of the horrors of war, in contrast to the portrayal of the revolution as the antithesis of violence and bloodshed, aimed, rather, to seize people's war-weariness in order to rally support for the republic. The adoption of the pacifist interpretation and the common commitment for peace furthermore represented the only unified republican attempt to define and defend the revolution. The narrative, dissociating the soldiers from the values of the former elite and questioning the moral integrity of former supporters of wartime belligerence, portrayed the republican forces as agents merely executing the perceived popular desire for peace. This recognition questions George Mosse's appeal for historical research on the left-wing utilisation of the war experience beyond pacifism, because the republican narrative of the war was consciously and distinctively pacifist.[308] Attempts to legitimise the republic's role in ending the war as a positive one, however, could not be sustained after the publication of the treaty of Versailles.

The considerable support enjoyed by the republican parties and the Nie Wieder Krieg (no-more-war) peace movement in the early years of the Weimar Republic suggests that a significant proportion of the German population could identify with the republican understanding of the war and its implications. Yet republican attempts to undermine the nationalist claim to power never fulfilled their full potential. This was partly due to the fact that the establishment of a coherent republican narrative of the revolution, which could have stabilised republican values, was impeded by diverging party-political goals and inter-party rivalries. The false assessment of republicans rather than anti-democratic forces as political rivals and the main targets of political attack prevented the creation of a unified republican platform which would have been a prerogative for any successful defence of the republic against right-wing attacks and adverse post-war conditions. The most devastating blow for the ideals promoted by republican propaganda, however, was the fact that they could not be reconciled with political reality. Both the violently suppressed political unrest and disappointment with the Versailles treaty illustrated too clearly that the political forces representing the republic did not have the power to keep their revolutionary promises. Even so, it can be established that the ultimate republican failure to create a coherent revolutionary narrative was not due to any lack of effort to do so.

---

[307] Ther, "Humans are cheap and the bread is dear" in Jones, O'Brien, Schmidt-Supprian (eds.), *Untold War*, p. 359.
[308] George L. Mosse, 'Über Kriegserinnerungen und Kriegsbegeisterung' in Linden and Mergner (eds.), *Kriegsbegeisterung*, p. 30.

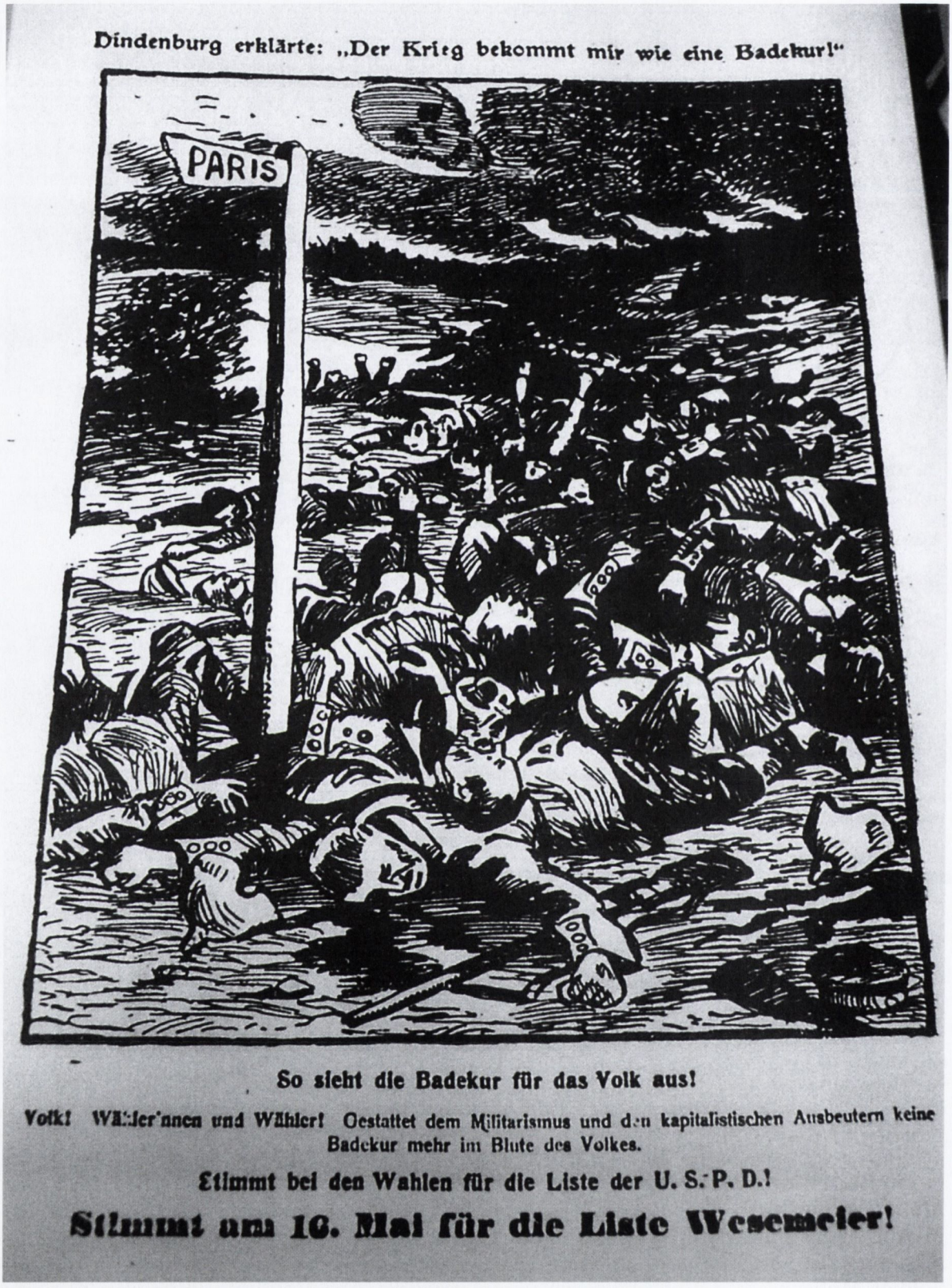
Illustration I: Kreislauf des Lebens [Cycle of Life][309]



[1000 BC. Primitive man Müller is sitting on a tree eating roots; 50 BC. Teuton Winfried Müller is hunting for food; 800 AD. Knight Dietrich von Müller is fighting a dragon; Middle Ages. Senator Müller is trading; 1750. Mr. de Mullére is devoting time to the fine arts; 1913. The high point of creation: General director Müller in a car ... but now: 1914. Soldier Müller is departing into a glorious time; 1915. NCO Müller is fighting a dragon; 1918. War invalid Müller is trading; 1919. Robber Müller is preying on passers-by in the zoo; 1920. The customer Müller is hunting for food; 19.. Müller has returned to his original state as a consequence of the glorious time [and] is sitting on a tree eating roots]

309 Fritz Wolff, 'Kreislauf des Lebens' *Ulk* 12/13 (2 April 1920).

Illustration II: Hindenburg declared: 'The war agrees with me like a visit to a health resort!'[310]



This is what the visit to a health resort looks like for the people! [...]

[310] FES, NUR 1920 Undatiert II USPD, *Hindenburg erklärte: 'Der Krieg bekommt mir wie eine Badekur!'* (n.p., 1920).

Illustration III: Memento Mori![311]



Über die dampfende Erde rasten die wütenden Völker, - Aus dem Blut der Gefall'nen blühet die Freiheit hervor

[Furious nations raged over the steaming soil, - Freedom blossoms from the blood of the fallen]

[311] 'Memento Mori' *Der wahre Jacob* 869 (17 November 1919).

Illustration IV: Shall this happen again? NO![312]



Therefore vote for the Social Democratic Party [...]

---

[312] Udo Achten, Siegfried Krupke (eds.), *An Alle! Lesen! Weitergeben!: Flugblätter der Arbeiterbewegung von 1848 bis 1933* (Berlin, Bonn, 1982), p. 187.

CHAPTER 2: MORAL LEGITIMACY FOR GOVERNMENT

The previous chapter established that an evaluation of the war experience and its ideological concepts, such as high esteem for the soldiers, was crucial for the definition and promotion of the republic. In evoking the horrors of war as an antagonistic model to the envisaged republican value system, republican discourse aimed to deconstruct post-war attempts to romanticise the old order. Yet republican foundation narratives did not merely justify the new state through vague ideological opposites like war and peace or oppression and freedom but also attempted to establish a democratic claim to government by attacking the moral credibility of the old regime with regard to their conduct during the war.

Although the collapse of the old regime was evident in the fact that no significant political force was prepared to defend the monarchy against the revolution, the republican parties' claim to government was by no means unchallenged.[313] Neither Max von Baden's declaration of Wilhelm's abdication on 9 November 1918, nor his appointment of SPD chairman Friedrich Ebert as chancellor, nor indeed Philipp Scheidemann's declaration of the republic was constitutionally legitimate.[314] This lack of legality allowed those representing or sympathising with the old regime to depict the revolution as an illegal coup.[315] A distinct lack of revolutionary ambition among majority social democrats, evident in SPD opposition to the January strikes in 1918 and their reluctance to support the revolutionary movement in November 1918, furthermore called the revolutionary legitimacy of the SPD into question.[316] The USPD which had promoted the revolution more actively, on the other hand, was too marginalised at the end of the war to take charge of the revolutionary state.[317] This lack of a clearly defined republican claim to leadership

---

[313] Both Ulrich Kluge and Heinrich August Winkler have established that the representatives of the old regime did not actively oppose the revolution. See Ulrich Kluge, *Die deutsche Revolution 1918/1919. Staat, Politik und Gesellschaft zwischen Weltkrieg und Kapp-Putsch* (Frankfurt, 1985), p. 69; Winkler, *Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung*, p. 45.

[314] 'Prinz Max zur Vorgeschichte der Revolution' *Vorwärts* 316 (16 November 1918); Karl Dietrich Erdmann, *Der Erste Weltkrieg* (Munich, 1980), pp. 238f; Kolb, *Weimar*, pp. 7f; Mommsen, *Die verspielte Freiheit*, p. 32; Mühlhausen, *Friedrich Ebert*, p. 105; Rürup, *Probleme der Revolution*, p. 17. The reactionary constitutional lawyer Axel von Freytagh-Loringhoven in fact demanded a rejection of the constitution, because he considered both Max von Baden's and Philipp Scheidemann's conduct to be high treason. See: Michael Wildt, *Volksgemeinschaft als Selbstermächtigung. Gewalt gegen Juden in der deutschen Provinz 1919 bis 1939* (Hamburg, 2007), p. 48. For biographical information on Max von Baden, Ebert and Scheidemann see Appendix I, pp. 322, 324, 338.

[315] See for example FES, 6/FLBL005451: *Das verlorene Paradies* (Berlin, 1918/1919); FES, 6/FLBL005856: DNVP, *Achtung Kameraden!* (Berlin, 1919); Max Taube, *Zum 9. November dem Trauer - und Bußtag des deutschen Volkes* (Berlin, 1919), p. 12.

[316] Erdmann, *Weltkrieg,* p. 222; Detlev Lehnert, *Sozialdemokratie und Novemberrevolution. Die Neuordnungsdebatte 1918/19 in der politischen Publizistik von SPD und USPD* (Frankfurt, New York, 1983), p. 48; Volker Ullrich, 'Zur inneren Revolutionierung der wilhelminischen Gesellschaft des Jahres 1918' in Jörg Duppler and Gerhard Paul Gross (eds.), *Kriegsende 1918: Ereignis, Wirkung, Nachwirkung* (Munich, 1999), p. 277. It is striking, for example, that SPD member Noske was sent to Kiel to contain and localise, rather than to fan the revolutionary movement of the sailors. See Winkler, *Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung*, p. 34. For biographical information on Noske see Appendix I, pp. 333f.

[317] This was particularly evident in the Bavarian revolution, as USPD Prime Minister Kurt Eisner was ultimately forced to resign because he and his party lacked electoral support. The agitation against the USPD had reached such heights that he was assassinated on the day he intended to resign. See Ludwig Morenz and Erwin Münz,

made the interpretation of the political lessons of the war a central argument in defining the democratic forces legitimacy to govern.

The political insecurity alluded to above also gave rise to diverging interpretations of the criteria which defined individuals as sufficiently discredited to merit their exclusion from the republic's political stage. As a consequence a multitude of allegations against individual leaders, parties, and political interest groups appeared throughout the republican press. A random sample of 60 articles defining political forces regarded as unfit to represent the new state listed 23 individuals, ranging from SPD politician Philipp Scheidemann to the Pan-German Count Erich zu Reventlow, as well as every party represented in Weimar politics as discredited on the grounds of their wartime policies.[318] Some of these allegations took absurd forms: in a rhetorical sparring match, USPD politician Rudolf Breitscheid accused *Vorwärts* journalist Erich Kuttner of having blown the 'patriotic trumpet' during the war.[319] In response, Kuttner argued that not only had Breitscheid attempted to shirk his duty at the front but had also gone to embarrassing lengths to do so by begging the SPD's military expert in the Reichstag Gustav Noske to intervene on his behalf.[320] This particular example reflected party-political rivalry between SPD and USPD, as the individuals in question were prominent spokesmen of each respective party, but also seemed to address a severe personal antagonism. Comparable political accusations, particularly those targeting representatives of the old regime, deliberately aimed to refrain from personal insults in order to focus on reasons why individuals or parties should be excluded from the political design of the republic.

As it is impossible to do justice to the large number of individual accusations that fall within the parameters of this study, only those regarded as most relevant for the definition of the new state have been included in this chapter's analysis. The republican newspapers' definitions of who was and who was not suitable to represent the Weimar Republic will be evaluated through references to the Kaiser and the former military leadership, as the former regime's most prominent representatives. This chapter will, furthermore, evaluate political attacks on the wartime conduct of individuals or parties where these reflect party-specific allegations common in republican discourse. In order to limit the large scope of sources available, the republican assessment of politicians' conduct during the war will be confined to attempts to determine the setting of moral standards in republican politics.

Revolution und Räteherrschaft in München. Aus der Stadtchronik 1918/1919 (Munich, Vienna, 1968), pp. 42f, 51f. For biographical information on Eisner see Appendix I, pp. 324f.

[318] See for example 'Frankfurt, 26. November' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 328 (26 November 1918); 'Neue Demokratie – alter Liberalismus' *Die Freiheit* 14 (22 November 1918); 'Neue Männer ins Auswärtige Amt' *Die Freiheit* 22 (27 November 1918); 'Die unsterbliche Junkerschnauze' *Vorwärts* 89 (18 February 1919); Erich Kuttner, 'Der Fall Eisner' *Vorwärts* 329 (30 November 1918); Hans Leuß, 'Zollerngezänk' *Die Welt am Montag* 49 (9 December 1918); Georg Metzler, 'Eiserne Stirnen' *Die Weltbühne* 11 (6 March 1919), pp. 246-250; L. Persius, 'Die Unheilstifter' *Die Weltbühne* 46 (14 November 1918), pp. 459-464. For biographical information on Leuß, Persius, and Metzler see Appendix I, pp. 332, 334.

[319] Rudolf Breitscheid, 'Die Schuldigen' *Die Freiheit* 182 (15 April 1919). For biographical information on Breitscheid and Kuttner see Appendix I, pp. 323, 330.

[320] Erich Kuttner, '"Strenges" Gericht' *Vorwärts* 196 (16 April 1919); Erich Kuttner, 'Nochmals: Strenges Gericht' *Vorwärts* 201 (19 April 1919).

The third chapter of this thesis will subsequently discuss political allegations against the old regime, such as the perceived implications of politicians' and parties' 'war guilt' for Germany's domestic and foreign policy, in more detail.

Republican evaluations of the wartime conduct of Germany's former elite merit analysis because they illustrate a relatively cohesive republican opposition to key representatives of the imperial regime. Contemporaneously, the desire to establish each party's moral legitimacy to represent the population generated a significant electoral rivalry among the republican forces. Attempts to discredit Germany's former leaders in order to exclude them from the republican political stage were diluted by political disputes among republican parties themselves, who each defined the other's wartime conduct as rendering their opponent unfit to govern. Competition for partly overlapping blocks of targeted voters motivated an inter-republican rivalry, which, to some extent, diverted republican focus away from Germany's former political elite as the most antagonistic force within the new state. On the basis of these considerations, the following chapter will assess to what extent the creation of a distinction between 'old' and 'new' proved problematic, because republican definitions of a common domestic enemy were not sufficiently unambiguous.

THE DISCREDITED KAISER

During the war, Kaiser Wilhelm II was portrayed as the embodiment of the German character. Within Germany, he was promoted as the nation's saviour representing national strength and belief in victory, while foreign sources depicted him as a symbol for Germany's delusions of grandeur, its aggressive foreign policy, and excessive war aims.[321] Wartime censorship prevented any critical evaluation of the monarch in Germany's public discourse and courts punished the crime of lèse-majesté more severely than blasphemy.[322] The Kaiser's role in suppressing internal political reform and promoting misguided war

---

[321] For international wartime images of Wilhelm II see 'Cherchez et vous trouverez', reproduced in: Elisabeth von Hagenow, 'Mit Gott für König, Volk und Vaterland. Die Bildpostkarte als Massen- und Bekenntnismedium' in Raoul Zühlke (ed.), *Bildpropaganda im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Hamburg, 2000), p. 166; 'Ich will Napoleon sein...'(Moscow, 1914) Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin, Plakate, Inventar Nummer P. 95, 225; 'Und wir werden siegen 1914/1918' in Digitale Bibliothek, *Der Erste Weltkrieg*, p. 1322. See Illustration V, pp. 112f. The different portrayals of Wilhelm in German and Allied wartime propaganda illustrate the diverging assessments of the Kaiser's character. While German propaganda depicted him as a heroic leader at the front, Entente images ridiculed him as a fool and depicted him as a representation of Germany's worst traits. Holger Afflerback noted that wartime Entente propaganda focused on Wilhelm II as a 'symbol of German militarism'. See Holger Afflerbach (ed.), *Kaiser Wilhelm II. als Oberster Kriegsherr im Ersten Weltkrieg. Quellen aus der militärischen Umgebung des Kaisers 1914-1918* (Munich, 2005), p. 4.

[322] Hans Leuß, *Wilhelm der Letzte! Eine Vorhersage aus 1914* (Berlin, 1918), p. 1; Fritz Spiegelberg, 'Die kaiserlose, die schreckliche Zeit' *Vorwärts* 448 (2 September 1919). In his memoirs published in 1926, the democratic pacifist Ludwig Quidde describes the pre-war years as a time riddled with 'a plague of trials' investigating lèse-majesté'. See Hans-Ulrich Wehler (ed.), *Ludwig Quidde: Caligula. Schriften über Militarismus und Pazifismus* (Frankfurt, 1977), p. 50. For biographical information on Quidde see Appendix I, pp. 334f.

aims through excessive and chauvinistic propaganda were not openly challenged until Germany's critical military situation could no longer be denied.[323] The necessity of requesting an armistice was the first indication that the promised German victory would not be forthcoming.[324] Recognising the increasingly desperate nature of their military and economic situation, the German population turned against Wilhelm as the cause of their misery.[325] Germany's military leadership consequently recognised that the moral blow of the armistice needed to be softened and it granted political reforms in order to prevent such moods from escalating into revolutionary agitation.[326]

A constitutional reform, initiated by Ludendorff and sanctioned by the Kaiser, changed the constitutional monarchy into a parliamentary monarchy, reluctantly implementing the majority parties' demands for a thorough parliamentarisation.[327] This reform, however, did not intend to undermine the monarchic principle but rather aimed to protect it by containing popular dissatisfaction with defeat.[328] Even as the notes of the American president Woodrow Wilson's clarified that a thorough democratisation of Germany would be a prerequisite for any armistice settlement, the newly appointed chancellor Prince Max von Baden continued to believe that Wilhelm's voluntary abdication could secure the survival of the monarchy.[329] Illustrating the extent to which the socialist SPD had come to terms with the monarchy, Ebert and Scheidemann also pledged themselves to support the chancellor in saving the monarchy until it became

---

[323] Holger Afflerbach and Wolfgang Mommsen have established that, particularly under Hindenburg's leadership of the *OHL*, the role of the Kaiser in Germany's political and strategic decisionmaking was, in fact, relatively limited. Irrespective of the extent to which Wilhelm actually influenced Germany's wartime decisions, however, his role as commander-in-chief made him accountable for their failure. See Afflerbach (ed.), *Kaiser Wilhelm II*, pp. 16f, 30, 45; Wolfgang J. Mommsen, *War der Kaiser an allem schuld? Wilhelm II und die preussisch-deutschen Machteliten* (Berlin, 2002), pp. 224, 230f, 242, 248, 251; Mommsen, *Die verspielte Freiheit*, p. 32.

[324] Kolb, *Weimar*, p. 5.

[325] Karl-Heinz Janßen, *Und morgen die ganze Welt... Deutsche Geschichte 1871-1945* (Bremen, 2003), p. 100; Erdmann, *Weltkrieg*, p. 237; Lehnert, *Sozialdemokratie*, p. 55; Ullrich, 'Zur inneren Revolutionierung' in Duppler and Gross (eds.), *Kriegsende 1918*, p. 279; Martin Kohlrausch, *Der Monarch im Skandal. Die Logik der Massenmedien und die Transformation der wilhelminischen Monarchie* (Berlin, 2005), p. 312.

[326] Chickering, *Imperial Germany*, p. 188; Ullrich, 'Zur inneren Revolutionierung' in Duppler and Gross (eds.), *Kriegsende 1918*, p. 282. The other motivation for implementing reforms as Germany's army was close to collapse was the military leadership's attempt to hide their responsibility for defeat by forcing a democratic government rather than representatives of the imperial regime to negotiate an armistice. This conduct, which is closely related to the establishment of the 'stab-in-the-back' myth, will be discussed in more detail in chapter 3. Volker Ullrich, *Als der Thron ins Wanken kam. Das Ende des Hohenzollernreiches 1890-1918* (Bremen, 1993), p. 186; Lehnert, *Sozialdemokratie*, p. 50.

[327] Chickering, *Imperial* Germany, p. 188; Lehnert, *Sozialdemokratie*, pp. 52f. Gunther May defines Wilson's demands regarding the armistice as the main motivation for the creation of a parliamentary monarchy. See *Das Ende des Kaiserreichs. Politik und Kriegsführung im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Munich, 1987), p. 159-163.

[328] May, *Ende des Kaiserreichs*, p. 159.

[329] Kolb, *Weimar*, p. 7. Both contemporaries and historians agreed that Wilhelm's abdication could have saved the monarchy. See Afflerbach (ed.), *Kaiser Wilhelm II*, pp. 56-58; Mommsen, *War der Kaiser an allem schuld?*, p. 254.

obvious that the revolutionary movement could not be contained.[330] Only the Kaiser's stubborn refusal to abdicate in spite of revolutionary unrest throughout Germany ultimately forced the SPD to seize the revolutionary momentum.[331]

Although the SPD would therefore have been prepared to accept the establishment of a parliamentary monarchy, it seized upon the Kaiser's abdication as an opportunity to call the institution of the monarchy to account by dissecting Wilhelm II's personality and politics.[332] After the revolution, *Vorwärts* particularly quoted personal attacks on the Kaiser printed in the monarchist press as evidence that the monarchy had lost all support.[333] The widespread criticism of Wilhelm's character made him a suitable target, against which all of the republican publications could direct popular resentment arising from Germany's post-war situation. The attempt to encourage emotional disappointment with Germany's former monarch through emphasizing people's grievances was particularly evident in depictions of his wartime conduct.[334] One *Vorwärts* article, for example, pointed out that while a widow had sacrificed her wedding-ring for the fatherland, the crown prince still had 24 golden and partly diamond-encrusted cigarette cases available to be stolen from him after the war.[335] Like other articles in *Vorwärts* and *Die Weltbühne*, it also stressed that Wilhelm was most likely the only father of six in Germany who had not lost any of his children at the front.[336] These allegations implied that the royal family had preached but not lived the wartime creed which they imposed on the German people: that need and suffering had to be endured for the good of the fatherland.

Articles commenting on royal feasts and luxurious decadence during the war furthermore tended to mention that this debauchery coincided with deprivation and starvation among the monarch's ordinary subjects. Under the headline 'How the monarchs shared the people's suffering' *Vorwärts* pointed out that a royal lunch during wartime contained 'royal meat broth, baked sole, venison, apple-stew, salad, green asparagus, peach-dessert, [and] fruit', while people at home suffered from malnutrition and soldiers at the front ate watery soup with dried vegetables.[337] These allegations emphasized the inequality of the old regime, which allowed those in power to disregard

---

330 Winkler, *Arbeiter und* Arbeiterbewegung, pp. 38f; Lehnert, *Sozialdemokratie*, pp. 50, 56f. In this context, Friedrich Ebert allegedly advocated that the monarchy had to remain, because Germany was 'not yet ready for a republic'. He subsequently argued that Wilhelm would have to abdicate in order to save the monarchy. See quote in Mühlhausen, *Friedrich Ebert*, pp. 98, 103.

331 Winkler, *Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung*, pp. 39-41.

332 'Vom Volke' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 312 (10 November 1918); Ullrich, *Ende des Hohenzollernreiches*, p. 209.

333 'Ein Junkerurteil über Wilhelm den Letzten' *Vorwärts* 333a (4 December 1918); 'Ein Monarchist über Wilhelm den Letzten!' *Vorwärts* 329 (30 November 1918); 'Ein Monarchist über Wilhelm II' *Vorwärts* 105 (26 February 1919).

334 Kohlrausch, *Monarch im Skandal*, p. 409.

335 'Alles fürs Vaterland' *Vorwärts* 299/304 (17 June 1919).

336 Ibid; 'Der unglückliche Mann in Amerongen' *Vorwärts* 52 (29 January 1919); Kurt Tucholsky, 'Schuldbuch' *Die Weltbühne* 36 (28 August 1919), p. 251.

337 'Wie die Monarchen die Not des Volkes teilten' *Vorwärts* 322 (23 November 1918). Also see 'Speisekarten' *Vorwärts* 489 (24 September 1919).

the very patriotic principles they claimed to represent and to impose rules they did not adhere to. Promoting the idea of democratic equality, which the republic proclaimed as its guiding principle, the republican press identified the duplicity of the old ideology as in need of change. These allegations were expressed particularly sharply in an article in *Die Freiheit* which commented that 'the war might not have lasted a month if the royals had been put on the average food rations' of their subjects.[338]

The portrayal of Wilhelm as a decadent and morally questionable ruler, who was neither concerned with his people's wellbeing nor prepared to lead by example, was continued in depictions of his life in exile.[339] The pacifist author Wilhelm Lamszus, who had already envisaged the horrific nature of the coming war in the novel *Das Menschenschlachthaus* in 1912, summarised the post-war conduct of the royals in Holland as follows:

> [t]hey took off their crowns. They took off their royalty with their purple robes and have become private people. We are told that they are exercising, playing tennis, driving around in cars, hunting and reading novels. Their people are writhing in feverish convulsions and are desperately trying to close the gaping wound through which life is escaping. They, however, are sitting in their hiding places, are ducking and waiting until the dust has settled on these wretched affairs. They may even secretly hope that things could develop differently and that they could, in a shining transfiguration, rise out of the ashes like a phoenix one day.[340]

The above article suggested that the royals had not learned from their mistakes and were still more interested in their own welfare than the country they claimed to represent. The conclusion of Lamszus' article consequently appealed to Wilhelm and his sons to lead by example by rolling up their sleeves to help rebuild destroyed regions in France in order to restore his reputation.[341] Taking the traditional perception of the royal family's social position into account, this demand seemed absurd. It evoked an almost carnivalesque image of the king as a simple labourer, thus emphasizing the immense contrast between the imperial hierarchy and the republican perception of equality. The implicit allegation that the German royals were not worthy of their former elevated position of power suggested that republican assessments of the monarchy were not primarily concerned with the possibility of its revival. Such propaganda rather functioned as an instrument to legitimise the republic by discrediting the old regime's moral integrity and that of the value system it had promoted and imposed during the war.

It is furthermore striking that, although Germany's former monarch was portrayed very negatively, he was not demonised but rather ridiculed as a decadent coward. In this context, *Vorwärts* quoted a number of disillusioned monarchists' assessments of the

---

[338] 'Aus den monarchischen Speisekammern' *Die Freiheit* 14 (22 November 1918).
[339] 'Die Sorgen Wilhelms II.' *Vorwärts* 308 (19 June 1919).
[340] Wilhelm Lamszus, 'Die Entthronten' *Vorwärts* 394 (4 August 1919). For biographical information on Lamszus see Appendix I, p. 330.
[341] Ibid.

Kaiser, tending to portray the former monarch's personality in far more vicious terms than the republican press. The Junker Gerhard von Bredow, for example, was quoted as defining Wilhelm as mentally subnormal, arguing that the republic would not have found such widespread support if the Kaiser had been certified insane.[342] Additionally, *Vorwärts* accused Wilhelm II of cowardice by pointing out that he showed off his sword demanding commitment until death from the soldiers but never came 'within range of enemy bullets'.[343]

The notion of Wilhelm as a coward was particularly evoked in response to his refusal to die a hero's death.[344] All republican publications, as well as a number of nationalist ones, defined the fact that he ran away from the revolution as the final deathblow to the monarchy.[345] The comparable conduct of other representatives of the monarchy, like the Crown Prince and the Bavarian Crown Prince Rupprecht, were regarded in a similar fashion.[346] One SPD leaflet summarised that Kaiser's actions as 'despicable, unsoldierly, unregal and unmanly' and thus deprived him of all attributes justifying the elevated status of a monarch.[347] This depiction of the members of the royal family suggested that they had failed to provide good leadership by their own standards. The implication that in deserting his people Wilhelm had not kept his promises to them

---

[342] 'Ein Junkerurteil über Wilhelm den Letzten' *Vorwärts* 333a (4 December 1918); 'Ein Monarchist über Wilhelm den Letzten!' *Vorwärts* 329 (30 November 1918).

[343] 'Der Wilhelm soll wiederkehren?' *Vorwärts* 286 (6 June 1920).

[344] 'Ein Monarchist über Wilhelm den Letzten!' *Vorwärts* 329 (30 November 1918); 'Frankfurt, 26. November' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 328 (26 November 1918); 'Der Wilhelm soll wiederkehren?' *Vorwärts* 286 (6 June 1920); FES, 6/FLBL005457: Oscar Cohn, *An die Soldaten!* (Berlin, 1918); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DDP, Berlin, 1920: DDP, *Die Parteien des Zusammenbruchs - ihr Sündenregister* (Berlin, 1920); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, SPD, 1921, Berlin: SPD, *Wollt ihr Wilhelm eine Milliarde nachschicken?* (Berlin, 1921). Wilhelm had in fact considered joining the troops in November 1918, but only in order to lead them against the revolution rather than to die heroically at the front. Afflerbach and Guth argue that while the concept of the Kaiser's heroic suicide at the front was considered and discussed among his advisors, it was never suggested to Wilhelm II. See Mommsen, *War der Kaiser an allem schuld?*, p. 255f; Afflerbach (ed.), *Kaiser Wilhelm II*, pp. 58f; Ekkehart P. Guth, *Der Loyalitätskonflikt des deutschen Offizierskorps in der Revolution 1918-1920* (Frankfurt, 1983), pp. 20f.

[345] 'Die Briefe der Hohenzollern' *Die Freiheit* 146 (27 March 1919); 'Frankfurt, 27. März' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 233 (27 March 1919); 'Gegenrevolution?' *Vorwärts* 333a (4 December 1918); Hans Leuß, 'Zollerngezänk' *Die Welt am Montag* (9 December 1918); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, Reichsfreunde, Berlin, 1919: Reichsfreunde, *Kaiser und Reich* (Berlin, 1919). Martin Kohlrausch argues that republican propaganda merely adopted right-wing criticism of Wilhelm's desertion which defined his flight as evidence that the Kaiser failed to live up to his position. It is evident from the republican analysis of the Kaiser's wartime conduct discussed above, however, that the republican forces extended this allegation to an all-encompassing means to discredit the monarchy. See Kohlrausch, *Monarch im Skandal*, p. 352.

[346] 'Ein Schreiben des früheren Kronprinzen' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 769 (14 October 1919); 'Der frühere Kronprinz und die Verständigungspolitik' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 828 (5 November 1919); 'Die Kriegsleiden des Kronprinzen' *Vorwärts* 561 (2 November 1919); 'Wie Kronprinz Rupprecht desertierte - Der Heerführer als feige Memme' *Vorwärts* 350a (21 December 1918); Hans Leuß, 'Zollerngezänk' *Die Welt am Montag* 49 (9 December 1918); Olf, 'Die Naiven' *Die Weltbühne* 15 (3 April 1919), pp. 369f. For biographical information on Rudolf Leonard see Appendix I, pp. 331f.

[347] BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, SPD, 1921, Berlin: SPD, *Wollt ihr Wilhelm eine Milliarde nachschicken?* (Berlin, 1921).

also reinforced the notion that he was thoroughly discredited as a leader because the nation could not rely on him.[348]

This range of accusations against Wilhelm II illustrates that the republican press recognised the political potential of a united stance against the former Kaiser as a useful symbol for the moral self-destruction of the monarchy. His depiction as a ridiculous fool who did not understand the limitations of his ability, however, also aimed to prevent the perception of the former monarch as a strong figure, which could be used as a propagandist weapon against the republic. Republican publications therefore did not limit themselves to criticising his decadent lifestyle, but also stressed the former monarch's political ignorance and miscalculations. An assessment of his character in *Die Weltbühne*, for example, emphasised that he was megalomaniac with regard to his role in world politics, even though he had been too weak to control his generals' decisions determining Germany's military strategy.[349] All republican publications depicted Wilhelm's illusions of grandeur in a similar manner. Focusing on his 'ridiculous' and 'self-obsessed' speeches, in combination with his inability to understand the nature of international relations, they aimed to illustrate that he could not seriously be considered a suitable political leader.[350] The allegation that Wilhelm II had inadvertently rather than intentionally led Germany into war reinforced the notion that he was no serious political mind but a severely incompetent egotist who had overrated his abilities.[351]

Republican propaganda, in accordance with more recent historical analysis, furthermore criticised Wilhelm's reluctance to abdicate as a sign of political incompetence which increased the political confusion in Germany and people's resentment against him.[352] Focusing on Wilhelm's failure to recognise the dimensions of popular unrest, which he wanted to suppress by military force, republican propaganda yet again suggested that he was more concerned with his own welfare than that of his people.[353] Current

---

348 'Die Flucht Wilhelms Hohenzollern II' *Die Freiheit* 164 (5 April 1919).

349 Johannes Fischart, 'Politiker und Publizisten - Wilhelm der Zweite' *Die Weltbühne* 1 (2 January 1919), pp. 5-11. For another depiction of this kind see 'Wilhelm II als Politiker' *Vorwärts* 376 (25 July 1919). For biographical information on Fischart see Appendix I, pp. 326.

350 'Die Kaiserfrage' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 308 (6 November 1918); 'Der Narr von Gottes Gnaden. Wie Wilhelm regierte' *Vorwärts* 631 (10 December 1919); 'Der unglückliche Mann in Amerongen' *Vorwärts* 52 (29 January 1919); 'Wilhelm II' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 314 (12 November 1918); 'Der Wilhelm soll wiederkehren?' *Vorwärts* 286 (6 June 1920).

351 'Wilhelm II' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 314 (12 November 1918); 'Wilhelm II als Politiker' *Vorwärts* 376 (25 July 1919); 'Zur Vorgeschichte des Krieges - Äußerungen Wilhelms' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 332 (30 November 1918); Johannes Fischart, 'Politiker und Publizisten - Wilhelm der Zweite' *Die Weltbühne* 1 (2 January 1919), pp. 5-11; Paulchen, 'Schwarz-weiß-rot' *Vorwärts* 340 (6 July 1919). A number of recent historians shared this contemporary evaluation. See for example Mommsen, *War der Kaiser an allem schuld?*, pp. 255f; Afflerbach (ed.), *Kaiser Wilhelm II*, pp. 56-59.

352 'Die Alldeutsche Quetschmine. Enthüllungen über die Abdankung Wilhelms' *Vorwärts* 380 (28 July 1919); 'Frankfurt, 31. Dezember' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 362 (31 December 1918); 'Wilhelm II' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 314 (12 November 1918); Prinz Max von Baden, 'Der 9. November' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 584 (9 August 1919). Also see Kohlrausch, *Monarch im Skandal*, p. 321.

353 'Die Alldeutsche Quetschmine. Enthüllungen über die Abdankung Wilhelms' *Vorwärts* 380 (28 July 1919); 'Die Flucht Wilhelms Hohenzollern II' *Die Freiheit* 164 (5 April 1919); 'Neue Enthüllungen' *Vorwärts* 404 (9 August 1919).

historiography generally acknowledges that Wilhelm had vainly hoped to be able to suppress the popular unrest with loyal troops.[354] At the time, however, the allegation that the former Kaiser would have been prepared to turn the army against his subjects for expressing legitimate grievances was sensational.[355] The articles clearly aimed to fuel popular resentment against Wilhelm for having used but not cared for his subjects. Another *Vorwärts* article extended this criticism to other German royals by commenting on the flight of Prince Rupprecht.[356] It alleged that his disappearing act had postponed crucial negotiations with the Allies for a day, although he had been aware that each hour of delay was costing thousands of soldiers' lives.[357] These assessments of the German dynasties implied that they deserved no sympathy but that in being removed they had merely received just punishment for their crimes.

This depiction of the monarchy legitimised the revolution and the establishment of a republic as a necessary replacement for a political system which had invalidated itself.[358] Implying that the monarchy had led its own values, and subsequently the German nation, into disintegration, the revolution was represented as innocent with regard to Germany's collapse. This assumption suggested that the democratic forces did not actively destroy the values of the old regime in order to assert their power, but that they merely stepped into a void left behind by the monarchy's collapse. In order to contradict the 'stab-in-the-back' myth, this interpretation of the revolution depicted republicans as Germany's saviour rather than a force which had undermined the country's wartime values. Contemporaneously the monarchy's collapse was used as proof that the old regime's values had failed to withstand the test of time and that defeat had proven that they needed to be replaced by republican ones.

In the initial months following the revolution, the republican press expressed the confident conviction that, in spite of some demands for the return of the monarchy, the latter had lost 'the last bit of dignity in the eyes of the German people during the last days and weeks of its reign'.[359] A *Vorwärts* article, commenting on celebrations for the Kaiser's birthday, also stressed that demands for the Kaiser's return did not reflect support for the monarchy but merely dissatisfaction with the current situation.[360] The *Frankfurter*

---

354 For example Mommsen, *War der Kaiser an allem schuld?*, pp. 255f; Wolfram Pyta, *Hindenburg. Herrschaft zwischen Hohenzollern und Hitler* (Munich, 2007), p. 364; Ullrich, *Ende des Hohenzollernreiches*, pp. 212f.

355 'Die Alldeutsche Quetschmine. Enthüllungen über die Abdankung Wilhelms' *Vorwärts* 380 (28 July 1919); 'Die Flucht Wilhelms Hohenzollern II' *Die Freiheit* 164 (5 April 1919); 'Neue Enthüllungen' *Vorwärts* 404 (9 August 1919).

356 'Wie Kronprinz Rupprecht desertierte - Der Heerführer als feige Memme' *Vorwärts* 350a (21 December 1918).

357 Ibid.

358 Kohlrausch, *Monarch im Skandal*, p. 378.

359 Quote in 'Frankfurt, 27. März' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 233 (27 March 1919). For similar evaluations see 'Die Hohenzollern-Interviews' *Vorwärts* 174 (4 April 1919); 'Vorsichtige Monarchisten' *Vorwärts* 48 (27 January 1919); Hellmut von Gerlach, 'Wilhelm, der Erledigte' *Die Welt am Montag* 49 (8 December 1919); Fritz Spiegelberg, 'Die kaiserlose, die schreckliche Zeit' *Vorwärts* 448 (2 September 1919).

360 'Zum 27 Januar' *Vorwärts* 49 (27 January 1920).

Zeitung and *Vorwärts* nevertheless identified monarchist propaganda as a danger to Germany's foreign policy, because it was misread as a representation of the political mood in Germany by the Allies, and to the domestic order, because it obstructed the work of the National Assembly.[361] Monarchist propaganda was therefore portrayed as an obstacle to implementing republican politics and to demobilising international relations rather than a sign of significant support for Wilhelm's return to power.

Some of the republican newspaper articles nevertheless reflected exasperation with the impertinence of the monarchist refusal to acknowledge that Wilhelm's time was over. In response to an appeal from the Pan-German League requesting that the right-wing parties should demand permission for Wilhelm and his wife to return to Germany in the Prussian parliament and the National Assembly in late May 1919, *Vorwärts* commented that:

> [t]he Pan-German League's request indeed reflects the most important 'dictate of the hour'. Finally the magic word has been spoken. Wilhelm, the Kaiser, will save the situation. Who else? His course – the right one as events have proven – will be followed again. We can already see how the Entente, overpowered by the recent German revolution, will present us with a peace treaty beginning with a tribute to Wilhelm. He will lead us into wonderful times![362]

The article concludes with a request to the German National Assembly to extradite the Pan-German League to join Wilhelm in Holland, should the Netherlands agree to such a decree.[363] This political tirade, printed in the main body of the newspaper rather than the literary section that usually featured satirical commentary, implied that monarchists did not pose a serious threat to Germany's democratisation.[364] Yet it also reflected the republican difficulty in responding to the irrational and illogical propaganda of German right-wing nationalists, because right-wing demands completely disregarded political reality and solely appealed to base emotions of popular dissatisfaction. *Vorwärts* and the *Frankfurter Zeitung* also showed an initial lack of concern with attempts to reinstate the monarchy through Paul von Hindenburg's candidacy for president. Both publications argued that Hindenburg's election would alienate the Entente and dismissed the notion that, in spite of his wartime popularity, the former military leader would make a feasible candidate supported by anybody but the right-wing parties.[365] Rather than debating the

---

[361] 'Alldeutsche Störung einer Volkskundgebung' *Vorwärts* 153 (24 March 1919); 'Fürsten und Volk' *Vorwärts* 88 (17 February 1919); 'Wilhelm II.' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 82 (31 January 1919).
[362] 'Wilhelm, kehre zurück!' *Vorwärts* 273 (30 May 1919).
[363] Ibid.
[364] Also see 'Gedanken der Deutschnationalen' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 918 (9 December 1919).
[365] 'Frankfurt, 8. März' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 182 (8 March 1920); 'Hindenburg als Politiker. Der Präsidentschaftskandidat der Deutschen Volkspartei' *Vorwärts* 439 (28 August 1919); 'Platzhalter der Monarchie. Warum Hindenburg kandidieren soll' *Vorwärts* 129 (10 March 1920); Hellmut von Gerlach, 'Wer wird Reichspräsident?' *Die Welt am Montag* 47 (24 November 1919).

danger of a monarchist counter-revolution, most republican newspapers simply commented that such aspirations would destroy Hindenburg's reputation.[366]

Republican evaluations of the former monarch as politically ruined were proven right by the fact that he never entered Germany or regained any significant position of power again.[367] In spite of this unanimous republican verdict, the debate regarding financial compensation for the Kaiser remained a source of significant political dispute among republican parties. Constitutionally obliged to deal with Hohenzollern demands to be compensated for private property they had left behind in Germany, the Prussian government drew up a compromise solution, granting Wilhelm, (among other concessions), ownership of a number of castles and a financial compensation of 100 million Reichsmark for art and property he had agreed to hand over to state ownership.[368] Yet again diverging interpretations of the nature of the new state among the republican parties produced seemingly irreconcilable demands. The USPD, advocating a clean and merciless break with the German monarchy, demanded a straightforward expropriation of Hohenzollern property.[369] The liberal *Frankfurter Zeitung*, on the other hand, opposed any expropriation demands because the largely middle-class party it represented was reluctant to grant the state the authority to confiscate private property, insisting that the compensation was a legal obligation.[370] The SPD in turn was acutely aware that the decision, which was passed on from the Prussian government to the National Assembly because no resolution could be reached, needed to be based on a compromise with the bourgeois parties because the majority socialists could not govern against the DDP.[371]

The press coverage in all of the analysed newspapers reflects these different viewpoints. Both *Die Freiheit* and Kurt Tucholsky in *Die Weltbühne* were highly critical of the suggestion that Wilhelm, whom they considered as responsible for the war, should

---

366 'Gedanken der Deutschnationalen' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 918 (9 December 1919); 'Platzhalter der Monarchie. Warum Hindenburg kandidieren soll' *Vorwärts* 129 (10 March 1920).

367 John C. G. Röhl, 'Wilhelm II' in Hirschfeld, Krumeich and Renz (eds.), *Enzyklopädie*, p. 970; Kohlrausch, *Monarch im Skandal*, p. 397.

368 'Die Abfindung der Hohenzollern' *Vorwärts* 62 (3 February 1920); 'Frankfurt, 28. Januar' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 74 (28 January 1920); 'Wilhelms Abfindung' *Vorwärts* 50 (28 January 1920). In his biography of Wilhelm, Lamar Cecil establishes that on 30 November 1918 the socialist government unfroze Wilhelm's assets, allowing him to transfer large amounts and valuables to Holland. He furthermore estimated that the republic paid Germany's fomer monarch 69 million marks in compensation between November 1918 and October 1920. In comparison, Karl-Heinz Janßen defined the goods which the Prussian government 'generously sent on' to Holland as 'fiftly wagon loads of the castle's household' and sixty million Reichsmark as an allowance for his luxurious lifestyle. The lack of secondary literature on the matter makes it impossible to provide more definitive dates and numbers. See Lamar Cecil, *Wilhelm II. Emperor and Exile 1900-1941* (Chapel Hill, London, 1996), p. 303; Janßen, *Deutsche Geschichte*, p. 132.

369 'Der Abfindungsskandal' *Die Freiheit* 28 (12 February 1920).

370 'Frankfurt, 3. März' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 169 (3 March 1920); 'Frankfurt, 28. Januar' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 74 (28 January 1920).

371 'Partei und Hohenzollernabfindung' *Vorwärts* 113 (2 March 1920); 'Staats- und Kronvermögen' *Vorwärts* 106 (27 February 1920).

receive financial compensation for the loss of his property.[372] In addition, both articles also vehemently attacked those republicans who considered that it should be paid.[373] The Independent Social-Democratic party organ furthermore extended this rational rejection of Wilhelm's demands into an emotional appeal to prevent him from profiting from war and revolution.[374] *Die Freiheit's* allegation that the SPD would allow him to do so showed that the rivalry between the two socialist factions obstructed a common socialist stance against the representatives of the old regime. The socialist error of judgement in diluting the accusations against the old elite with allegations against each other complicated the clear differentiation of motives for such propaganda. Linking attempts to dissociate the republic from representatives of the old regime to inter-republican election campaigning, socialist - but particularly USPD - propaganda obstructed the creation of a clear-cut common republican enemy.

Vorwärts dealt most frequently and most contradictorily with the Hohenzollern compensation, partly in order to defend itself against USPD allegations and partly because it approached the issue most rationally. Even so, it did not manage to bridge the gap between emotional opposition to a proposal that would financially reward Wilhelm for voluntarily leaving his suffering nation, and the necessity to act in a legally correct manner. In late January 1920, *Vorwärts* passionately asked 'how the people who fell victim to his 'governing skills' were compensated for the misery that he had caused them' if 'the former monarch who had caused [...] such misery was being compensated in such a manner'.[375] Over the next couple of days, however, a number of articles stressed that the constitutional guarantee of private property necessitated a thorough official investigation of the former monarch's demands.[376] Commenting on the compromise which the Prussian government had drawn up, *Vorwärts* ultimately tried, rather unsuccessfully, to reconcile these opposing considerations. Both a printed letter and a leading article in *Vorwärts* compared Wilhelm to a normal trader who would simply be declared bankrupt after losing his fortune.[377] In summing up this comparison, the two writers came to entirely different conclusions, reflecting the SPD's dilemma between political necessity and grass root opinion. While the letter demanded that Wilhelm's money should be used to help the victims of Germany's collapse for which he was responsible, the leading article merely called for a careful revision of the compromise which is regarded as far too generous.[378]

---

[372] 'Der Abfindungsskandal' *Die Freiheit* 28 (12 February 1920); Kurt Tucholsky, 'Wilhelm von Abfundien' *Die Weltbühne* 11 (11 March 1920), p. 335. For biographical information on Tucholsky see Appendix I, p. 338.
[373] Ibid.
[374] 'Der Abfindungsskandal' *Die Freiheit* 28 (12 February 1920).
[375] 'Wilhelms Geburtstagsgeschenk' *Vorwärts* 48 (27 January 1920). A similarly critical argument is evident in 'Die Abfindung der Hohenzollern' *Vorwärts* 62 (3 February 1920).
[376] 'Südekum über die Abfindung' *Vorwärts* 54 (30 January 1920); 'Wilhelms Abfindung' *Vorwärts* 50 (28 January 1920).
[377] 'Die Abfindung der Hohenzollern' *Vorwärts* 62 (3 February 1920); 'Der Konkurs Hohenzollern. Das Abfindungsgesetz' *Vorwärts* 87 (17 February 1920).
[378] Ibid.

Popular opposition to the compromise sharpened SPD criticism of the former monarch's demands.[379] The newspaper nevertheless upheld the conviction that a compromise solution, supported by the DDP, had to be found.[380] The *Frankfurter Zeitung*, on the other hand, maintained that the compensation sum suggested by the Prussian government was high but moderately acceptable and did not question that the republic needed to compensate Germany's former monarch.[381] When the SPD finally got round to support the expropriation of the German nobles in a 1926 referendum, the combined left did not manage to gain the necessary support to implement the bill.[382]

Although the original issue was relatively minor in the context of the republic's political challenges, it illustrated that the diverging republican interpretations of how the legacy of the war was to be dealt with posed significant difficulties for the new state. Both party political conceptions of the new state and political rivalries obstructed the creation of common republican goals and led to tedious and unnecessary political disputes. Turning such comparatively trivial issues into ideological battlefields defining the nature of the republic diverted the government's attention from more pressing consequences of the war, such as the Treaty of Versailles, Germany's mental demobilisation, and food shortages. The failure to find a republican consensus on the compensation issue had long-term consequences: the defeat of the 1926 referendum was a severe blow to the republic which echoed that failure.[383]

DISCREDITED MILITARY LEADERS

Apart from the monarchy, the former army leadership's political position was the main remnant of the old system's power structure that the first German democracy strove most determinedly to overcome.[384] The wartime concept of German militarism - associated with blind obedience, an oppressive hierarchy, and deception at both front and home front - was personified in two military leaders, who expanded the control of the military to include political decisions between 1916 and 1918.[385] Following a number of

---

[379] 'Die Abfindungsdebatte' *Vorwärts* 115 (3 March 1920); 'Die Abfindungsfrage. Der Hohenzollernanwalt gegen den 'Vorwärts' *Vorwärts* 112 (1 March 1920); 'Ein Vorbild. Bismarck für die Enteignung abgesetzter Fürsten' *Vorwärts* 114 (2 March 1920); 'Hohenzollernprofit' *Vorwärts* 111 (1 March 1920); 'Partei und Hohenzollernabfindung' *Vorwärts* 113 (2 March 1920).

[380] 'Die Abfindungsdebatte' *Vorwärts* 115 (3 March 1920); 'Partei und Hohenzollernabfindung' *Vorwärts* 113 (2 March 1920).

[381] 'Frankfurt, 28. Januar' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 74 (28 January 1920); 'Frankfurt, 3. März' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 169 (3 March 1920).

[382] SPD, 'Vergeßt das nicht' (1926) in: Friedrich Arnold (ed.), *Anschläge. Politische Plakate in Deutschland 1900 - 1970* (Frankfurt, Vienna, Zurich, 1979), p. 52.

[383] Ibid, commentary no. 52.

[384] Detlev Lehnert notes that the SPD explicitly opposed the *OHL*'s 'absolutist position' from October 1918. The constitutional amendments in October also reflected the democratic desire to contain the military leadership's political power. See Lehnert, *Sozialdemokratie*, pp. 52f.

[385] Chickering, *Imperial Germany*, p. 75; Pyta, *Hindenburg*, pp. 245-257; Janßen, *Deutsche Geschichte*, p. 88; Ullrich, *Ende des Hohenzollernreiches*, pp. 147-154. For republican descriptions

failed offensives and unforeseen military complications, Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg and Quartermaster-General Erich Ludendorff were jointly appointed as *Oberste Heeresleitung (OHL)* (Supreme Army Command) in 1916 to replace Erich von Falkenhayn.[386] As 'victor of Tannenberg', the formal head of the *OHL*, Hindenburg enjoyed great popular esteem and developed into a cult figure, symbolising Germany's 'determination and military success' throughout the war.[387] Historians – in line with contemporary republican journalists – suggested, however, that in spite of his popularity Hindenburg was of 'limited intelligence', 'like a big child with regard to political issues', and thus more of a symbolic figure than a crucial military decision-maker.[388] Ludendorff, on the other hand, was correctly defined as the driving force behind Germany's strategic decisions during the war.[389] The great national respect in which Hindenburg was held nevertheless shaped public perceptions of the war and of the *OHL*'s achievements, thus allowing Ludendorff to extend his sphere of influence to encompass political as well as military decisions.[390]

As the third chapter of this thesis will deal more closely with republican allocations of blame for military and political miscalculations during the war, this chapter will not analyse detailed strategic and political allegations against Germany's wartime military leadership. It aims, rather, to assess how the republican press attempted to undermine Hindenburg and Ludendorff's political credibility by assessing their personal traits and failings. Due to his perceived role as the most influential military authority, Quartermaster-General Ludendorff was regarded as the military leader most responsible for Germany's military collapse.[391] Max von Baden's observation that the urgency of Ludendorff's request for an immediate armistice weakened Germany's bargaining power with the Entente, for example, clearly identified Ludendorff as the masterminded of Germany's defeat.[392] In order to obfuscate their responsibility for the armistice, the *OHL* subsequently attempted to hide their role in Germany's armistice request and Ludendorff

---

of German militarism see FES, NUR 1918 Undatiert III: *Den Heimgekehrten!* (n.p., 1918); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, SPD, 1919, Berlin: SPD, *Frauen Berlins, seid wach!* (Berlin, 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, USPD, 1921, Berlin: USPD, *Wähler und Wählerinnen!* (Berlin, 1921).

386 Chickering, *Imperial Germany*, pp. 71f; Mommsen, *War der Kaiser an allem schuld?*, p. 236.

387 Chickering, *Imperial Germany*, p. 74; Janßen, *Deutsche Geschichte*, p. 87; Andreas Dorpalen, *Hindenburg in der Geschichte der Weimarer Republik* (Berlin, Frankfurt, 1966), p. 19.

388 Chickering, *Imperial Germany*, p. 73; 'Frankfurt, 26. Juni' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 465 (26 June 1919); 'Hindenburg als Politiker. Der Präsidentschaftskandidat der Deutschen Volkspartei' *Vorwärts* 439 (28 August 1919).

389 Chickering, *Imperial* Germany, p. 74; Dorpalen, *Hindenburg*, p. 18; Pyta, *Hindenburg*, p. 328. 'Hindenburg will Ludendorff decken' *Vorwärts* 393 (4 August 1919); 'Hindenburgs Erklärung' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 578 (7 August 1919).

390 Chickering, *Imperial Germany*, pp. 74f; Dorpalen, *Hindenburg*, p. 18.

391 'Frankfurt, 2. Dezember' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 334 (2 December 1918); 'Ludendorffs Kriegserinnerungen' *Die Freiheit* 407 (25 August 1919); 'Ludendorffs verbrecherischer Größenwahn - Deutschlands Unglück' *Vorwärts* 342 (13 December 1918); Heinrich Ströbel, 'Die Verantwortlichen' *Die Weltbühne* 34 (14 August 1919), p. 183. For biographical information on Ströbel see Appendix I, pp. 337f.

392 'Aufzeichnung des Reichskanzlers Prinz Max von Baden, 16 Oktober 1918' in Michalka and Niedhart (eds.), *Deutsche Geschichte 1918-1933*, p. 11; also see 'Prinz Max zur Vorgeschichte der Revolution' *Vorwärts* 316 (16 November 1918).

changed his mind, promoting a military last-ditch defence once initial armistice negotiations had begun.[393] His declaration of 2 October 1918 that the army could not wait for another 48 hours, however, allowed the republican press to hold him responsible for the outcome of Germany's ill-fated wartime policies.[394]

In a well documented speech before the National Assembly introducing the new government's programme on 13 February 1919, Prime Minister Philipp Scheidemann publicly denounced Ludendorff as a 'clever gambler of the world war'.[395] This allegation implied that Ludendorff had not made wartime decisions in a rational, considered manner but had hazardously staked soldiers' lives and Germany's fate on the lost cause of absolute victory. Against right-wing protests from the floor, he argued that Ludendorff's armistice demand represented the bankruptcy of a system refusing to recognise the possibility of defeat.[396] As Wolfram Pyta has already noted in his excellent biography of Hindenburg, the republican side of the debate ensuing from Scheidemann's allegations subsequently constructed Ludendorff into a symbol representing the sins of the old regime.[397] Pyta, however, does not elaborate on the motivations for a distinct typisation of each military leader in republican propaganda.

Ludendorff was more suitable as a republican scapegoat for Germany's dire situation than Hindenburg. Unlike the latter, he had clearly expressed his disinclination to co-operate with the new regime by running away to Sweden during the revolution.[398] He was nevertheless equally disinclined to surrender his former position of power in Germany. In response to Scheidemann's allegation in the National Assembly, Ludendorff published a letter to President Ebert, announcing that his forthcoming memoirs would justify his actions.[399] He stressed that the information he could provide would be of utmost importance to the country he intended to continue serving.[400] In a letter to Scheidemann, Ludendorff subsequently argued that while he had remained heroically silent so far, Scheidemann's accusations had forced him to speak up, and vehemently demanded that Scheidemann should retract his accusations.[401] These attempts to give orders to the new government reflected a thinly-veiled threat that the openly anti-republican Ludendorff

---

393 Barth, *Dolchstosslegenden*, pp. 81-83; Dorpalen, *Hindenburg*, p. 29.

394 'Dokumente zum Waffenstillstand. Von der Niederlage zur Revolution' *Vorwärts* 388 (1 August 1919); 'Die Entstehung des deutschen Waffenstillstandsangebots' *Die Freiheit* 146 (27 March 1919); 'Frankfurt, 2. Dezember' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 334 (2 December 1918); 'Zur Geschichte des Waffenstillstandsangebots' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 169 (4 March 1919); Kurt Tucholsky, 'Schuldbuch' *Die Weltbühne* 36 (28 August 1919), pp. 250-255.

395 The original phrase Scheidemann uses is 'geniale[r] Hazardeur des Weltkrieges'. 'Das Programm der Reichsregierung' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 121 (14 February 1919). Also see Dorpalen, *Hindenburg*, p. 38; Pyta, *Hindenburg*, pp. 431f.

396 Ibid.

397 Pyta, *Hindenburg*, pp. 325, 352.

398 For republican evaluations of Ludendorff's flight to Sweden see 'Ludendorffs verbrecherischer Größenwahn - Deutschlands Unglück' *Vorwärts* 342 (13 December 1918); Kurt Tucholsky, 'Schuldbuch' *Die Weltbühne* 36 (28 August 1919), p. 253.

399 'Ludendorff an Ebert' *Vorwärts* 102 (25 February 1919).

400 Ibid.

401 'Briefwechsel zwischen Ludendorff und Scheidemann' *Vorwärts* 138 (16 March 1919).

would not simply sink into oblivion but intended to challenge the republic. Scheidemann, in turn, defended his statement, explaining that the term 'gambler' defined somebody willing to put everything on one card without considering the consequences should this card fail, which Ludendorff had done.[402] Although Scheidemann ultimately did not rise to Ludendorff's bait and refused to continue this dialogue, Ludendorff nevertheless remained a focus of the republican propaganda effort which defined the former military leader as the main perpetrator of Germany's military miscalculations.

Even before the publication of Ludendorff's memoirs, *Vorwärts* attempted to discredit their content by stressing that 'unsuccessful military leaders were never objective historians' and that, no matter what they wrote, they could never disprove that history had ultimately decided against them.[403] The newspaper consequently implied that the republican memory of Ludendorff and the *OHL* was irreversibly marked by defeat.[404] Subsequent allegations that any attempts to present himself in a better light by attacking the republic were thus based on lies were also common throughout republican propaganda.[405] The republican perception of both Ludendorff's responsibility for Germany's defeat and his lack of commitment to the truth were best illustrated in the satire supplement *Ulk*, which portrayed him in conversation with the muse of history. Asked by Clio what he was going to tell them at home now that he had lost the game of cards, Ludendorff confidently replies that he will 'give them a piece of [his] mind'.[406] More focused on the immediate political debate, the *Frankfurter Zeitung* explicitly attacked Ludendorff's attempt to blame the government for defeat. Denouncing his claim that he had been in favour of peace as somewhat naïve, the article stressed that the war had had already been lost at the time Ludendorff had considered peace.[407]

These press sources encapsulated the two most important characteristics of the republican assessment of Ludendorff: on one hand, he appeared as an impertinently authoritative leader, who failed to recognise that Germany's defeat had destroyed the wartime system in which he could manufacture truth through propaganda. On the other hand, he was portrayed as a coward, willing to shift the blame for his actions because he was too weak to face their consequences. In response to Ludendorff's attacks against SPD Defence Minister Gustav Noske in October 1919 a *Vorwärts* article 'Thersites Ludendorff' compared Ludendorff to ancient military leaders in order to demonstrate his negative

---

[402] Ibid.
[403] 'Ibid; 'Ludendorff an Ebert' *Vorwärts* 102 (25 February 1919).
[404] Also see 'Generalfeldmarschall' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 338 (9 May 1920).
[405] 'Der Volksbetrüger Ludendorff' *Die Freiheit* 319 (8 July 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DDP, Berlin, 1920: DDP, *Wer waren die Kriegsverlängerer und die falschen Siegespropheten?* (Berlin, 1920); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, SPD, 1918-19, o.O.: SPD, *Noch eine Gemeinheit der „Allgemeinen Zeitung"* (n.p., 1918/1919).
[406] Willibald Krain, 'Der Hasardeur' *Ulk* 10 (7 March 1919). See Illustration VI, p. 114. Ludendorff's alleged statement clearly referred to the 'stab in the back' legend and implied that its inherent allegations against the German people only intended to cover up Ludendorff's dangerous gamble. For biographical information on Krain see Appendix I, pp. 329f.
[407] 'Frankfurt, 2. Mai' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 325 (2 May 1919).

characteristics.[408] The analogy between Ludendorff and the reputedly ugly, cowardly, and impertinent Thersites condemned the brazenness of Ludendorff's propaganda. Although the article does not directly quote but merely alludes to Homer's Iliad, its headline clearly refers the reader to the following passage:

> [t]he rest now took their seats and kept to their own several places, but Thersites still went on wagging his unbridled tongue – a man of many words and those unseemly; a monger of sedition, a railer against all who were in authority, who cared not what he said [...][409]

This association of Ludendorff with the mythical Greek military leader who was reputedly assassinated for his impertinence implied that Ludendorff had failed to recognise his rightful place within the republic. The article additionally argued that ancient Roman military leaders 'threw themselves on their swords' when they were defeated, commenting sarcastically that the Germans would be 'satisfied if the dangerous gamblers of the world war would maintain their silence'.[410] Claiming that he had lost the right to speak, particularly against the republic, *Vorwärts* symbolically sentenced Ludendorff for his wartime crimes. Completing this character assassination, the republican press contended not merely that Ludendorff had not learned from the war experience, but also questioned the political and strategic soundness of his military decisions.[411] By disputing his military leadership qualities, republican propaganda tried to undermine Ludendorff's endeavours to regain a position of authority in the new state.

Press attempts to discredit the former military leadership also appropriated people's grievances regarding the war in order to underline their rational deconstruction of the military leaders' failures with popular emotional resentment against them. This tactic becomes particularly evident in a poem in *Vorwärts* which responded to Ludendorff's claim that he had not been aware of the Papal peace offer in 1917: [412]

---

[408] Bernhard Rausch, 'Thersites Ludendorff' *Vorwärts* 524 (13 October 1919). For biographical information on Rausch see Appendix I, p. 335.

[409] Homer, 'Iliad' in CD-ROM, *Great Poetry Classics* (California, 1984), Screen 32: 608.

[410] Bernhard Rausch, 'Thersites Ludendorff' *Vorwärts* 524 (13 October 1919). Emil Gumbel made a similar analogy when arguing in 1921 that the deficiencies of the German democracy were evident in the German failure to curtail the political role of military leaders leaders in the aftermath of a conflict as it had been custom in ancient Greece. See 'Die Männer von 1914. Zur Psychologie der öffentlichen Meinung in Deutschland (1921) in Christian Jansen, *Emil Julius Gumbel: Portrait eines Zivilisten* (Heidelberg, 1991), p. 206. For biographical information on Gumbel see Appendix I, pp. 327f.

[411] Ibid; 'Der Dolchstoß von vorne' *Die Freiheit* 54 (26 February 1920); 'Ludendorffs Hazardspiel. Deutsches Opfervolk sei eingedenk!' *Vorwärts* 286 (6 June 1920); 'Das Problem Ludendorff II' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 649 (2 September 1919); Kurt Tucholsky, 'Schuldbuch' *Die Weltbühne* 36 (28 August 1919), p. 253.

[412] 'Eine Erklärung Ludendorffs' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 548 (27 July 1919). Details of the Papal peace offer can be found in Wolfgang Steglich (ed.), *Die Friedenspolitik der Mittelmächte 1917/18* (Wiesbaden, 1964), pp. 117-231; Fritz Fischer, *Der Griff nach der Weltmacht. Die Kriegszielpolitik des kaiserlichen Deutschland 1914/18* (Düsseldorf, 1984), pp. 357-369. Fischer provides a counter-narrative to Ludendorff's post-war claims by arguing that the Quartermaster-General explicitly rejected Germany's renunciation of annexations in the Crown Council of 11 September 1917 which discussed Germany's response to the Papal peace offer. Ibid, pp. 364, 366.

'I don't know anything!' This is a great expression.
He was the maker, the man behind the wheel,
the stronghold of demagogues and beaters,
who threw hundreds of thousands into the fire...
and does not know anything.
You unfortunate people!

You poor cripples, miserable and torn apart,
You grey dead with bullets in your chest:
the man who used you in hundreds of battles
did not know anything. Did not know anything...
You believed...
You unfortunate people. [...]

From the sea to Switzerland – a single grave.
A people bound, on trial before the world.
What do you think, gracious master of the general staff?
He only shrugs his shoulders. 'I don't know!'
This is the answer.
Unfortunate people![413]

The poem appealed to the entire German nation to recognise that the man who had controlled the bodies and minds of the people, sent them into battles to be killed or crippled, had turned most of Europe into a graveyard, and was responsible for Germany's helplessness with regard to the peace settlement, was either a moron or a liar. It suggested that they had put their faith in somebody, who had either ignorantly played with their lives and their nation's fate or, alternatively, was now deceiving them again, thus implying that in order to learn from the war experience Germany had to reject its former leaders. Additionally the republican press denounced Ludendorff as a war profiteer for earning up to 20 million Reichsmark for his memoirs, insinuating that he had not merely brought defeat but was now also trying to derive a profit from the lost war.[414] *Vorwärts* particularly exploited this claim in two articles which reported that Ludendorff would donate the money to German war invalids and subsequently printed his denial of such intentions.[415] Considering that the sum of 20 million marks could have provided a yearly pension for 8818 severely disabled war invalids it can safely be assumed that such reports intended to direct people's anger and dissatisfaction against Ludendorff.[416]

---

[413] Paulchen, 'Ludendorff!' *Vorwärts* 379 (27 July 1919).

[414] The different articles quote divergent amounts regarding Ludendorff's alleged profit, ranging from an advance payment of 200 000 Reichsmark to a net profit of 20 million Reichsmark. These varying sums suggest that the propagandistic exploitation of the large amount rather than its factual correctness was prioritised. See 'Ludendorff als Revolutionsgewinnler' *Vorwärts* 407 (11 August 1919); 'Ludendorffs Kriegsgewinn' *Vorwärts* 195 (16 April 1919); Kurt Tucholsky, 'Ludendorff' *Die Freiheit* 167 (9 May 1920).

[415] 'Ludendorffs Hilfe für die Kriegskrüppel' *Vorwärts* 495 (27 September 1919); 'Ludendorff gibt nichts!' *Vorwärts* 498 (29 September 1919).

[416] An article detailing new pension regulations for war invalids from May 1920 notes that before the introduction of the new law 2268 Reichsmark per annum were the highest pension a severely disabled war invalid could receive. See 'Die Renten der Kriegsopfer' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 319 (1 May 1920).

The republican press also explored the fact that Ludendorff, like the Kaiser, had fled Germany in the early stages of revolutionary unrest.[417] Kurt Tucholsky particularly emphasised the Quartermaster-General's dishonourable act of fleeing 'when the revolution posed the only danger he ever had to face', implying that he was by no means a war hero.[418] The *Frankfurter Zeitung* commented that the military leaders' attempts to run away illustrated how 'small and pathetic the world's greatest have become out of fear for their lives', suggesting that they did not deserve to remain in power because they were simply not worthy of an elevated position.[419] After resigning as Prime Minister in opposition to Germany's decision to sign the Treaty of Versailles, Philipp Scheidemann also ridiculed the tendency of Germany's former leaders to leave Germany.[420] Responding to right-wing allegations that he owned a castle in Denmark, he sarcastically inquired in *Vorwärts* whether this aimed to imply that he had embezzled state money or whether the reactionary press could not imagine the end of a political career that did not involve deserting to a neutral castle.[421] Such comments suggested that republican propaganda did not choose Wilhelm and Ludendorff as emblematic representatives of the imperial German regime because they posed a serious danger to the new state, but because they did not. They were, in other words, politically dead. *Die Welt am Montag*, for example, stressed that it was far more effective to recognise that these individuals posed no danger because they had 'ultimately and for ever reached the lowest possible level' than to punish them out of desire for revenge, which would merely provide them with an opportunity for martyrdom.[422]

The political significance of the perceived desertion of Ludendorff and representatives of the monarchy becomes evident through comparison with the press assessment of Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg.[423] Although Hindenburg insisted, in response to accusations against Ludendorff, that military decisions had been made jointly by him and his Quartermaster-General, republican propaganda treated him with

---

[417] 'Frankfurt, 26. November' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 328 (26 November 1918). Although his postwar memoirs fail to mention this fact, General Ludendorff fled Germany for Denmark and Sweden on 15 November 1918. Having requested a false passport because he allegedly feared for his life, he only returned to Germany in February 1919 in order to begin his political crusade against the republic. See James Cavallie, *Ludendorff und Kapp in Schweden. Aus dem Leben zweier Verlierer* (Frankfurt, 1995), pp. 15-29, 94-100.

[418] Kurt Tucholsky, 'Ludendorff' *Die Freiheit* 167 (9 May 1920).

[419] 'Frankfurt, 26. November' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 328 (26 November 1918).

[420] In his memoirs Scheidemann, (who had vehemently advocated a rejection of the treaty), claims to have ended the pointless discussion whether or not the treaty should be signed by resigning and thus enabling the remaining SPD and Centre Party deputies to accept the peace settlement. After his resignation, Scheidemann left Germany for a vacation in Switzerland, returning to Germany to accept the position of mayor of Kassel. Philipp Scheidemann, *Memoiren eines Sozialdemokraten* (Dresden, 1928), pp. 371-374, 379, 386.

[421] Philipp Scheidemann, 'Mein Schloss in Dänemark' *Vorwärts* 284 (5 June 1919).

[422] Dr. Frosch, 'Das große Aufwaschen' *Die Welt am Montag* 53 (30 December 1918). For biographical information on Dr. Frosch see Appendix I, p. 326.

[423] Unlike Ludendorff, Paul von Hindenburg declared his willingness to co-operate with the new government and, upon Groener's initiative, remained in office after the revolution. See William J. Astore and Dennis E. Showalter, *Hindenburg. Icon of German Militarism* (Dulles, 2005), pp. 71-73.

significantly more respect.[424] The different perceptions of Hindenburg and Ludendorff in the republican press were most evident in a *Vorwärts* article describing Hindenburg as a typical officer at the front while depicting Ludendorff as an archetypal member of the general staff in the rear.[425] This distinction was a crucial indication for the uneven apportioning of public sympathy that the article wished to evoke for each respective military leader. The historian Robert Whalen has pointed out that during the entire war, only two Field Marshals had died, neither of them during active service at the front.[426] This death rate among high-ranking military commanders suggests that it was rather untypical for them to lead their troops into battle and that the attribution of characteristics associated with active service at the front to Hindenburg was purely polemic. The propagandistic intention of this depiction was particularly evident in the fact that it was also factually incorrect. While Ludendorff had led troops in the assault on Liège in 1914, Hindenburg never actively led soldiers into battle.[427]

Wolfram Pyta, in fact, stresses that the retired General was only chosen to command the Eighth Army because he was regarded as a suitable candidate to carry out representative duties without impeding Ludendorff's strategic decisions.[428] The historian furthermore argues that Hindenburg's strengths had not been military but political.[429] The attribution of respective soldierly characteristics to Hindenburg and Ludendorff has to be regarded as an important instrument of post-war propaganda rather than a reflection of wartime reality. In the immediate post-war period, republican war literature portrayed officers in the administrative units in the rear as decadent, debauched, and corrupt war profiteers.[430] This stereotypical prejudice immediately identified Ludendorff with very negative attributes, while Hindenburg was associated with the more soldierly qualities ascribed to officers at the front.[431] This distinction between the two former military leaders was upheld throughout the republican press, although Hindenburg himself actively

---

[424] While Wolfram Pyta depicts this republican concern from Hindenburg's point of view, arguing that his continued involvement in the demobilisation allowed him to consolidate his political position in the republic, Andreas Dorpalen highlights republican concerns that Hindenburg's departure would have left the troops in chaos. See Pyta, *Hindenburg*, pp. 335, 352f; Dorpalen, *Hindenburg*, pp. 23f.

[425] 'In Gemeinschaft mit Ludendorff' *Vorwärts* 591 (18 November 1919).

[426] Robert Weldon Whalen, *Bitter Wounds. German Victims of the Great War, 1914-1939* (Ithaca, London, 1984), p. 42.

[427] John Horne and Alan Kramer, *German atrocities, 1914: a history of denial* (New Haven, London, 2001), p. 81; Pyta, *Hindenburg*, particularly pp. 41-55, 99-113.

[428] Pyta, *Hindenburg*, pp. 44f.

[429] Ibid, p. 54; for a similar evaluation of Hindenburg's role see Dorpalen, *Hindenburg*, p. 18.

[430] Ther, "Humans are cheap and the bread is dear" in Jones, O'Brien, Schmidt-Supprian (eds.), *Untold War*, pp. 378f.

[431] Althogh, as noted in chapter 3, the negative depiction of officers did not make significant distinctions between officers at the front and in the administrative units in the rear, a limited amount of articles admitted that some officers at the front had done their duty in a satisfactory manner. See 'An den Herrn Verfasser der Militaria' *Die Weltbühne* 13 (28 March 1919), pp. 315-317; von einem Stabsoffizier, 'Das alte Heer - Offizierstypen' *Die Weltbühne* 6 (5 February 1920), pp. 174-179; Kurt Tucholsky, 'Militaria - Zur Erinnerung an den Ersten August 1914' *Die Weltbühne* 34 (14 August 1919), p. 190. Also see chapter 3, p. 151 FN 737.

opposed such categorisations, defending Ludendorff as a 'patriot' to whom he was still deeply devoted.[432]

Hindenburg's respected status in the new state was also evident from the fact that only the USPD organ *Die Freiheit* openly attacked him for declaring his solidarity with Ludendorff, alleging that he was equally as responsible for the war as his Quartermaster-General.[433] The newspaper was also the only republican publication to express concern with Hindenburg's continued role in the new state.[434] Already in late November 1918, an article in *Die Freiheit* attempted to counteract nationalist attempts to restore Hindenburg to political power by stressing that both Hindenburg and Ludendorff should not be seen as national heroes but as those solely responsible for the catastrophic armistice.[435] A few days later, the newspaper suggested that allowing Hindenburg to appear as a political figure in front of the returning soldiers could fuel a misguided glorification of his person and continued to warn against Hindenburg's counter-revolutionary political aspirations.[436]

Hellmut von Gerlach, on the other hand, argued in *Die Welt am Montag* that Hindenburg was by no means as dangerous as Ludendorff, because he was apolitical.[437] Commenting on Hindenburg's resignation in May 1919 the *Frankfurter Zeitung* also stressed that no honourable German could disregard Hindenburg's achievements, especially in the light of his willingness to continue serving the German nation after the revolution.[438] In spite of this relatively positive judgement, the article nevertheless criticised Hindenburg's limited understanding of the political situation and welcomed his resignation as a necessary symbolic departure from the values of the old regime.[439] Both *Vorwärts* and the *Frankfurter Zeitung* only followed *Die Freiheit's* lead in openly questioning Hindenburg's conduct when, in March 1920, Hindenburg's bid for presidency suggested that he was not entirely apolitical.[440] The tenor of most SPD and liberal allegations against Hindenburg, however, centred on his lack of political understanding rather than on his conduct during the war, and expressed concern that his good reputation

---

[432] Quote from 'Hindenburg and Scheidemann' *Vorwärts* 92 (19 February 1919).
[433] 'Hindenburg und Ludendorff' *Die Freiheit* 90 (19 February 1919). Andreas Dorpalen argues that the only criticism against Hindenburg was apparent in the press of the 'extreme left'. It is unclear whether he refers to *Die Freiheit* which reflected the moderate wing of the USPD or to the communist press. This thesis, however, regards the USPD publication and its critical evaluation of Hindenburg as part of the republican discourse. See Dorpalen, *Hindenburg*, p. 23.
[434] 'Die Hetze gegen die sozialistische Regierung' *Die Freiheit* 22 (27 November 1918); 'Hindenburgs neueste Proklamation' *Die Freiheit* 71 (23 December 1918); 'Militärische Anmaßungen' *Die Freiheit* 32 (2 December 1918).
[435] 'Die Hetze gegen die sozialistische Regierung' *Die Freiheit* 22 (27 November 1918).
[436] 'Hindenburg als Politiker' *Die Freiheit* 71 (23 December 1918); 'Hindenburg hält treu zu Ludendorff' *Die Freiheit* 58 (2 February 1919); 'Militärische Anmaßungen' *Die Freiheit* 32 (2 December 1918).
[437] Hellmut von Gerlach, 'Ludendorffs Vabanquespiel' *Die Welt am Montag* 8 (24 February 1919). For biographical information on Hellmut von Gerlach see Appendix I, p. 327.
[438] 'Ludendorff und Scheidemann' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 204 (17 March 1919).
[439] Ibid.
[440] 'Frankfurt, 8. März' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 182 (8 March 1920); 'Hindenburg als Reichspräsidentschaftskandidat der Rechten' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 180 (7 March 1920); 'Hindenburg Präsidentschaftskandidat' *Vorwärts* 123 (7 March 1920).

was exploited by the nationalists.[441] It is striking that this misconception also featured in historical biographies of Hindenburg: while Andreas Dorpalen, William J. Astore and Dennis Showalter still emphasized Hindenburg apolitical disposition in 1966, only Wolfram Pyta's recent study elaborated on the inherently political dimension of Hindenburg's self-representation.[442]

Although the republican press does not express this sentiment explicitly, its treatment of Hindenburg implies that the republic hoped to prevent Hindenburg from becoming a political force after the revolution. Recognising that, unlike Wilhelm and Ludendorff, he was still regarded as an honoured public figure, the press refrained from attacking Hindenburg too strongly in order to allow continuous co-operation and prevent the right from exploiting republican antagonism against a recognised war hero.[443] The republican focus on Hindenburg's soldierly qualities illustrated that republican propaganda recognised or shared public respect for the soldiers' achievements.[444] The newspapers' logical conclusion that his soldierly character made him naturally apolitical and thus politically inept, implied that his time as an influential German leader had passed with the end of the war.[445] Although the provisional government had accepted the offer of Ludendorff's successor General Wilhelm Groener that Hindenburg would remain in power to carry out the demobilisation, republican propaganda insinuated that his duties were to be confined to military matters.[446] Only *Die Freiheit* refused to subscribe to this view, upholding the conviction that Hindenburg had been involved in making political decisions during the war and continued to do so after, and against the revolution.[447]

---

[441] 'Diktatur Hindenburgs?' *Vorwärts* 326 (27 November 1918); 'Frankfurt, 8. März' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 182 (8 March 1920); 'Hindenburg als Politiker. Der Präsidentschaftskandidat der Deutschen Volkspartei' *Vorwärts* 439 (28 August 1919); 'Hindenburg Präsidentschaftskandidat' *Vorwärts* 123 (7 March 1920); Hellmut von Gerlach, 'Wer wird Reichspräsident?' *Die Welt am Montag* 47 (24 November 1919).

[442] Dorpalen, *Hindenburg*, p. 30; Astore and Showalter, *Icon of German Militarism*, pp. 83f; Pyta, *Hindenburg*, for example pp. 326, 353, 383, 386-389.

[443] The republican press failed to express the dangerous anti-republican potential inherent in continued tributes to Hindenburg. Their reluctance to criticise the former military leader arising from the hope to use his co-operation with the republic as poltical capital, however, does not justify Lars Langhans' claim that the *Vorwärts* was 'stunned by devotion and admiration for Hindenburg'. This assessment, which he bases on a single newspaper article, fails to consider the diverging and partly quite critical nuances which determined the socialist view of the former military leader. See 'Die Haltung der SPD zum Militär vom Waffenstillstand 1918 bis nach dem Kapp-Putsch im Spiegel des Vorwärts', Magister-Dissertation (Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn, 1993), p. 57.

[444] 'Frankfurt, 2. Dezember' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 334 (2 December 1918); 'Frankfurt, 2. Mai' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 325 (2 May 1919); 'Hindenburg' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 486 (4 July 1919); 'Hindenburg als Politiker. Der Präsidentschaftskandidat der Deutschen Volkspartei' *Vorwärts* 439 (28 August 1919); 'Hindenburg als Reichspräsidentschaftskandidat der Rechten' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 180 (7 March 1920); 'In Gemeinschaft mit Ludendorff' *Vorwärts* 591 (18 November 1919).

[445] 'Eine Erklärung Hindenburgs' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 860 (16 November 1919); 'Hindenburg als Politiker. Der Präsidentschaftskandidat der Deutschen Volkspartei' *Vorwärts* 439 (28 August 1919); 'Hindenburgs Erklärung' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 578 (7 August 1919); 'Platzhalter der Monarchie. Warum Hindenburg kandidieren soll' *Vorwärts* 129 (10 March 1920).

[446] Andreas Dorpalen, *Hindenburg*, p. 14. Wolfram Pyta's study argues that Hindenburg's intentions to challenge Friedrich Ebert's presidency was only prevented by the Kapp-Putsch in 1920. See Pyta, *Hindenburg*, pp. 450f.

[447] 'Hindenburg als Politiker' *Die Freiheit* 71 (23 December 1918); 'Hindenburg hält treu zu Ludendorff' *Die Freiheit* 58 (2 February 1919).

Although Hindenburg's depiction as an apolitical soldier was more likely to have been an attempt to undermine his political credibility rather than a complete misjudgement of the situation by SPD and DDP, his assessment as a threat to the democratic development of the republic was significantly more accurate.

This republican miscalculation challenges Boris Barth's claim that the 'Hindenburg-myth waned rapidly towards the end of the war' because it still influenced republican post-war propaganda.[448] The republican failure to distance its governing principles more explicitly from Hindenburg's wartime values ultimately contributed to the fact that in 1925 the idea of a 'monarchist Field Marshal as head of the German peace republic' did not seem as ridiculous to a significant number of the electorate as *Vorwärts* had described it as being in 1919.[449] The 'soldier' Hindenburg was elected as president of the German republic on 26 April 1925, in spite of the fact that a DNVP poster for the *Reichstag* elections had depicted him as a carved war memorial, behind Germany's wartime flag, a crown and a victor's laurel wreath – implying his and the party's commitment to both monarchy and wartime values.[450] This obvious paradox was facilitated by the republican failure to distance the new state from the former military leader by focusing on his responsibility for defeat in order to undermine his public admiration.

DISCREDITED POLITICIANS

The republican press defined the representatives of the old regime as inherently unable to comprehend and accept the democratic idea and therefore unsuitable to influence the construction of the republic. Depictions of the former elite as politically superfluous were justified by their alleged incompetence, but also implicitly inherent in definitions of the republican system. Individuals like Wilhelm II and Ludendorff could be written out of the republican design because they had held positions of power which ceased to exist after the revolution. Like Hindenburg, right-wing political parties who had, at least formally, accepted the principles of parliamentary democracy, however, could not as naturally be excluded from the Weimar Republic's political discourse.

In spite of their professed recognition of the democratic principle, right-wing parties DVP and DNVP were by no means supporters of Germany's parliamentary democracy.[451] A DNVP leaflet from 1919, for example, defined the party's view of democracy (which it

---

[448] Barth, *Dolchstosslegenden*, p. 555. For the perception of Hindenburg as a unifying symbol for all parties left of the USPD see Jesko von Hoegen, *Der Held von Tannenberg. Genese und Funktion des Hindenburg Mythos* (Cologne, Weimar, Vienna, 2007), pp. 234f.

[449] 'Hindenburg als Politiker. Der Präsidentschaftskandidat der Deutschen Volkspartei' *Vorwärts* 439 (28 August 1919).

[450] DNVP, 'Dolchstoß' (1924), in Arnold (ed.), *Anschläge*, p. 39.

[451] Siegmund Neumann, *Die Parteien der Weimarer Republik* (3, Stuttgart, Berlin, Cologne, Mainz, 1973), p. 61; Ulrich von Alemann, *Das Parteiensystem der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Bonn, 2000), p. 34.

tellingly associated with the democratic party DDP rather than the political system in which the nationalist party claimed to operate) thus:

> [w]ho ridiculed the German state institutions through decades of subversion and shook the sense for authority? - Democracy. [...]
> Who undermined German resistance during the war from within and fought the German will for victory to the limit? – Democracy.
> Who befuddled the German nation's brain with international and pacifist catchphrases and aided enemy intentions to violate [Germany]? - Democracy.
> Who encouraged and fostered any demagogy against army, officers, monarchy, and the forces of order? – Democracy.
> Who was [...] badly taken for a ride because they trusted the enemies and enthusiastically supported Wilson? – Democracy.
> Who carries a large part of responsibility for the misery that befell the German people? – Democracy. [...][452]

This election leaflet, aimed at alienating bourgeois voters from supporting the genuinely republican parties, illustrated that the reactionary parties were merely prepared to tolerate the new system for their own advantage.[453] In addition, these accusations also implied that the former pillars of the old regime were not prepared to surrender their wartime position of power without resistance. The passage has been quoted at such length in order to exemplify the scope and diversity of reactionary allegations against the democratic state, which the leaflet complemented by attacks specifically targeting SPD politics.[454]

These challenges to the conduct and the ideals of the republican parties suggested that the anti-republican agenda of the parties representing Germany's former elite could not be ignored. Although *Vorwärts*, for example, ridiculed the DNVP chairman Oskar Hergt's announcement that the party intended to restore the monarchy through constitutional means, the republican assessment of the DVP, the DNVP and the Pan-German League suggested that their continued agitation was seen as a danger to Germany's political development.[455] Focusing on right-wing orientation towards the past rather than the future, republican articles stressed that in spite of their foundation as

---

[452] BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DNVP, 1919, o.O.: DNVP, *Deutscher Bürger: Wie wählst Du?* (n.p., 1919).
[453] Martin Vogt, 'Parteien in der Weimarer Republik' in Karl Dietrich Bracher, Manfred Funke and Hans-Adolf Jacobsen (eds.), *Die Weimarer Republik 1918-1933* (Düsseldorf, 1987), pp. 143-145.
[454] BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DNVP, 1919, o.O.: DNVP, *Deutscher Bürger: Wie wählst Du?* (n.p., 1919). For a random selection of other accusations against the revolution, the provisional government and the Weimar coalition see Flugblätter 1918-1933, DDP, o.O: DNVP, *Mitbürger! Deutsche Männer und Frauen!* (n.p., 1918/1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DNVP, 1918, o.O.: DNVP, *Wahlaufruf der Deutschnationalen Volkspartei* (n.p., 1918); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DNVP, 1919, o.O.: DNVP, *Der Weg ins Deutsche Glück* (n.p., 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DVP, Berlin, 1919: DVP, *Erwachet deutsche Männer! Erwachet deutsche Frauen!* (Berlin, 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DVP, Berlin, 1919: DVP, *Was trennt uns von der Deutschen Demokratischen Partei?* (Berlin, 1919).
[455] 'Hergt prophezeit wieder' *Vorwärts* 492 (26 September 1919). Also see 'Deutsche Vaterlandspartei' *Die Weltbühne* 43 (24 October 1918), p. 400; 'Die "Deutsche Volkspartei" als Feindin der Demokratie' *Vorwärts* 357 (29 December 1918); 'Der deutschnationale Gummiknüppel' *Die Freiheit* 331 (14 July 1919); 'Deutschnationale Volkspartei' *Vorwärts* 25-28 (16 January 1919); 'Die Deutschnationalen' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 364 (19 May 1920); 'Die Deutschnationalen' *Die Freiheit* 192 (26 May 1920); 'Konservative Lärmmacher' *Vorwärts* 113 (3 March 1919); 'Major Ohlberg' *Die Weltbühne* 5 (30 January 1919), p. 124; 'Neue Umtriebe' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 467 (27 June 1919); Willibald Krain, 'Kusch!' *Ulk* 19 (9 May 1919); Theodor Leister, 'Ihr Sündenregister' *Ulk* 22 (28 May 1920).

republican parties after the revolution, the DVP and the DNVP had 'changed nothing but their name'.[456] Republican propaganda thus implied that the DVP and the DNVP had not learned from the tragedy of the war and were still committed to the wartime ideology of Germany's former political elite.

Most republican newspaper articles and leaflets criticised the wartime transgressions of the DVP and the DNVP in varying degrees of detail. A DDP election appeal in *Ulk*, for example, caricatured the full range of republican counter-accusations against right-wing parties and explicitly appealed to voters to remember the sins of those representing the old regime when they were now trying to seduce the German people into voting for them.[457] The sequence of images depicting the wartime conduct of nationalist parties, their involvement in the Kapp putsch and the predicted future under a right-wing government, focuses particularly on demagogy, cowardice, and greed as the parties' most distinguishing features.[458] Preceding the 1920 elections, a poem in *Vorwärts* took a similar line in depicting the DNVP *Reichstag* candidate Count Cuno von Westarp as a fawning and cursing drummer, followed by war profiteers and warmongers, who now pretended to have turned into angels.[459] Appropriating popular grievances regarding the war experience, republican propaganda stylised the nationalist right into a classic political stereotype.

Like the 'stab in the back' legend, the republican stereotype of the right contained allegations of betrayal, treachery, and profiteering. In republican discourse, reactionary parties were primarily defined as architects of Germany's war propaganda who had welcomed war in 1914, withheld its true nature from Germany's population, and evoked a false hope in victorious peace which ultimately led to defeat.[460] Taking advantage of the devastating impact of the armistice on German morale, (to which the continuation of official predictions of victory right up until the moment of Germany's imminent military collapse had contributed significantly), republican propaganda emphasized the disparity between reality and the official information with which the German population had been provided throughout the war.[461] On a basic level, the republican focus on wartime propaganda as one of the most discrediting skeletons in the DVP and the DNVP cupboards simply amplified people's perception that they had been wilfully deceived.[462] This equation

---

[456] 'Deutschnationale Volkspartei' *Vorwärts* 25-28 (16 January 1919); 'Frankfurt, 16. Dezember' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 42 (16 December 1919); 'Konservative Kriegserklärung' *Vorwärts* 338 (5 July 1919).
[457] Theodor Leister, 'Ihr Sündenregister' *Ulk* 22 (28 May 1920). See Illustration VII, p. 115.
[458] Ibid.
[459] Schlaraff, 'Trommelschlag von rechts' *Vorwärts* 282 (4 June 1920).
[460] For example 'Bande!' *Die Freiheit* 352 (26 July 1919); 'Ursachen des deutschen Zusammenbruchs' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 322 (20 November 1918); 'Wahrheitsunterdrücker an die Front!' *Vorwärts* 7 (4 January 1919).
[461] For the shocking impact of the armistice see Mommsen, *Die verspielte Freiheit,* pp. 23f; Ullrich, *Ende des Hohenzollernreiches*, p. 193, Eberhard Kolb, *Der Frieden von Versailles* (Munich, 2005), pp. 28f.
[462] 'Bande!' *Die Freiheit* 352 (26 July 1919); 'Das Treiben der Reaktion' *Vorwärts* 154 (25 March 1919); 'Wahrheitsunterdrücker an die Front!' *Vorwärts* 7 (4 January 1919); 'Wie war das möglich?'

of deceptive war propaganda with the republican right-wing parties offered them as a punching ball for people's frustration that their disappointed hopes - for which they had sacrificed a great deal - had never been anything more than a mirage.

Republican depictions of right-wing war propaganda as immoral were sanctioned by narratives recounting the experience of soldiers at the front, as articles and pamphlets dealing with the issue recorded soldiers' fierce antipathy towards attempts to glorify the conflict.[463] Resenting the patriotic war rhetoric of heroism and sacrifice, which they could not reconcile with their own experience of combat, the soldiers' depictions of the conflict in republican war narratives showed that nationalist propaganda did not reflect their point of view.[464] Instead, the soldiers portrayed regarded propagandists as responsible for prolonging their own suffering and the deprivation of their families at the home front.[465] The soldiers' perceived disillusionment with nationalist agitation lent legitimacy to the republican claim that the right-wing's war propaganda merited their exclusion from the political stage. Their rejection of chauvinist values also suggested, that rather than feeling betrayed by the home front, both they and war-weary civilians shared the same values. This clearly confronted the 'stab in the back' myth by identifying right-wing propagandists rather than the home front as having destroyed the soldiers' morale by prolonging the conflict.[466] The stereotype of right-wing warmongers was repeatedly evoked in republican propaganda in order to prove that their values were not compatible with those of the republic.[467]

In suggesting that the demagogues who called for sacrifice during the war had not been prepared to act upon their own principles, republican propaganda added an even more emotional appeal to the allegations of warmongering. Even before the revolution, pacifist publications made general allegations defining war propagandists as 'home front strategists' or 'home front warriors'.[468] Kurt Tucholsky in *Die Weltbühne*, for example,

---

Frankfurter Zeitung 465 (26 June 1919); Lothar Persius, 'Die Unheilstifter' *Die Weltbühne* 46 (14 November 1918), pp. 459-464.

[463] Lehmann-Russbüldt, *Warum?*, pp. 11f; 'Die Kriegsberichterstatter' *Die Weltbühne* 17 (28 April 1921), pp. 466f; 'Nicolai' *Die Weltbühne* 49 (5 December 1918), pp. 531f; 'Es war einmal!' *Die Welt am Montag* 7 (14 February 1921); Paul Zech, 'Der See Genezareth' *Vorwärts* 335 (6 December 1918); Dr. Frosch, 'Heimkrieger' *Die Welt am Montag* 31 (1 August 1921). For biographical information on Lehmann-Russbüldt see Appendix I, p. 331.

[464] Ther, "Humans are cheap and the bread is dear" in Jones, O'Brien, Schmidt-Supprian (eds.), *Untold War*, pp. 369-371. For biographical information on Paul Zech see Appendix I, pp. 339f.

[465] Paul Zech, 'Der See Genezareth' *Vorwärts* 335 (6 December 1918); Dr. Frosch, 'Heimkrieger' *Die Welt am Montag* 31 (1 August 1921); 'Franz T.' *Die Weltbühne* 6 (6 February 1919), p. 147.

[466] 'Der militärische Zusammenbruch' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 419 (8 June 1919); 'Nicolai' *Die Weltbühne* 49 (5 December 1918), p. 531; 'Ursachen des deutschen Zusammenbruchs' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 322 (20 November 1918).

[467] For example 'Wer hat die Front erdolcht? Dokumente zur deutschen Niederlage' *Die Freiheit* 184 (20 May 1920); Dr. J. P. Buß, 'Die geistigen Stützen des alten Systems' *Vorwärts* 496 (28 September 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DDP, Berlin, 1919: DDP, *Brief an einen deutschnationalen Wähler* (Berlin, 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, SPD, 1918-19, o.O.: SPD, *Die Wölfe im Schafspelz* (Berlin, 1918/1919).

[468] These terms were common republican insults to define armchair politicians who were settling important matters of the war from the safety of the home front and without a clue about the reality of warfare. See Altro, 'Helden' *Die Welt am Montag* (4 November 1918), Also see 'Drückeberger

alleged that those calling for more soldiers to be sent into the war only ever referred to others as the ones being sent, while they remained in Germany feasting on black market goods and enjoying their social position.[469] A satirical poem in *Die Welt am Montag* jokingly evoked the expression of war propagandists' 'heroism' in a similar manner:

> [r]etreat and flee now, the storm is breaking.
> Now you're in for it, Mister Frenchman!
> The home front strategists are coming [...]
>
> The editors, who fought
> with gluepot and scissors so far,
> are now giving their last bit of blood for the empire
> with daring courage.
> [...] And then the war profiteers.
>
> They are now generously
> sacrificing their profits.
> They gladly offer their dosh,
> and willingly shoulder their gun.
> And then those who were retained by the home front.
>
> The shirkers, old and young,
> are glowing with enthusiasm.
> They have saved their strength,
> until the business became dicey.
> Now they are going hard at it!
>
> Tschingbumm, Tschingbumm, hurray, hurray!
> The genuine/right-wing heroes are coming!
> The enemies are shaken by cold horror.
> They are shaking and running away [...][470]

This poem, printed in the editorial section of the weekly publication, had two distinctly political functions. Firstly, it judged the old regime's spokesmen in the same manner in which the republican press later assessed Wilhelm - namely as individuals who were not prepared to live what they preached. The implication that this allegation could therefore be extended from top to bottom of the former empire's political hierarchy suggested that not just individuals but rather the entire system was affected by moral rot and consequently politically discredited. Like Tucholsky's poem, summarised above, it also aimed to deflect acute right-wing demands for a last-ditch-defence by stressing that demands for more sacrifices were only made by those who were in no danger of having to heed their own call.

After the revolution, such allegations of shirking were made in a far more personal manner in order to undermine individual politicians and journalists' careers. *Vorwärts*, for example, simply disregarded Count zu Reventlow's laboriously gathered evidence -

---

und Maulhelden' *Die Welt am Montag* (2 February 1920), Dr. Frosch, 'Heimkrieger' *Die Welt am Montag* 31 (1 August 1921), 'Preußische Presse' *Die Weltbühne* 24 (29 May 1919), pp. 647f.

[469] Kurt Tucholsky, 'Das Volk steht auf' *Die Weltbühne* 44 (31 October 1918), p. 419.

[470] 'Helden' *Die Welt am Montag* 44 (4 November 1918). The phrase 'rechte Helden' is ambiguous in German, it can mean both 'right-wing heroes' and - with a sarcastic undertone - 'genuine heroes'.

'proving' that the army had been undermined by socialist propaganda - with the argument that the Pan-German officer would have known better had he actually been at the front where he should have been.[471] The SPD newspaper also attacked DNVP deputies Paul Fuhrmann and Count von Westarp for attacking war invalids and holding pacifists responsible for defeat after carefully evading military duty themselves.[472] These personal attacks on the war conduct of right-wing public figures aimed to neutralise those individuals whose attacks on the republic were particularly prominent and thus most damaging to the republic.

Within the theoretical construct of the national community during wartime (in which soldierly sacrifice and patriotism were upheld as the noblest ideals) the accusation of war profiteering was an insult insinuating severe moral decline.[473] Republican propaganda leaflets thus identified the old elite as war propagandists motivated by greed to profit from the conflict.[474] This allegation was considered a particularly condemning one, as republican propaganda generally stressed that those who had profited from the war had done so by exploiting soldiers' and workers' suffering and sacrifices.[475] The stigmatisation inherent in this accusation validated republican demands that the public sphere needed to be cleansed of right-wing forces with a 'taste for war' and no regard for the people who had bled and hungered for 4 years.[476] The continuous relevance attributed to the accusation of war profiteering beyond the armistice was evident in a poem in *Vorwärts* which outlined that war profiteers promoted a war of revenge because they were dissatisfied that sufficient food provisions spoilt their prices.[477] In this manner, war supporters during and after the war were characterised as a danger to the German nation.

By assuming that the war was predominantly driven by the greed of the nationalist elite against the will and the genuine interest of the people, this republican discourse created a division between those who had directed the bloodshed and those who had been forced to endure it. This logic allowed both soldiers and civilians to identify themselves against a common internal enemy, which was personified in the former elite, now

---

471 'Zwei unglückliche Verteidiger' *Vorwärts* 342 (7 July 1919). Also see 'Heimkriegers Wutgekreisch. Hinter-Frontler aber kein Feigling' *Vorwärts* 344 (8 July 1919).

472 'Drückeberger und Heimkrieger' *Vorwärts* 646 (18 December 1919); 'Heimkriegers Klage' *Vorwärts* 650 (20 December 1919).

473 Wolfram Wette, '"Reichstag und 'Kriegsgewinnlerei" (1916-1918). Die Anfänge parlamentarischer Rüstungskontrolle in Deutschland' in Reiner Steinweg (ed.), *Lehren aus der Geschichte? Historische Friedensforschung* (Frankfurt, 1990), p. 117; Magnus Hirschfeld and Andreas Gaspar (eds.), *Sittengeschichte des Ersten Weltkrieges* (2, Hanau, n. d. but 1964), pp. 305f.

474 BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DDP, Berlin, 1919: DDP, *Nichts hinzugelernt und alles vergessen!* (Berlin, 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DDP, Berlin, 1920: DDP, *Die Parteien des Zusammenbruchs - ihr Sündenregister* (Berlin, 1920); FES, 6/FLBL005876: SPD, *Deutsch-nationale Lügenmanöver!* (n.p., 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, USPD, 1921, Berlin: USPD, *Wähler und Wählerinnen!* (Berlin, 1921).

475 BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, USPD, 1919, Berlin: USPD, *An alle Privatangestellten!* (Berlin, 1919); FES, NUR 1919 Undatiert II USPD, *Männer und Frauen in Stadt und Land!* (Hamburg, 1919). Also see Jürgen Kocka, *Klassengesellschaft im Krieg. Deutsche Sozialgeschichte 1914-1918* (Göttingen, 1973), p. 45.

476 BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, SPD, 1920, Berlin: SPD, *Der Feind steht rechts!* (Berlin, 1920).

477 Schlaraff, 'Der Kriegsgewinnler klagt' *Vorwärts* 384 (30 July 1919)

represented by Germany's right-wing parties. Accusations of profiteering - which targeted the allegation that the republic had betrayed the soldiers - thus created a counter-myth intended to limit the political influence of the republic's opponents by identifying them as the enemy within. Such allegations, however, were not unique to republican sources. On the contrary, they were also used by Pan-German propaganda to discredit the 'Jewish SPD', by DVP and DNVP propaganda to discredit the Centre Party and the DDP and by USPD propaganda to discredit the DDP, while a KPD publication alleged that the SPD had aided the war profiteers during the conflict.[478] This multi-purpose use of the accusation of war profiteering suggests that it was perceived to be as a strong emotional propaganda tool, likely to influence the outcome of the elections. Its even-handed attribution to all political parties, however, also indicates that the allegation's adaptability to fit any potential opponent obstructed republican attempts to establish it as a right-wing stereotype.

Additional republican allegations against the post-revolutionary right-wing parties focused on the fact that not only did the DVP and DNVP uphold their wartime convictions, but also continued their destructive propaganda efforts after the revolution.[479] Some articles focused on the negative international implications of this propaganda affecting both armistice and peace, while others deconstructed the allegations against the republic on a factual basis.[480] The republican perception of right-wing propaganda unanimously argued that the political rhetoric of the right was merely a continuation of their wartime propaganda and therefore intrinsically untrue. *Vorwärts*, for example, criticised that the DNVP chairman Oskar Hergt was still allowed to 'present big speeches' in the Prussian parliament after having claimed that the US would not get involved in the war because their soldiers could neither swim nor fly.[481] The assumption of continued right-wing deception allowed the republican press to disregard any right-wing attacks on the republic as attempts by those responsible for Germany's misery to save their own skin.[482]

Perceptions of the political right as permanently marked by their moral failures during the war, coupled with their limited success in the election to the National Assembly

---

[478] 'Neue Demokratie – alter Liberalismus' *Die Freiheit* 14 (22 November 1918); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, Antisemitismus: Deutschvölkischer Bund, *Von der Hohenzollern- zur Judenherrschaft* (Hamburg; BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DNVP, 1919, o.O.: DNVP, *Deutsche Krieger!* (n.p., 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DVP, Berlin, 1920: DVP, *Wahlspiegel* (Berlin, 1920); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, KPD, 1920: KPD, *Arbeiter und Arbeiterinnen!* (n.p., 1920); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, KPD, 1919, o.O.: KPD, *Die neuen Enthüllungen. Haltet den Dieb* (n.p., 1919).

[479] 'Hergt prophezeit wieder' *Vorwärts* 492 (26 September 1919); 'Morgen Preußenwahl!' *Vorwärts* 46 (25 January 1919); 'Ollivier II' *Vorwärts* 138 (16 March 1919); 'Der Volksbetrüger Ludendorff' *Die Freiheit* 319 (8 July 1919); 'Der Waffenstillstand verlängert' *Die Freiheit* 85 (17 February 1919).

[480] 'Der Waffenstillstand verlängert' *Die Freiheit* 85 (17 February 1919); 'Der Ruf nach der Gegenrevolution' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 424 (11 June 1919); 'Wer hat die Front erdolcht? Dokumente zur deutschen Niederlage' *Die Freiheit* 184 (20 May 1920).

[481] 'Hergt prophezeit wieder' *Vorwärts* 492 (26 September 1919).

[482] For example 'Der militärische Zusammenbruch' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 419 (8 June 1919); 'Ursachen des deutschen Zusammenbruchs' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 322 (20 November 1918); 'Wer hat die Front erdolcht? Dokumente zur deutschen Niederlage' *Die Freiheit* 184 (20 May 1920); Victor Schiff, 'Alldeutsches Bangen' *Vorwärts* 508 (4 October 1919). For biographical information on Schiff see Appendix I, p. 336.

in January 1919, and initially resulted in the assumption that these forces had eliminated themselves from political power.[483] Yet a number of publications noted that the persistent German belief in authority, as well as political naivety, could motivate people to continue believing right-wing propaganda lies.[484] For those citizens who were not convinced that the right-wing parties had thoroughly undermined their claim to leadership through the outcome of the war, republican propaganda evoked the horror scenarios that would follow the election of a right-wing government. Apart from warnings that the Allies would refuse to co-operate with a reactionary government, republican propaganda predicted that it would also throw Germany into the misery of a new war.[485] Prior to the elections to the National Assembly in January 1919, a USPD leaflet summarised this prospect by claiming that 'voting for the DNVP would be voting for one's own butcher'.[486]

This republican stereotype of the political right was similar to the 'stab in the back' myth, in so far as it aimed to discredit political opponents by claiming that they had betrayed the German people. The formulaic portrayal of shirking, war profiteering right-wing demagogues, however, was not as simple, one-dimensional or immediately visually accessible as the nationalist image of the Bolshevik deserter raising a knife behind a German soldier's back.[487] The fact that Nazi propaganda later reinterpreted the stereotype of the war profiteer, created to represent their nationalist predecessors, into an anti-Semitic (and by their definition anti-republican) caricature, illustrates that republican propaganda did not sufficiently establish their formula as exclusively attributable to Germany's former political elite.[488] One possible explanation for this phenomenon could be that the right-wing 'stab in the back' accusations, based on the presumption that a German victory would have been possible, were more in tune with Germany's wartime ideology and therefore more immediately accessible to the people.[489] It is also conceivable, however, that in the immediate post-war period, people more acutely sought explanations

---

[483] The two parties DVP and DNVP only gained 15% of votes in this election. See Kolb, *Weimar*, p. 194. Also see 'Eberts Rede' *Vorwärts* 69 (5 February 1919); 'Nach verlorener Schlacht' *Vorwärts* 384 (30 July 1919).

[484] 'Frankfurt, 13. Februar' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 118 (13 February 1920); Georg Metzler, 'Die verruchte Lüge' *Die Weltbühne* 2 (9 January 1919), pp. 36f.

[485] Ibid, 'Neue Ludendorff-Demonstration' *Vorwärts* 604 (26 November 1919); Dr. J. P. Buß, 'Die geistigen Stützen des alten Systems' *Vorwärts* 496 (28 September 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DDP, o.D, o.O: DDP, *Die Wahrheit!* (n.p., n.d.); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DDP, Berlin, 1920: DDP, *Wen wählen wir?* (Berlin, 1920); FES, N 252, Nachlass Wilhelm Dittmann (from RZNG, FONDS 215, OPIS 1, 196/45): SPD, *Frauen, ihr dürft nicht vergessen!* (Berlin, n.d.); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, USPD, 1920, Berlin: USPD, *Wir und die Anderen!* (Berlin, 1920).

[486] BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, USPD, 1919, Berlin: USPD, *Vor der Entscheidung!* (Berlin, 1919).

[487] Hessisches Landesmuseum Darmstadt, *Politische Plakate der Weimarer Republik 1918-1933* (Darmstadt, 1980), p. 67, Illustration 49.

[488] Antisemitic National Socialist propaganda successfully appropriated the democratic image of the war profiteer to represent Jewish capitalism. A 1933 NSDAP poster, for example, portrays a Jewish capitalist with exactly the same characteristics that a DDP poster in 1920 used to depict the right-wing parties. See DDP, 'Gegen Diktatur von rechts und links' (1920) in Friedrich Arnold (ed.), *Anschläge. Politische Plakate in Deutschland 1900 - 1970* (Frankfurt, Vienna, Zurich, 1979), p. 32; Gerhard Paul, *Aufstand der Bilder. Die NS-Propaganda vor 1933* (Bonn, 1990), p. 81.

[489] Metzler promotes a similar argument in an attempt to explain people's refusal to acknowledge Germany's defeat. See 'Die verruchte Lüge' *Die Weltbühne* 2 (9 January 1919), pp. 35f.

for Germany's defeat – which the 'stab in the back' myth claimed to provide – rather than reminders of wartime grievances.

REPUBLICAN GOVERNING LEGITIMACY

While republican publications portrayed a rather cohesive image of the old regime's leading representatives, definitions of governing legitimacy among republican parties proved far more complex. Of the range of parties defined as republican within the parameters of this analysis, only the SPD could rely on a long-standing political tradition and an established core of electoral support.[490] The more radical pacifist creed of the socialist splinter party USPD - founded in 1917 - on the other hand, could not reach a broad political base under Germany's restrictive wartime culture.[491] As the only one of the analysed parties founded after the revolution, the liberal DDP was also forced to establish a distinctively republican profile after the revolution.[492] For USPD and DDP, the elections to the National Assembly represented the first chance to establish and determine their political role in the Weimar Republic. As a logical consequence, the post-revolutionary electoral contest among republican parties was shaped by political rivalries.[493] Like their attempts to discredit the political representatives of the monarchy, the republican parties' battle for authority was also fought on the basis of political attacks based on each party's wartime conduct.

As early as the aftermath of the constitutional reforms in October 1918, both *Die Weltbühne* and the *Frankfurter Zeitung* demanded that neither reactionaries nor 'agitators of hatred', but those who had advocated a just peace even at the height of Germany's military success, should represent the nation.[494] Party political considerations determining which individuals and parties should be regarded as discredited by their conduct during the war, however, varied widely. Recognising the importance of each party's wartime policies in the republican discourse of the Weimar Republic, all parties attempted, as part of their self-representation, to justify their own particular wartime

---

[490] Lehnert, *Sozialdemokratie*, p. 256.

[491] Hellmut von Gerlach, 'Die große Lügenzeit' *Die Welt am Montag* 33 (18 August 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, USPD, 1919, Berlin: USPD, *Gegen die Lügenpest!* (Berlin, 1919); Siegfried Weinberg, 'Wie sie wüteten, Kriegserlebnisse aus der Froschperspektive' *Die Freiheit* 132 (19 March 1919). Also see Prager, *Geschichte der USPD*, pp. 144f, 171, 183.

[492] Lothar Albertin, *Liberalismus und Demokratie am Anfang der Weimarer Republik. Eine vergleichende Analyse der Deutschen Demokratischen Partei und der Deutschen Volkspartei* (Düsseldorf, 1972), pp. 54, 57; Hartmut Schustereit, *Linksliberalismus und Sozialdemokratie in der Weimarer Republik* (Düsseldorf, 1975), pp. 39f; Vogt, 'Parteien' in Bracher, Funke and Jacobsen (eds.), *Weimarer Republik*, p. 142.

[493] Lehnert, *Sozialdemokratie*, pp. 254, 256, 259f. This antagonism was further aggravated by socialist and liberal party splits which, according to Andreas Wirsching, prevented political pragmatism and compromise. See Wirsching, *Die Weimarer Republik*, p. 17.

[494] 'Die Kaiserfrage' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 308 (6 November 1918); Robert Breuer, 'Das Ergebnis' *Die Weltbühne* 41 (10 October 1918), p. 327; Alfons Goldschmidt, 'Reinigung' *Die Weltbühne* 45 (7 November 1918), p. 444; Walter Schmidt, 'Reventlow' *Die Weltbühne* 45 (7 November 1918), p. 438. For biographical information on Goldschmidt see Appendix I, p. 327.

conduct. Among republican parties, the DDP, which was joined by members of the liberal Progressives and the left-wing of the National Liberals, was considered as most closely linked to the wartime policies of the old regime.[495] The wartime conduct of some of their members consequently forced the newly-founded liberal DDP to address their wartime legacy.[496] Commenting on the party's foundation, the *Frankfurter Zeitung* urged the new party to replace the old leaders who were no longer trusted by the people.[497] A speaker at a DDP meeting in late November subsequently stressed in an appeal to Wilson that its exclusion of those representatives who had agitated for annexations and unrestricted U-Boat warfare proved the party's critical view of its own wartime legacy.[498]

Concerned with distancing the Democratic Party from the partly questionable war policies of its predecessors and in order to prove its commitment to the new republic, the DDP-affiliated *Frankfurter Zeitung* argued that only those who had remained untarnished by the policies of the old regime should join the revolutionary government.[499] In attempting to dissociate the party from the chauvinist policies of the old regime, DDP press and propaganda were notably concerned with uncovering and denouncing the ideological continuity between those responsible for Germany's wartime policies and republican right-wing parties.[500] Appealing to the same bourgeois circles as the DVP and

---

[495] Larry Eugene Jones, *German Liberalism and the Dissolution of the Weimar Party System 1918-1933* (Chapel Hill and London, 1988), pp. 16-19. Fear of being associated with Germany's wartime ideals was particularly evident in its refusal to accept members who had a history of annexationist agitation. See Albertin, *Liberalismus und Demokratie*, pp. 60f, 63f.

[496] Bruce B. Frye had described the war aims of the Progressives as 'moderate annexationism', suggesting that they initially refused to renounce German territorial interests in Belgium and upheld considerable territorial demands in the East. See *Liberal Democrats in the Weimar Republic. The History of the German Democratic Party and the German State Party* (Carbondale and Edwardsville, 1985), pp. 22f, 27f; also Albertin, *Liberalismus und Demokratie*, pp. 60f, 63f. For DDP attempts to confront their parties' wartime conduct see 'Die Deutsche Demokratische Partei - Eine Kundgebung an Wilson' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 331 (29 November 1918); 'Frankfurt, 16 November' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 318 (16 November 1918).

[497] 'Frankfurt, 16 November' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 318 (16 November 1918).

[498] 'Die Deutsche Demokratische Partei - Eine Kundgebung an Wilson' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 331 (29 November 1918).

[499] 'Frankfurt, 26. November' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 328 (26 November 1918).

[500] BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DDP, Berlin, 1919: DDP, *Brief an einen deutschnationalen Wähler* (Berlin, 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DDP, Berlin, 1920: DDP, *Demokraten heraus!* (Berlin, 1920); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DDP, o.D, o.O: DDP, *Die Deutsche Demokratische Partei* (n.p., n.d.); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DDP, o.O: DDP, *Deutsche Frauen!* (n.p., n.d.); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DDP, Berlin, o.D.: DDP, *Das deutsche Volk ist antinational!* (Berlin, n.d.); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DDP, A-D, Braunschweig, 1918: DDP, *Handwerker, Gewerbetreibende, Kaufleute!* (Braunschweig, 1918); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DDP, o.O,: DDP, *Kriegshetzer!* (n.p., n.d.); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DDP, Berlin, 1919: DDP, *Nichts hinzugelernt und alles vergessen!* (Berlin, 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DDP, Berlin, 1920: DDP, *Die Parteien des Zusammenbruchs - ihr Sündenregister* (Berlin, 1920); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DDP, o.O: DDP, *Die schiefe Ebene oder Wer hatte Interesse am Krieg?* (n.p., n.d.); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DDP, E-J, Hannover, 1920: DDP, *Viel Feind, viel Ehr!* (Hannover, 1920); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DDP, Berlin, 1920: DDP, *Was verdankt das deutsche Volk den Politikern der Rechtsparteien, der Deutschnationalen und der Deutschen Volkspartei?* (Berlin, 1920); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DDP, Berlin, 1920: DDP, *Wen wählen wir?* (Berlin, 1920); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DDP, Berlin, 1920: DDP, *Wer waren die Kriegsverlängerer und die falschen Siegespropheten?* (Berlin, 1920); FES, Januar 1919 IV DDP, *Wie wähle ich?* (Berlin, 1919); FES, 6/FLBL005070: DDP, *Wie wähle ich?* (Potsdam, Berlin, 1919); FES,

the DNVP, DDP propaganda criticised the wartime conduct of the post-revolutionary right most forcefully, because they were most likely to address the party's potential pool of voters. It is evident from the post-war propaganda of all republican parties that, in addition to focusing on the wartime conduct of Germany's former elite, each party paid most attention to the wartime record of the political forces perceived as their most likely political rivals. Although both SPD and USPD propaganda also argued that the DDP was discredited for supporting the wartime policies of the old regime, the two socialist parties mainly focused on each other as main political antagonists.[501]

USPD propaganda clearly and repeatedly reinforced the notion that it was the only republican party that was not discredited by its wartime policies because it had fought 'systematically and resolutely for international peace regardless of persecution and unspeakable sacrifices during the war'.[502] The historian Detlev Lehnert links this USPD antagonism to the SPD's wartime policies to the recent memory of the party split while denouncing their demand to cleanse the political sphere from those discredited by the war as illusionary.[503] Lehnert, however, does not elaborate on the political repercussions of the inter-socialist dispute regarding the war. Although *Vorwärts* printed two counter-allegations accusing a majority of later USPD politicians of also having voted for the war credits in 1914, USPD propaganda severely attacked the SPD for supporting the war credits throughout the conflict.[504] Disregarding the former conduct of their own members as of the SPD, the Independent Socialists represented themselves as the only real opposition against a block of war supporters.[505] A significant proportion of their own claim to leadership was thus staked on attempting to discredit the SPD by defining their socialist competitor as an integral part of the war machinery.[506] This was particularly evident in the fact that *Die Freiheit* coupled many accusations against Germany's former regime with a

---

NUR 1919 Januar I: DDP, *Wo ist die Tat?* (Berlin, 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DDP, Berlin, 1919: DDP, *Der Zusammenbruch der deutschnationalen (konservativen) Partei* (Berlin, 1919).

501 'Neue Demokratie – alter Liberalismus' *Die Freiheit* 14 (22 November 1918); FES, 6/FLBL005034: SPD, *Das Handwerk und die Nationalversammlung* (Berlin, 1919). Detlev Lehnert suggests that SPD election propaganda particularly criticised the DDP as a potential rival. Lehnert's analysis, however, focuses on party political antagonism with regard to economic strategies which this chapter does not take into account. Regarding the war, criticism against the USPD was far more common than against the DDP in SPD propaganda. See Lehnert, *Sozialdemokratie*, pp. 259f.

502 BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, USPD, 1919, Berlin: USPD, *An alle Privatangestellten!* (Berlin, 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, USPD, 1919, Berlin: USPD, *Vor der Entscheidung!* (Berlin, 1919).

503 Lehnert, *Sozialdemokratie*, p. 154.

504 'Keine Geschichtsfälschung' *Die Freiheit* 34 (3 December 1918); 'Die Kriegssozialisten' *Die Freiheit* 176 (15 May 1920); 'Die Schuldfrage und unsere Haltung' *Vorwärts* 382 (29 July 1919); 'Die Unabhängigen' *Vorwärts* 140 (17 March 1919); Hugo Haase, 'Der Zusammenbruch der Kriegspolitik' *Die Freiheit* 366 (3 August 1919). For biographical information on Haase see Appendix I, p. 328.

505 Rudolf Breitscheid, 'Die Schuldigen' *Die Freiheit* 182 (15 April 1919); FES, 6/FLBL005481: Ernst Däumig, Hugo Haase et al., *An das werktätige Volk Deutschlands!* (Berlin, 1918); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, USPD, 1919, Berlin: USPD, *Auf in den Wahlkampf für die Unabhängige Sozialdemokratische Partei!* (Berlin, 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, USPD, 1919, Berlin: USPD, *An das werktätige Volk Gross-Berlins!* (Berlin, 1919).

506 Lehnert, *Sozialdemokratie*, p. 256.

tirade detailing the co-responsibility of the SPD for Germany's misery.[507] In a pamphlet dealing with the SPD's alleged crimes during the war, which was lauded in *Die Freiheit*, USPD politician Heinrich Ströbel summarised the evaluation of SPD wartime policies thus:

> [n]ot only did the SPD put its wartime policies on the wrong track from the beginning of the war: no, over 3 full years it committed mistake upon mistake, crime upon crime against socialism and democracy out of nationalist blindness. [...] Half of the [post-war provisional] government was made up of socialists who had, up to the last moment, administered strengthening potions to the old regime when it was lying in convulsions. Over 4 years, the majority socialists had supported all war credits, spread the legend of a defensive war, glossed over any German war atrocity and was only ruthless in defending the national unity against protest from Independent parliamentarians, editors, and striking crowds of workers.[508]

Just like republican rhetoric with regard to the right-wing parties, USPD propaganda in general and Ströbel's pamphlet in particular portrayed revolutionary SPD policies as a continuation of their wartime conduct.[509] Stressing that their conduct during the war had left them unfit to govern by definition of the party's' own original principles, Ströbel linked the SPD's coalition with the army to the 'anti-revolutionary, militarist thinking and feeling in which it had been caught as a consequence of its war policies'.[510] Ströbel as well as *Die Freiheit* thus implied that the significance of their rival's conduct during the war was not a matter of the past but had serious repercussions for the nation's present and future.[511]

Due to their more secure position of power, SPD propaganda was initially less antagonistic yet more condescending towards their socialist rival, suggesting that they were welcome to rejoin the SPD.[512] *Vorwärts* initially expressed the hope that the end of the war had abolished the reasons for the split between the two socialist factions.[513] The same article, however, commented that USPD attempts to demonise the SPD obstructed reunification. As a result of this antagonism, the SPD was not only forced to justify its war policies, but was also pushed into a position in which any critical evaluation of Germany's wartime policies would inevitably result in an accusation based on their own role during the war.[514] USPD allegations forced SPD propaganda to create a narrative of their war conduct that allowed the party to legitimise its support for the war credits while

---

[507]For example 'Die Kriegssozialisten' *Die Freiheit* 176 (15 May 1920); 'Ungesühnte Schuld' *Die Freiheit* 206 (3 June 1920). 'Die Entlarvung der Schuldigen: Das Weltverbrechen, Urkunden über den Ursprung des Krieges' *Die Freiheit* 18 (25 November 1918).

[508] Heinrich Ströbel, *Die Kriegsschuld der Rechtssozialisten* (Berlin, 1919), pp. 40, 63.

[509] Ibid; 'Auf zur Revanche' *Die Freiheit* 202 (28 April 1919); 'Katzenjammer' *Die Freiheit* 371 (6 August 1919); 'Die Lügenpest' *Die Freiheit* 409 (26 August 1919).

[510] Ströbel, *Kriegsschuld*, pp. 40, 63.

[511] Ibid, p. 66; 'Keine Geschichtsfälschung' *Die Freiheit* 34 (3 December 1918).

[512] 'Der erste Tag' *Vorwärts* 346 (17 December 1918); 'Die letzte Zuflucht der Unabhängigen' *Vorwärts* 23 (14 January 1919); 'Regierung der vereinigten Sozialdemokraten!' *Vorwärts* 311 (11 November 1918); 'Versammlung der Unabhängigen' *Vorwärts* 334 (5 December 1918).

[513] 'Die Strömungen im Sozialismus' *Vorwärts* 315 (15 November 1918).

[514] Horne and Kramer, *German Atrocities*, p. 339.

reinforcing its continuous commitment to peace. *Vorwärts* consequently stressed the necessity of defending Germany against the Allied will for destruction, while upholding the notion that the SPD had always simultaneously demanded a just peace.[515] USPD allegations against the majority socialists thus motivated the latter to revive wartime values, (such as support for war as a patriotic duty or alleged Allied intentions to destroy Germany), in order to stabilise their political position within the republic.

In response to criticism of their wartime conduct, the SPD also launched similar attacks on the USPD, accusing the Independent Socialists of being responsible for the disunity and weakness of German socialism, of misrepresenting individual SPD politicians' propaganda excesses as the political position of the party, and of being motivated by hatred of the SPD rather than by political ideals.[516] This combative relationship between the two socialist factions deteriorated to such an extent that *Die Freiheit* maintained that the SPD 'was not only an accomplice of the war parties but carried the main bulk of the responsibility for the continuation of the war' while *Vorwärts* accused the USPD of being bad losers, turncoats without principles and an obstruction in government.[517] This increasing antagonism between the socialist factions obstructed the creation of constructive political policies. The *Frankfurter Zeitung* aptly expressed this state of affairs by arguing that it would be more constructive to focus on Germany's desperate international situation regarding the peace settlement than to continue with petty bickering among the socialist parties.[518] The strong rivalry between SPD and USPD also prevented the creation of a clear-cut definition of which political forces should be regarded as an integral part of the republican design. In identifying each other as the principal enemy, the socialist parties diverted political attention away from the reactionary parties, allowing them to restore their political power more easily.

It is neither possible nor useful to assess even a fraction of inter-republican attacks on individual politicians in the context of this thesis, as this approach would demand more detailed attention than a comparative analysis of war related propaganda could provide. The republican press evaluation of Centre Party politician Matthias Erzberger, however, provides a compelling case study, illustrating the potentially devastating impact of such accusations on the political discourse of the Weimar Republic.[519] Although the Centre Party has not been defined as a republican party within the parameters of this study,

---

[515] 'Ja, wir haben die Kredite bewilligt!' *Vorwärts* 333 (4 December 1918); 'Die Kriegspolitik der Sozialdemokratie' *Vorwärts* 248 (15 May 1920); 'Wähler! Wählerinnen!' *Vorwärts* 1 (1 January 1919).

[516] 'Die Kriegspolitik der Sozialdemokratie' *Vorwärts* 248 (15 May 1920); 'Der Ruf nach Einigung' *Vorwärts* 74 (10 February 1919); 'Die Unabhängigen' *Vorwärts* 140 (17 March 1919); 'Die Uneinigkeit hat eine sozialistische Majorität vereitelt' *Vorwärts* 70 (7 February 1919). Rainer Sammet notes that SPD allegations accusing the USPD of having broken the unity of the German working class were used in a similar manner as the 'stab in the back' myth. None of the articles referred to above, however, link the problems arising from the socialist disunity to defeat, but only criticised that the party split obstructed the political implementation of socialist goals. See Sammet, *"Dolchstoss"*, pp. 265f.

[517] 'Keine Geschichtsfälschung' *Die Freiheit* 34 (3 December 1918); 'Die Unabhängigen' *Vorwärts* 140 (17 March 1919).

[518] 'Agitation' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 407 (4 June 1919).

[519] For biographical information on Erzberger see Appendix I, p. 325.

Erzberger, (who was Germany's main representative in the armistice negotiations, supported Germany's acceptance of the peace terms and defended the republic against right-wing attack), was described as a convinced democrat by the historian Klaus Epstein.[520] In spite of his willingness to take on the arduous task of representing Germany at the armistice negotiations, Erzberger was confronted not merely with predictable right-wing accusation holding him responsible for both the armistice and the peace settlement, but also had to face significant republican opposition.[521]

The republican allegations against Erzberger were as varied as the political intentions behind them. *Die Freiheit*, for example, repeatedly declared that Erzberger, discredited by his support for excessive war aims during the conflict, would not be trusted by the Allies and would thus prevent an acceptable peace settlement if he represented the republic on an international level.[522] This USPD stance reflected the party's claim to be the only political force in Germany legitimised to represent the republican because they had not been discredited by their conduct during the war. The SPD had no interest in supporting the USPD allegations against Erzberger, because similar allegations targeted SPD politicians like Scheidemann and Eduard David.[523] Yet *Vorwärts* did not initially defend Erzberger against such accusations from the left.[524] Rather, a SPD leaflet stressed that Erzberger's commitment to the *Reichstag* peace resolution in 1917 was merely opportunism, aimed at rescuing his party's reputation.[525] This line of argument clearly

---

[520] Klaus Epstein, *Matthias Erzberger und das Dilemma der deutschen Demokratie* (Frankfurt, Berlin, Vienna, 1976), p. 446. In its introduction this study questions the Centre Party's enthusiastic republicanism without denying its commitment to democratic values. The definition of Erzberger, who represented the party's moderate wing, as a 'convinced democrat' does not therefore invalidate the assumption that the Catholic Centre Party only grudgingly accepted the political change in 1918. For reasons why the Centre Party press was considered beyond the parameters of this analysis see Introduction pp. 23ff.

[521] BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DNVP, 1920: DNVP, *Kundgebung der Nichtwähler!* (n.p., 1920).

[522] 'Gegen Eisner und Kautsky' *Die Freiheit* 25 (28 November 1918); 'Weg mit den Kompromittierten' *Die Freiheit* 24 (28 November 1918); 'Zur Psychologie des Auslandes – Solf und Erzberger sind unmöglich' *Die Freiheit* 37 (5 December 1918). For an excellent analysis of Erzberger's political activity and the gradual development of his image in the press towards that of a political scapegoat for the Treaty of Versailles see Fulda, *Press and Politics*, pp. 45-63. Although he notes that the antagonism towards Erzberger also extended into republican circles, he does not analyse the republican depiction of Erzberger as systematically as the 'partisan' right-wing focus on his political activity. In defining the antagonism against Erzberger as partisan, however, Fulda disregards his own evidence of republican opinion against him. Ibid, pp. 50, 52, 55.

[523] 'Eisners Rede im Vollzugsrat' *Die Freiheit* 22 (27 November 1918); 'Neue Männer ins Auswärtige Amt' *Die Freiheit* 22 (27 November 1918); Johannes Fischart, 'Politiker und Publizisten - Kurt Eisner' *Die Weltbühne* 2 (9 January 1919), p. 33; Hellmut von Gerlach, 'Die Lügenernte' *Die Welt am Montag* 7 (17 February 1919); Georg Metzler, 'Eiserne Stirnen' *Die Weltbühne* 11 (6 March 1919), p. 248.

[524] 'Der bayerische A.- und S.-Rat gegen Solf und Erzberger' *Vorwärts* 337 (8 December 1918); 'Bayern gegen Solf' *Vorwärts* 327 (28 November 1918); 'Die Krise im Auswärtigen Amt' *Vorwärts* 328 (29 November 1918).

[525] FES, NUR 1918 Dezember I SPD, *Die klerikale Hetze während des Krieges* (Berlin, 1919). The *Reichstag* peace resolution of 1917 was a declaration of the SPD, the Centre Party and the liberal Progressive People's Party appealing for a reconciliatory peace and Germany's rejection of territorial annexations. The declaration, however, did not have the desired effect because its rhetoric still contained belligerent elements and Reich Chancellor Michaelis did not genuinely support it. Wilhelm Ribbhegge, *Frieden für Europa. Die Politik der deutschen Reichstagsmehrheit 1917-18* (Berlin, 1988), pp. 182-189. Rudolf Morsey's summary of the Centre Party in fact describes Erzberger's commitment to the peace resolution as motivated by political pragmatism

functioned as election propaganda, intending to prevent the Centre Party from utilising their commitment to peace in 1917 to rally support for the elections to the National Assembly. While the SPD was prepared to let Erzberger represent the republic in the politically damaging armistice negotiations, it had no interest in defending his reputation during the early months of the republic. In the same timeframe, the *Frankfurter Zeitung* initially defended Erzberger, suggesting that if he was to be regarded as discredited only very few could not be and stressing the individual's genuine ability to change.[526] This view of Erzberger reflected the DDP's own position, in that it also needed to claim this right for a number of its own representatives in order to escape the stigmatisation of politicians like Friedrich Naumann or Friedrich von Payer as representatives of the old regime.[527]

After the renewal of the armistice in February 1919, however, the liberal publication bitterly attacked Erzberger for not sufficiently defending Germany's interests against Allied demands.[528] In the same context, *Die Freiheit* accused him of representing Germany alternately by grovelling too much or being too aggressive, while *Vorwärts*, in the wake of the January unrest and rising antagonism between the two socialist factions, finally defended him against USPD allegations.[529] In July 1919 Erzberger - in response to constant attacks from the right, which held him responsible for the harsh armistice conditions, Germany's acceptance of the peace, and opposed his proposed tax reforms - attacked the former imperial government for failing to follow up a papal offer to initiate peace negotiations in 1917.[530] In the subsequent hail of right-wing allegations against Erzberger, which resulted in a libel trial against the former imperial Vice Chancellor and DNVP deputy Karl Helfferich, the republican press finally took Erzberger's side.[531] Only a number of articles in *Die Welt am Montag*, however, defended Erzberger unreservedly, depicting him as one of Germany's few reformed, pragmatic and courageous statesmen while portraying Helfferich as thoroughly discredited by his support for the U-Boat campaign in 1917.[532] All other publications qualified their support for Erzberger by

---

and opposition to the SPD rather than ideological commitment to peace. See Rudolf Morsey, *Die Deutsche Zentrumspartei 1917-1923* (Düsseldorf, 1966), p. 61.

[526] 'Frankfurt, 26. November' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 328 (26 November 1918).

[527] For accusations against DDP politicians see Georg Metzler, 'Eiserne Stirnen' *Die Weltbühne* 11 (6 March 1919), p. 247; Olf, 'Nationalversammlung' *Die Weltbühne* 9 (20 February 1919), pp. 195f.

[528] 'Verteidigung Erzbergers' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 117 (13 February 1919). Although the article prints Matthias Erzberger's justification for his conduct during the armistice negotiations, the subsequent editorial commentary severely criticises him.

[529] 'Erzbergers Bericht in Weimar' *Vorwärts* 89 (18 February 1919); 'Der Schleier wird gelüftet' *Vorwärts* 378 (26 July 1919); 'Der Waffenstillstand verlängert' *Die Freiheit* 85 (17 February 1919). For a historical overview of accusations against Erzberger and his self-defence in the National Assembly, see Wolfgang Ruge, *Matthias Erzberger* (East Berlin, 1976), pp. 109f.

[530] 'Die Enthüllungen Erzbergers' *Die Freiheit* 351 (26 July 1919); 'Der Friedensschritt des Papstes' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 549 (27 July 1919).

[531] 'Erzberger' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 543 (25 July 1919); 'Frankfurt, 30. Juli' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 557 (30 July 1919); 'Helfferich und Erzberger' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 615 (21 August 1919); 'Die Juli-Resolution vor Gericht' *Die Freiheit* 63 (2 March 1920); 'Kesseltreiben' *Vorwärts* 398 (6 August 1919); Hellmut von Gerlach, 'Erzberger' *Die Welt am Montag* 37 (15 September 1919).

[532] Hellmut von Gerlach, 'Erzberger' *Die Welt am Montag* 37 (15 September 1919); Hellmut von Gerlach, 'Held Helfferich' *Die Welt am Montag* 10 (8 March 1920); Hellmut von Gerlach, 'Prozeß

questioning his political and moral integrity. This lack of genuine support from republican parties ultimately allowed Helfferich to turn the libel case against himself into a political assassination of Erzberger, who was subsequently forced to resign from his position as Minister of Finance.[533] Republican reluctance to counteract right-wing demagogy against Erzberger more decisively furthermore allowed the right-wing press to defame him in such a manner that *Die Freiheit's* warning in June 1919, that Erzberger would be assassinated like Liebknecht and Luxemburg, came true when he was murdered on 26 August 1921.[534]

Republican antagonism towards Erzberger based on his wartime conduct exemplified the republican dilemma that arose from the need to redefine the political parameters of the new German state. The lack of legitimacy for any one party, arising out of the political uncertainty that followed the armistice request and reactionary attacks on the provisional government, elevated the German war experience to a decisive marker of moral credibility. Seizing upon the most prominent popular grievances in relation to the war, republican propaganda stylised individual representatives of the old regime, like Wilhelm II and Ludendorff, into symbols of its moral collapse. The stereotype attributed to the monarchy's representatives - which was applied to all levels of political hierarchy from the Kaiser to chauvinist politicians - particularly focused on demagogy, cowardice and profiteering as the main characteristics disqualifying both individuals and parties from determining the moral or political framework of the republic. The allegation that these political forces had failed to alter their political convictions as a consequence of the war suggested that they were discredited as political and moral leaders. This counter-myth to the 'stab in the back' accusation illustrated that republican propaganda by no means underestimated the propagandist potential of the war experience in determining the political discourse of the Weimar Republic.

In spite of its uniformly condemnatory assessment of Wilhelm II, Ludendorff, and Germany's anti-democratic right-wing organisations, republican propaganda ultimately failed to undermine their influence on Weimar politics. Although Wilhelm never again gained any position of power, Ludendorff and political reactionaries gained nation-wide notoriety through their role in the Kapp Putsch, the Hitler Putsch, and the assassinations

---

Erzberger-Helfferich: das Grabgeläut der Demokratie' *Die Welt am Montag* 9 (1 March 1920). Initially wartime Secretary of State Karl Helfferich had rejected demands for an unrestricted U-Boat campaign in February 1916, arguing that its implementation would be more harmful to Germany than its effects would be for England, thus advising against employing it as a means of warfare. In January 1917, however, he changed his mind and fully supported its implementation. See Willibald Gutsche et. al. (eds.), *Deutschland im Ersten Weltkrieg. Band 2: Januar 1915-Oktober 1917* (Leipzig, 2004), pp. 299, 451; Epstein, *Matthias Erzberger*, p. 182.

533 Epstein, *Matthias Erzberger*, p. 411.

534 'Die Hetze gegen Erzberger' *Die Freiheit* 298 (26 June 1919). When Erzberger was close to resuming his political career in August 1921, rehabilitated by a tax office inquiry which followed the Helfferich trial, he was assassinated by two former *Freikorps* members of the Ehrhardt Brigade who claimed to have acted upon orders of the counter-revolutionary Organisation Consul. See Epstein, *Matthias Erzberger*, pp. 429-431, 434f.

of several prominent republicans like the Minister of Finance Matthias Erzberger and Foreign Minister Walther Rathenau.[535] Although they lacked mass support, which was evident in the failure of both putsch attempts, continued right-wing agitation was, at least to some extent, assisted by a republican failure to define the right more clearly as the internal enemy of the republic. Inter-republican attacks, motivated by party-political competition for electoral support, for example, obstructed the definition of Germany's former elite as the main enemy of the new state and diverted public attention away from the wartime failures of the old regime.

SPD attempts to justify their own conduct during the war in response to USPD allegations demonstrate that the antagonism between the socialist factions also contributed to a republican failure to create an understanding of republican governing legitimacy dissociated from the values of the old regime. The use of concepts taken from wartime ideology in order to establish republican legitimacy to govern revived these concepts as politically acceptable. This was particularly evident in the republican reluctance to undermine the political integrity of the war hero Hindenburg, which ultimately helped him to restore his power in a state he resented. As with the case of Erzberger, the republican parties proved generally incapable of consolidating their interests and differences sufficiently to prioritise republican before party-political interests.

[535] Peukert, *The Weimar Republic*, pp. 68f, 73f; Kolb, *Weimar*, pp. 36f, 44f, 48f. For biographical information on Rathenau see Appendix I, p. 335.

Illustration V: Propagandistic Images of Wilhelm II

1. French Postcard: Seek and you will find[536]



[One calf's head , one pig's head, eight skulls, one skeleton, a woman carrying an eagle, a stork, the Kaiser of Austria, a woman carrying a grenade, the head of a German officer, Prussian heads, one Gorgon, one witch, a saw-sabre, two brushes, sausages, chamber pot, etc., etc., etc.]

---

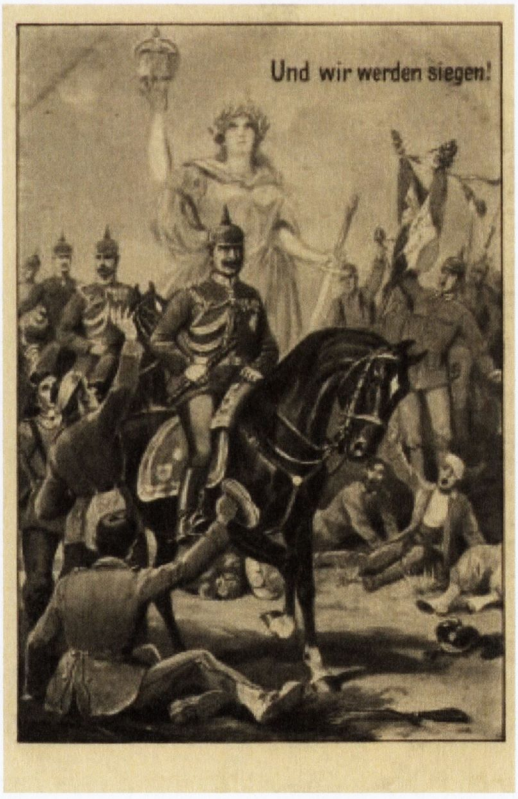
536 Reproduced in: Elisabeth von Hagenow, 'Mit Gott für König, Volk und Vaterland. Die Bildpostkarte als Massen- und Bekenntnismedium' in Raoul Zühlke (ed.), *Bildpropaganda im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Hamburg, 2000), p. 166.

2. Russian poster ridiculing Wilhelm's image as a mighty leader[537]



[I want to be Napoleon ...]

3. German postcard of Wilhelm riding along the front line [538]



[And we will win!]

---

[537] 'Ich will Napoleon sein...'(Moscow, 1914) Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin, Plakate, Inventar Nummer P. 95, 225.
[538] 'Und wir werden siegen 1914/1918' in Digitale Bibliothek, *Der Erste Weltkrieg*, p. 1322.

Illustration VI: The Gambler[539]



Clio: 'Well, Erich, you have lost the game! What will you tell them at home now?'
- 'I will give my people a piece of my mind!'

[539] Willibald Krain, 'Der Hasardeur' *Ulk* 10 (7 March 1919).

Illustration VII: Their catalogue of sins[540]

[German voters, look closely at those around Gräfe and Stresemann and remember that DVP and DNVP are the same!]



[Who withheld [...] all freedom from the people? Who would only support payment of duties and alms in the form of liquor? Who continued to threaten and talk us into the war? Who silenced and deceived us once the storm had come upon us? When did the hordes of profiteers and black marketeers become fat? Who wildly agitated for the unrestricted U-Boat warfare on a daily basis? Who wanted to convulse with laughter because Americans could neither fly nor swim? Who fled and hid when the building collapsed? Who putsched with Lüttwitz, Kapp and his comrades when the wounds were almost closed? Who spends millions on half of the press to win voters' support? Who would lead us into new misery and darkness should they be elected again? DVP and DNVP! Go, German and remember this during the elections!]

---

[540] Theodor Leister, 'Ihr Sündenregister' *Ulk* 22 (28 May 1920).

CHAPTER 3: ALLOCATING BLAME

The insecurity of the republican foundation period and popular resentment arising out of Germany's unexpected defeat made allocations of blame for Germany's post-war misery a central theme in political discourse.[541] Diametrically opposed attributions of responsibility for the outbreak of hostilities, Germany's wartime politics and its military defeat created fiercely debated political controversies. Historiography dealing with the legacy of the First World War generally focuses on war guilt and on the 'stab in the back' legend as key elements of this political debate.[542] This chapter will also concentrate on these themes as case studies in order to establish how discourse aimed at demarcating the war's political legacy for Germany also served to define the political identity of the republic.

The complexity of these political debates and their relevance for the republican narrative of the legacy of the war only become apparent if they are contextualised within the framework of wider political discourse. Michael Dreyer's and Oliver Lembcke's excellent monograph *Die deutsche Diskussion über die Kriegsschuldfrage 1918/19* provides a comprehensive analysis of the war guilt debate. It does not, however, specifically focus on the republican treatment of the war guilt question, but examines newspapers representing Germany's entire political landscape ranging from the communist *Rote Fahne* to the *Deutsche Tageszeitung*, which was close to the DNVP.[543] In order to avoid repeating its central findings the following chapter will not provide a detailed narrative of the war guilt debate, but will concentrate rather on the key conflicts of interest that prevented the allocation of war guilt from becoming a constructive republican weapon against the reactionary aspirations of Germany's former elite.

The biased nature of the newspaper sources prohibits using them to reconstruct the question of Germany's pre-war and wartime responsibility accurately, which is therefore not a central concern of this investigation. Rather, it will examine why republican propaganda did not translate the recognition that only a factual evaluation of the former elite's misconduct could limit their influence within the republic into political policy.[544] This study will particularly focus on the disparity between domestic and foreign policy

---

[541] The significance of this issue in republican discourse is evident in the fact that almost 20% of the 3,626 newspaper articles analysed within this thesis focus on allocating blame for Germany's wartime miscalculations and its military defeat.

[542] See for example Barth, *Dolchstosslegenden*; Michael Dreyer and Oliver Lembcke, *Die deutsche Diskussion um die Kriegsschuldfrage 1918/19* (Berlin, 1993); Heinemann, *Die verdrängte Niederlage*; Herwig, 'Clio deceived' in Wilson (ed.), *Collective Memory*; Kramer, 'Der Umgang mit der Schuld' in Papenfuß and Schieder (eds.), *Deutsche Umbrüche*, pp. 77-96; Gerd Krumeich, 'Die Dolchstoßlegende' in Etienne François and Hagen Schulze (eds.), *Deutsche Erinnerungsorte* (Munich, 2001), pp. 585-599; Sammet, *"Dolchstoss"*.

[543] According to Kaaren Moores, the *Deutsche Tageszeitung* was not directly affiliated but closely linked with the DNVP. See *Presse und Meinungsklima*, p. 37.

[544] For example 'Frankfurt, 28. November' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 330 (28 November 1918); 'Scheidemann gegen reaktionäre Treibereien' *Vorwärts* 158 (27 March 1919); Georg Metzler, 'Die verruchte Lüge' *Die Weltbühne* 2 (9 January 1919), p. 37. For biographical information on Metzler and Scheidemann see Appendix I, pp. 332, 336.

concerns regarding the war guilt question which prevented republican discourse from establishing a constructive narrative of German war guilt and from dissociating the political reasoning of the republic from Germany's wartime ideology. In failing to recognise the ideological impact of the war guilt question on the identity of the Weimar Republic, republican discourse encouraged a culture of denial which ultimately undermined its own legitimacy.

As a second case study, this chapter will evaluate allegations attributing responsibility for Germany's defeat to individuals and parties. These were of crucial importance in the post-war political discourse, because the military collapse affected the people more immediately than questions regarding Germany's wartime politics.[545] With the benefit of hindsight on its significant role in the rise of National Socialist ideology, the historiography of this political debate largely focuses on the 'stab in the back' myth as the predominant explanation for Germany's military collapse in 1918.[546] With the exception of Rainer Sammet's study, however, none of the major works on the 'stab in the back' legend considers similar constructs within the republican narrative of defeat.[547] Although Sammet outlines many of the main 'left-wing' explanations for defeat also discussed in this study, he does not elaborate on their political function and impact beyond the intention to undermine the traditional 'stab in the back' allegation.[548] In order to address this analytical desideratum of Weimar historiography, this chapter will assess the diverse republican counter-allegations to the 'stab in the back' myth which intended to stabilise the republic. Furthermore, it aims to evaluate the genesis and development of the most frequent republican explanations for defeat in order to establish how these projected a political blueprint for the new state.

CASE STUDY 1: WAR GUILT

---

545 Although Rainer Sammet's description of the devastation impact of the news of Germany's defeat on a sample of prominent Germans does not necessarily reflect its impact on the German population, it appears plausible that defeat came as a shock to many Germans. See Sammet, *"Dolchstoss"*, pp. 54-57.

546 Barth, *Dolchstosslegenden*; Krumeich, 'Dolchstoßlegende' in François and Schulze (eds.), *Erinnerungsorte*; Sammet, *"Dolchstoss"*.

547 Sammet, *"Dolchstoss"*, pp. 176-188, 259-268. The close points of contact between Sammet's analysis and the second part of this chapter demand a repeated critical focus on Sammet's study.

548 Sammet, whose research focus lies predominantly on different right-wing versions of the 'stab in the back' myth, provides a valuable collection of quotations from republican publications promoting alternative explanations for defeat. Although his narrative provides a groundbreaking historical approach in assessing republican responses to the 'stab in the back' myth, it lacks clear parameters. He only illustrates the existence of a left-wing 'stab in the back' myth between 1918 and 1928 but does not offer a detailed analysis of its role in political discourse. The lack of nuanced argument is evident in the fact that while claiming to define the 'left-wing 'stab in the back" narratives, for example, he quotes articles from the DDP affiliated *Frankfurter Zeitung* and the *Berliner Tageblatt*. Although he quotes from a range of republican press-sources, his selection of individual articles was chosen according to title rather than content, which explains the rather unstructured description of many of the 'stab in the back' narratives. See Ibid, pp. 178, 186, 188, 275.

This analysis deliberately refrains from making a clear distinction between the responsibility for the outbreak of the war and responsibility for German wartime politics, because these were often intermingled in the public debate and both served similar political purposes within republican discourse. Each set of allegations could be used to define the political parameters of the republic by distinguishing the failed representatives of the imperial regime from those worthy of representing the peacetime democracy.[549] For a number of reasons the cross-party consensus absolving the German population from responsibility for the conflict provides an interesting starting point for an analysis of the war guilt question. Firstly, it illustrates how a seemingly non-partisan agreement was used to convey divergent political intentions, derived from opposing interpretations of the war's legacy for the republic. Secondly, the attempt to clear the German population itself of any responsibility identified the people's will as a significant marker of republican moral integrity. As the republic defined itself as the representation of this popular will, the depiction of the people as innocent implied that German politics had departed decisively from the values of Germany's wartime regime and therefore deserved domestic and international recognition.

Right-wing leaflets universally rejected the allegation of German war guilt and thus, by default, acquitted the German population of responsibility for the war.[550] As Dreyer and Lembke show, the right-wing argument was limited to reiterating wartime myths blaming 'British commercial envy, Russian Pan-Slavism and French desire for revenge' for the outbreak of the war in order to divert popular attention away from their own role before and during the conflict.[551] Refusal to acknowledge German wartime misconduct reflected the right-wing view that Germany's only mistake had been to revoke its belligerent wartime ideals through the revolution.[552] The principal contribution by reactionary propaganda to the public war guilt debate therefore consisted of sabotaging any factual assessment of the available evidence once it had become apparent that it would not prove German innocence.[553] Right-wing propaganda particularly exploited the central role of the war guilt question during the peace negotiations as a means to discredit any republican

---

[549] See for example 'Die Deutschnationalen' *Die Freiheit* 192 (26 May 1920); 'Frankfurt, 30. Juli' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 557 (30 July 1919); 'Weg mit den Kompromittierten' *Die Freiheit* 24 (28 November 1918); Der Vorstand der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands, 'An die deutsche Arbeiterschaft' *Vorwärts* 612 (30 November 1919); Hellmut von Gerlach, 'Die Verbrecher' *Die Welt am Montag* 30 (28 Juli 1919); Erich Kuttner, 'Strenges Gericht!' *Vorwärts* 188 (12 April 1919); Georg Metzler, 'Die verruchte Lüge' *Die Weltbühne* 2 (9 January 1919), p. 37. For biographical information on von Gerlach and Kuttner see Appendix I, pp. 327, 330.

[550] FES, 6/FLBL005712: Bund deutscher Männer und Frauen zum Schutze der persönlichen Freiheit und des Lebens Wilhelms II., *Zur Klärung der Schuldfrage* (n.p., 1918/1919); FES, NUR 1919 Januar III: DNVP, *Lügen, Phrasen, Wahrheit!* (n.p., 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DVP, Berlin, 1920: DVP, *Der Tag der Abrechnung* (Berlin, 1920).

[551] Quote from Dreyer and Lembcke, *Kriegsschuldfrage*, p. 33. For contemporary versions of the reactionary explanations for the outbreak of war see FES, 6/FLBL005421: Bund deutscher Männer und Frauen zum Schutze der persönlichen Freiheit und des Lebens Wilhelms II., *Ein weiterer Beitrag zu dem Kapitel: Wer ist schuld am Kriege?* (n.p., 1918); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DVP, Berlin, 1920: DVP, *Der Tag der Abrechnung* (Berlin, 1920).

[552] Sontheimer, *Antidemokratisches Denken*, pp. 101f.

[553] Dreyer and Lembcke, *Kriegsschuldfrage*, p. 80; Heinemann, *Die verdrängte Niederlage*, pp. 162, 164.

attempts at addressing matters that might reveal right-wing responsibility for the conflict.[554] DVP and DNVP discourse thus failed to reflect any recognition that a critical evaluation of Germany's role before and during the war might be necessary.[555]

While reactionary propaganda was not particularly concerned with the role of the German people in the war guilt question, republican discourse portrayed them as a morally uncorrupted force, according to which Germany should be judged. USPD and SPD leaflets, for example - often specifically referring to workers and soldiers whom they claimed to represent - emphasized that the German population had only supported the war because it had been deceived.[556] Even one of the most unrelenting advocates of German war guilt within the USPD, Bavarian Prime Minister Kurt Eisner, defended the German people as victims of the deposed authoritarian system, explaining their war enthusiasm as ignorance.[557] In two speeches he argued that ordinary Germans could not have acted differently than they did because wartime propaganda and censorship had prevented them from recognising and expressing the truth.[558] The logical conclusion of this premise was that the people would have opposed Germany's wartime decisions had they understood their true nature. This assumption clearly dissociated the German

---

554 The *Neue Preußische Zeitung (Kreuzzeitung)*, for example, defined the republican government's failure to deny German war guilt as co-operation with the former enemies which helped the Allies to justify their 'immoral' peace terms. The article thus suggested that the the republic had betrayed the interests of the German people for selfish political reasons. See 'Die Schuld am Kriege' *Preußische Kreuzzeitung* 259 (3 June 1919). The pan-German *Deutsche Zeitung* also categorically rejected any investigation into German war guilt as dishonourable, denouncing even moderate official admissions of co-responsibility as dangerous 'stupidity'. 'Die Entehrung' *Deutsche Zeitung* 212 (9 May 1919). Also see BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DNVP, Satzungen, Manifeste, Personen: DNVP, *Nationales Manifest der Deutschnationalen Volkspartei* (n.p., 1920); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DVP, Berlin, 1920: DVP, *Der Tag der Abrechnung* (Berlin, 1920); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DVP, Berlin, 1918: DVP, *Unser Anspruch auf einen Rechtsfrieden!* (Berlin, 1918).

555 This summary of right-wing propaganda is significantly simplified and does not reflect a nuanced evaluation of the right-wing debate of the war guilt question. Due to the limits of this study, however, it is necessary to work with such typifications in order to avoid digressing from the republican attempts to deal with the war's legacy.

556 BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DVP, Berlin, 1919: Dr. Aner, *Deutsche Christen!* (Berlin, 1919); FES, 6/FLBL005542: Arbeiter und Soldatenrat Groß-Berlin, *An die heimgekehrten Soldaten! Kameraden!* (Berlin, 1918); FES, NUR 1918 Dezember II Hans Georg von Beerfelde, *Die Waffen nieder! Kameraden von der Front!* (Berlin, 1918); FES, Feb/März 1919: Freie Jugend, *Gegen die Zwangseinziehung der Jugend. Nieder mit dem Militarismus!* (Berlin, 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, SPD, 1919, Berlin: SPD, *Wofür haben wir gekämpft?* (Berlin, 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, USPD, 1919, Berlin: USPD, *Gegen die Lügenpest!* (Berlin, 1919).

557 'Ministerpräsident Eisner über die Lage' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 325 (23 November 1918). For biographical information on Eisner see Appendix I, pp. 324f. Although recent studies by historians like Wolfgang Kruse and Jeffrey Verhey have portrayed a more complex analysis of the German responses to the outbreak of war, the perception of Germans as enthusiastically celebrating the outbreak of war dominated both contemporary perceptions and historical evaluations of the period. See Wolfgang Kruse, 'Die Kriegsbegeisterung im Deutschen Reich zu Beginn des Ersten Weltkrieges. Entstehungszusammenhänge, Grenzen und ideologische Strukturen' in Linden and Mergner (eds.), *Kriegsbegeisterung*, pp. 73-88, for the common perception of war enthusiasm particularly p. 73; Verhey, *Der "Geist von 1914"*. For an excellent historiographical essay on the diffifculties to assess the nuances of German 'war enthusiasm' see Roger Chickering, '"War Enthusiasm?" Public opinion and the outbreak of war in 1914' in Holger Afflerbach and David Stevenson, *An Improbable War? The outbreak of World War I and European political culture before 1914* (New York, Oxford, 2007), pp. 200-212.

558 'Ministerpräsident Eisner über die Lage' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 325 (23 November 1918); 'Die Schuldfrage' *Vorwärts* 66 (5 February 1919). See also a reprint of Eisner's speech at the International Socialist Conference in Berne in BA Berlin, NY 4060, 83, p. 43: *Offizielles Bulletin der Internationalen Arbeiter- und Sozialistenkonferenz* 2, 1 (5 February 1919), p. 4.

population from the crimes of its former leaders. Eisner's views on this issue accorded with those of Walther Rathenau, who, as an industrialist, wartime advocate of territorial annexations and DDP politician, represented the opposite end of the republican spectrum assessed in this study.[559] In an open letter to Wilson's aide, Colonel House, which was printed in *Vorwärts*, Rathenau also vehemently denied Allied allegations that the German people bore any responsibility for the war.[560] In addition, he stressed the people's impotence against the old regime, arguing that even the minority who had foreseen the war and had understood its insanity and hopelessness had been unable to influence its course.[561] This collective focus on a blameless German population among republicans, who shared hardly any other common political convictions, suggests that moral labels of guilt and innocence were essential in delineating the political parameters of the new state.

On a domestic level, absolving the German population from responsibility for the outbreak of war and for Germany's wartime conduct, often with reference to their political naivety, naturally shifted the blame to those who had not only decided upon the conflict's fateful course but had also kept the people ignorant.[562] This juxtaposition of victims and perpetrators in the republican narrative of the war created scapegoats for Germany's decline, aiming to dissociate the republic from any blame for Germany's post-war misery. Accordingly, the *Frankfurter Zeitung* defined the political ignorance which had led people to accept the military dictatorship and its lies, as an indication that the people's informed participation in the new state needed to be one of the most important political lessons of the war.[563] Focus on the war conduct of Germany's former elite rather than the German population also allowed the republican forces to address the legacy of Germany's wartime mistakes critically while not alienating voters. Theoretically, this interpretation of the war provided a means of curtailing the political influence of Germany's wartime leadership without implicating the nation in their crimes.

The republican distinction between innocent German people and guilty wartime leadership also provided a useful means of representing the new state on an international level. If all responsibility was attributed to the old elite who had allegedly been removed by

---

[559] Although Rathenau, an industrialist, publicist and employee of the Prussian War Ministry who became Foreign Minister in 1921, changed his mind in 1917, demanding a conciliatory peace on the grounds of the Central Power's war weariness, his appeal for total mobilization in a last-ditch-defence to negotiate the armistice from a position of strength gave him a, somewhat undeserved, reputation as a warmonger in the initial post-war years. See Martin Sabrow, 'Rathenau, Walther' in Hirschfeld, Krumeich and Renz (eds.), *Enzyklopädie*, p. 787; Walther H. Pehle, 'Rathenau, Walther' in Benz and Graml (eds.), *Biographisches Lexikon*, p. 262f. For biographical information on Rathenau see Appendix I, p. 335.

[560] Walther Rathenau, 'Offener Brief an Oberst House' *Vorwärts* 335 (6 December 1918).

[561] Ibid.

[562] See for example 'Die Schuldfrage und unsere Haltung' *Vorwärts* 382 (29 July 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DVP, Berlin, 1919: Dr. Aner, *Deutsche Christen!* (Berlin, 1919); Walther Rathenau, 'Offener Brief an Oberst House' *Vorwärts* 335 (6 December 1918); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, SPD, 1919, Berlin: SPD, *Wofür haben wir gekämpft?* (Berlin, 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, USPD, 1919, Berlin: USPD, *Gegen die Lügenpest!* (Berlin, 1919).

[563] Franz Wolff, 'Deine Schuld, Wähler!' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 394 (1 June 1920); Paul Ernst, 'Der sittliche Mut' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 304 (2 November 1918).

the revolution, the republican government could claim to represent a population of victims rather than perpetrators; victims who did not deserve to be punished.[564] In response to an article in the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* which advocated postponing the publication of war guilt documents in order to prevent the Entente from exploiting such evidence to prove 'our' responsibility for the war, the USPD politician Karl Kautsky suggested that dissociating the German nation from its former leadership would help rather than harm the republic:

> [w]ho is the 'we' that the official paper mentions? The German people? In all of the documents I have examined, there is not a single line alluding to the German people's responsibility for the world war. If they refer to guilt, they only refer to the responsibility of particular individuals and institutions which gave these individuals the power to inflict damage. The German people do not appear as co-responsible but as victims of those responsible. [...] The people could expect better treatment and more just peace conditions if the Entente governments and particularly their people were informed about this finding.[565]

According to this line of reasoning, a public investigation of the war guilt question could only benefit the republic by curtailing the political influence of the old elite and reflecting Germany's ideological renewal, thus improving its international recognition.[566] As a logical conclusion to this argument, Kautsky criticised the government for failing to dissociate the people from the old regime by depicting the nation as implicated in Germany's wartime politics. He maintained that:

> [...] the government seems to believe it to be most effective to initiate the peace negotiations by letting their spokesmen define the responsibility of the deposed leaders as 'our guilt', which must not be revealed without posing a danger to 'us'. [...] The government increasingly seems to have taken leave of its senses.[567]

Similar considerations motivated Kurt Eisner to demand the publication of all available German documents regarding the outbreak of war, while unilaterally starting to publish a number of relevant Bavarian documents without consulting the Foreign Ministry.[568] The republican press interpreted these documents as proof that the German leadership had been aware of the implications of the Austrian ultimatum (at least with

---

[564] Kurt Eisner, 'Eine Kundgebung Bayerns an die Entente' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 314 (12 November 1918); Ferdinand Hansen, 'An Präsident Wilson' *Vorwärts* 357 (29 December 1918).

[565] Karl Kautsky, 'Nochmals Schuldfrage und Friedensschluß' *Die Freiheit* 204 (29 April 1919). For biographical information on Kautsky see Appendix I, pp. 328f.

[566] 'Törichtes Gebahren' *Die Freiheit* 258 (30 May 1919); 'Die Verbrechen der deutschen Kriegsführung' *Die Freiheit* 400 (21 August 1919); Karl Kautsky, 'Die Friedensverhandlungen' *Die Freiheit* 195/196 (24 April 1919); Georg Metzler, 'Die verruchte Lüge' *Die Weltbühne* 2 (9 January 1919), p. 36; Otfried Nippold, 'Die Schuld des neuen Regimes' *Die Welt am Montag* 31 (4 August 1919). The international law specialist Otfried Nippold (1864-1938) advocated a development of international law in the direction of arbitration and contributed to the *Frankfurter Zeitung* from 1909. Nippold, a Swiss citizen, returned to Switzerland on the outbreak of the First World War and continued to censure German militarism and imperialism. See Adolf Gasser, 'Otfried Nippold' in Donat und Holl (eds.), *Die Friedensbewegung*, pp. 288f.

[567] Karl Kautsky, 'Nochmals Schuldfrage und Friedensschluß' *Die Freiheit* 204 (29 April 1919).

[568] Dreyer and Lembcke, *Kriegsschuldfrage*, pp. 64f.

regard to war with Russia), had encouraged a reluctant Austria to declare war and had falsely pretended that Germany's intentions were peaceful.[569] For Eisner, this search for truth was merely the logical duty of a revolution claiming to have severed its ties with Germany's former political elite.[570] The republican reaction to his publications soon illustrated that only a minority of prominent republicans shared his willingness to address Germany's past conduct with such honesty. *Vorwärts'* initial reaction to Eisner's publications was positive, because it recognised the potential usefulness of such evidence against right-wing propaganda. An article summarising the content of the Bavarian documents on 25 November 1918 concluded with a warning to Germany's former elite:

> [...] this gang of mass murderers who got off really lightly during the revolution because of the people's generosity still believe that they can restore their bloodstained reign which has been besmirched by lies? The people have chased them away in disgrace and they can thank their god on their knees that they escaped in such a manner.[571]

The newspaper thus evoked the potential power of the governing republican forces to publish evidence against the old regime as a threat to silence right-wing opposition to the republic.

Beyond this initial approval the SPD failed to pursue the political possibilities which lay in a factual evaluation of the war guilt debate. In response to a factually questionable declaration from the Foreign Ministry, claiming that French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau had encouraged a German admission of war guilt in order to justify imposing harsh peace terms, *Vorwärts* changed its tone and embarked on a personal crusade against Eisner and a more general one against the admission of German war guilt.[572] This antagonistic response to a genuine investigation of German war guilt was partly a defensive knee jerk reaction in reply to allegations from both USPD and Entente socialists who considered the SPD co-responsible for Germany's wartime policies, because the party had not opposed the old regime sufficiently.[573] The large number of USPD attacks on the

---

[569] 'Die Entlarvung der Schuldigen: Das Weltverbrechen, Urkunden über den Ursprung des Krieges' *Die Freiheit* 18 (25 November 1918); 'Die Schuld der deutschen Machthaber am Kriege' *Vorwärts* 324 (25 November 1918); 'Zur Vorgeschichte des Krieges' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 328 (26 November 1918).

[570] Kurt Eisner, 'Rede in der 2. Sitzung des Provisorischen Nationalrats am 13 Dezember 1918' in Kurt Eisner, *Sozialismus als Aktion. Ausgewählte Aufsätze und Reden* (Frankfurt, 1975), pp. 85, 86, 94-96.

[571] 'Die Schuld der deutschen Machthaber am Kriege' *Vorwärts* 324 (25 November 1918).

[572] 'Die Enthüllungen der bayerischen Regierung' *Vorwärts* 326 (27 November 1918); 'Kurt Eisner gegen die deutschen Kriegsgefangenen' *Vorwärts* 78 (12 February 1919); Erich Kuttner, 'Der Fall Eisner' *Vorwärts* 329 (30 November 1918). The *Frankfurter Zeitung* printed a statement from Clemenceau denying rumours that he had requested an admission of German war guilt. See 'Die Vorgeschichte des Krieges' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 333 (1 December 1918).

[573] For a representative selection of accusations see 'Keine Geschichtsfälschung' *Die Freiheit* 34 (3 December 1918); 'Die Kriegssozialisten' *Die Freiheit* 176 (15 May 1920); 'Ungesühnte Schuld' *Die Freiheit* 206 (3 June 1920); Wilhelm Dittmann, 'Das Steuer der Wahrheit' *Die Freiheit* 358 (30 July 1919). The joiner Wilhelm Dittmann (1874-1954) joined the SPD in 1894. He wrote for a number of working class newspapers before representing the party in the Reichstag from 1912-1918. Dittmann voted against war credits in 1915 and co-founded the USPD in 1917. Involved in the organisation of the ammunition workers' strike in January 1918, Dittmann was sentenced to 5 years in prison but was released under the amnesty in

war conduct of the SPD suggested that such allegations were perceived as one of the most potent political weapons which the USPD could use against its socialist rival.[574] Working on this perception, USPD propaganda identified a number of prominent SPD members, among them Eduard David and Philipp Scheidemann, as those discredited by their political conduct during the war.[575] Additionally the SPD was severely attacked during the first post-war conference of the Socialist International in Berne, which contributed to the creation of a political climate in which the SPD could not address the issue of war guilt without being confronted with accusations based on its own conduct during the war.[576]

The discourse at the Socialist International illustrates that the SPD's siege mentality reinforced its refusal to address the war guilt question and critically examine its own wartime conduct.[577] It is noteworthy, however, that the main debate on war guilt at Berne was not initiated by the USPD, but rather by the French delegate Albert Thomas, who demanded to exclude the SPD from the conference because its wartime conduct had destroyed the Socialist International.[578] Although Kurt Eisner also criticised the SPD's adherence to wartime rhetoric during the conference, his speech was not an outright attack on the rival socialist faction. In emphasizing the SPD's post-war opposition to Germany's wartime politics and German - rather than SPD - war guilt which the entire German nation needed to atone for through its commitment to socialism, Eisner aimed at persuading the majority socialists to moderate their stance rather than attacking them.[579] The *Frankfurter Zeitung,* which had no stake in the socialist dispute, explicitly lauded Eisner's convictions.[580] Although the article reprimanded his criticism of the SPD, it also disapproved of the SPD's failure to distinguish between defending the German people and defending the old regime.[581] While disapproving of Eisner's approach at Berne the article thus justified the basis of his criticism of the SPD's position regarding German war guilt to some extent. The SPD response to both French and USPD allegations in fact reflected very

---

mid-October 1918. After the revolution he represented the USPD in the Council of People's Representatives and sat in the Reichstag from 1920-1933. He returned to the SPD in 1922, acting as secretary of the party's executive committee and executive chairman of the party's Reichstag delegation. See Manfred Vasold, 'Dittmann, Wilhelm' in Graml and Benz, *Biographisches Lexikon*, p. 64.

574 See chapter 2, p. 105f.

575 'Eisners Rede im Vollzugsrat' *Die Freiheit* 22 (27 November 1918); 'Neue Männer ins Auswärtige Amt' *Die Freiheit* 22 (27 November 1918); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, USPD, 1919, Berlin: USPD, *Auf zur Wahl!* 1919).

576 'Die Entlarvung' *Die Freiheit* 353 (27 July 1919); Rudolf Breitscheid, 'Die Schuldigen' *Die Freiheit* 182 (15 April 1919); Wilhelm Dittmann, 'Das Steuer der Wahrheit' *Die Freiheit* 358 (30 July 1919). For biographical information on Rudolf Breitscheid see Appendix I, p. 323.

577 The defensive nature of the SPD position at the conference is particularly evident in Otto Wels' speech in response to the demand of the French delegate Albert Thomas to exclude the members of the SPD from participating in the conference. Reprint of the speech in BA Berlin, NY 4060, 83, p. 42: *Offizielles Bulletin der Internationalen Arbeiter- und Sozialistenkonferenz* 2, 1 (5 February 1919), pp. 1f. For biographical information on Otto Wels see Appendix I, p. 339.

578 Ibid; also see 'Die Berner Konferenz' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 92 (4 February 1919).

579 BA Berlin, NY 4060, 83, p. 43: *Offizielles Bulletin der Internationalen Arbeiter- und Sozialistenkonferenz* 2, 1 (5 February 1919), p. 3. For press coverage of Eisner's speech see 'Die Berner Konferenz' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 92 (4 February 1919); Carl Weichard, 'Erster Friede' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 142 (22 February 1919).

580 'Die Berner Konferenz' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 126 (16 February 1919).

581 Ibid.

little recognition that the reconstruction of international co-operation after four years of war necessitated some critical reflection on Germany's role before and during the conflict. Otto Wels' and Hermann Müller's speeches sought to internationalise war guilt, denied any SPD responsibility for Germany's wartime policies, and depicted the blockade as a worse crime than the occupation of Belgium.[582] The socialist allegations against the SPD pushed the party into a more antagonistic position towards representatives of the Entente than was beneficial for the political demobilisation of the international socialist discourse.

While these socialist inter-party rivalries shaped the rigidity of respective positions regarding the war guilt question, the intervention of the Foreign Ministry changed its general focus.[583] Concerns that an honest investigation of Germany's conduct before and during the war would provide ammunition to the Entente during the peace negotiations led to the suspension of plans to uncover the extent of the imperial regime's responsibility for the outbreak of war.[584] The *Frankfurter Zeitung* justified this stance by focusing on the dangers rather than benefits of Eisner's publications, arguing that the Entente would use the existence of an internal war guilt investigation as evidence to incriminate Germany.[585] This reluctance to address the question of German war guilt came to reflect the official German position. Although the provisional government had put Kautsky in charge of compiling official documents on the origins of the war in the immediate aftermath of the revolution, the increasing influence of the Foreign Ministry obstructed their publication after the USPD left the provisional government.[586] The official version of the war guilt question was thus shaped by a desire to present Germany in the most favourable light rather than by a genuine quest for truth.

In line with the government's conviction that a unilateral investigation of the matter would harm Germany's chances for a moderate peace, *Vorwärts* and the *Frankfurter Zeitung* stressed that responsibility for the war could not be attributed to any individual

---

[582] Ibid; 'Die Internationale in Bern' *Vorwärts* 64 (4 February 1919); 'Die Internationale Sozialistenkonferenz. Die Schuldfrage' *Die Freiheit* 64 (5 February 1919). For biographical information on Müller see Appendix I, p. 333.

[583] Heinemann attributes most of the responsibility for the official German position on war guilt to the Foreign Minstry, arguing that SPD and DDP only accepted the largely untrue claims of the negative neutral and Allied responses to admissions of war guilt. *Die verdrängte Niederlage*, pp. 35-37.

[584] 'Die Enthüllungen der bayerischen Regierung' *Vorwärts* 326 (27 November 1918); Olf, 'Die Wahrheit' *Die Weltbühne* 49 (5 December 1918), p. 523. For biographical information on Rudolf Leonard see Appendix I, pp. 331f.

[585] 'Vom Ursprung des Krieges' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 328 (26 November 1918); 'Zur Vorgeschichte des Krieges' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 328 (26 November 1918).

[586] Herwig, 'Clio deceived' in Wilson (ed.), *Collective Memory*, p. 91. Kautsky himself explained the government's obstruction of the publication, which he denounced in a letter to Count Max Montgelas, with an attempt to find a compromise between those forces in government demanding the publication for the sake of the people and those who saw it as an international danger. He warned that after the publication had been announced, its postponement would only arouse suspicion abroad. IISH, Kautsky Archive, G 11/12: Letter from Karl Kautsky to Count Max Montgelas (26 March 1919), pp. 1, 3. The provisional government's USPD representatives Hugo Haase, Wilhelm Dittmann and Emil Barth resigned from their posts on 28 December 1918 in protest against the government's decision to respond to use military violence against rebellious naval troops. Winkler, *Weimar 1918-1933*, pp. 53f. For biographical information on Haase see Appendix I, p. 328.

country and demanded an international war guilt inquiry.[587] Broadly speaking, both publications admitted some German contribution to the outbreak of war while at the same time stressing that all other belligerent countries carried at least an equivalent amount of responsibility.[588] In this context, many republican papers focused on the pre-war belligerence of imperial Russia, because opposition to the deposed authoritarian state was deemed most acceptable from a democratic viewpoint, while the Russian mobilisation provided a common, if historically inaccurate, argument to prove Russia's desire for war.[589] Some articles, however, evoked the full range of right-wing myths in order to absolve Germany from responsibility for the outbreak of war. While Robert Breuer in *Die Weltbühne* maintained that Russia, France, Great Britain and the US [sic!] carried equal responsibility for the war as Germany, the renowned economist, sociologist and DDP politician Max Weber defined Russia as the main warmonger, criticised Belgium for defending herself against Germany, but not against France, justified the unrestricted U-Boat warfare as a legitimate defence against the blockade and denounced US intervention in the war as unjustified.[590]

The persistence of such wartime views in the republican press illustrated that the government's failure to bring facts into the war guilt debate contributed to the dilution of republican discourse with wartime ideology. The appropriation of such historical misconceptions in republican newspapers and in official documents drawn up for the peace negotiations was partly responsible for the fact that wartime rhetoric did not lose its political currency during the republic.[591] Focus on the Entente rather than on domestic opposition as the main threat to Germany's democratic development - which was evident in concerns that the Allies would abuse any evidence questioning the integrity of

---

[587] 'Eine Rede des Grafen Brockdorff-Rantzaus' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 66 (25 January 1919); 'Einsetzung eines Staatsgerichtshofs' *Vorwärts* 157 (26 March 1919); 'Frankfurt, 22, Januar' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 58 (22 January 1919); 'Die Schuldfrage' *Vorwärts* 66 (5 February 1919).

[588] For example 'Gegen die Vergewaltigung Deutschlands' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 185 (10 March 1919); 'Frankfurt, 12. April' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 277 (12 April 1919); 'Frankfurt, 8. Mai' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 338 (8 May 1919); 'Bethmanns Verteidigung' *Vorwärts* 327 (28 November 1918); Artur Zickler, *Die Schuldfrage* 158 (27 March 1919); 'Bethmann über Kriegsentstehen. Keine persönliche Unvollkommenheit' *Vorwärts* 282 (4 June 1919); 'Dokumente zur Kriegsschuld. Russische Enthüllungen' *Vorwärts* 272 (29 May 1919). These articles challenge Lothar Wieland's generalisation that with the publication of the Allied peace draft even those moderate views proposing that Germany carried at least part of war guilt ceased to be voiced. From 1920 the *Kriegsschuldreferat* of the Foreign Office, set up to prove German innocence, also continued to regard the admission of limited responsibility as the best way to disprove the allegation of war guilt. See Lothar Wieland, *Belgien 1914. Die Frage des belgischen 'Franktireurkrieges' und die deutsche öffentliche Meinung von 1914-1936* (Frankfurt, Berne, New York, 1984), p. 114f. For biographical information on Artur Zickler see Appendix I, p. 340.

[589] David Alan Rich, 'Russia' in Holger Herwig and Richard Hamilton (eds.), *The Origins of World War I* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 188, 224f. For contemporary examples of the republican allegations against Russia see 'Die Berner Konferenz' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 95 (5 February 1919); 'Die Schuldfrage' *Die Freiheit* 253 (27 May 1919); 'Zur Schuldfrage' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 367 (19 May 1919); Heinrich Ströbel, 'Sie lügen weiter' *Die Weltbühne* 41 (2 October 1919), 399ff. For biographical information on Ströbel see Appendix I, pp. 337f.

[590] Robert Breuer, 'Germanicus nimmt Abschied' *Die Weltbühne* 49 (5 December 1918), pp. 521f; Max Weber, 'Zum Thema der "Kriegsschuld"' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 43 (17 January 1919). For biographical information on Robert Breuer see Appendix I, pp. 323f.

[591] Heinemann, *Die verdrängte* Niederlage, pp. 37-40, 45f.

Germany's behaviour at the outbreak of war - illustrates that the wartime notion of *Burgfrieden* against an external enemy was still a crucial political consideration after the revolution.[592] The republican refusal to address the war guilt question publicly and thoroughly prevented a genuine demobilisation of public discourse. Owing to the republican self-portrayal as the antithesis of the belligerent values of the old regime, any evocation of such wartime propaganda in the name of the republic could only undermine its ideological basis, because the right were always going to be the more convincing heirs of wartime politics.[593] The war guilt question therefore provides a compelling example of how the republican failure to demobilise its political considerations created obstacles for the creation of a legitimising narrative for the new state.

The above considerations led to a public discourse about German war guilt which concentrated on its implications for the Entente's formulation of the peace settlement. Many articles, both supporting and rejecting the admission of German war guilt, listed the respective merits and dangers of an official war guilt investigation with regard to the peace negotiations.[594] Only those demanding an honest assessment of the available documentation also stressed that the issue had significant domestic relevance.[595] As a rare SPD advocate of the admission of German war guilt - an advocacy for which he was severely censured within the party - the politician Eduard Bernstein, for example, wrote that:

> [t]he position of the bourgeois press and sadly also a part of the social democratic press with regard to the war guilt question is as factually wrong as it is politically short sighted. Does it make any sense to deny or cover up the fact that the governments of Wilhelm II and Franz Josef unleashed the Hydra of war on the world in July and August 1914? And can one, as a German, deny or cover it up without becoming retrospectively morally co-responsible? Leave this hopeless business to those who are really co-responsible and recognise that, on two counts, it is our duty to the German nation to ruthlessly tell the truth. As long as the truth is further kept from or only partly revealed to the German people, who have been betrayed and deceived for years, they will never understand their fate and or be able to comprehend and adequately deal with foreign policy questions. This question concerns the German people. It is futile to attempt to deceive those foreign nations which matter with regard to this question.[596]

---

[592] The term *Burgfrieden* refers to the agreement of a domestic political truce and national unity which all political parties in Germany, (including the SPD), supported on 4 August 1914 in order to demonstrate their support for the German war effort. See Verhey, *Der "Geist von 1914"*, pp. 261-267.

[593] For the peaceful self-representation of the republic see chapter 1.

[594] 'Entgegnung der Redaktion' *Vorwärts* 326 (27 November 1918); 'Frankfurt, 29. April' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 318 (29 April 1919); 'Kurt Eisner und das bayerische Volk' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 332 (30 November 1918); 'Zur Vorgeschichte des Krieges - Eine Erklärung F. W. Försters - Ein Urteil Quiddes' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 331 (29 November 1918); Hellmut von Gerlach, 'Unser einziger Friedenstriumph' *Die Welt am Montag* 5 (3 February 1919); Hellmut von Gerlach, 'Verbrecher Album 1914' *Die Welt am Montag* 48 (2 December 1918); Karl Kautsky, 'Nochmals Schuldfrage und Friedensschluß' *Die Freiheit* 204 (29 April 1919).

[595] 'Die Entlarvung' *Die Freiheit* 353 (27 July 1919); 'Die Schuldfrage' *Die Freiheit* 253 (27 May 1919); 'Eisner über das Auswärtige Amt' *Die Welt am Montag* 48 (2 December 1918); Hellmut von Gerlach, 'Haß ohne Ende' *Die Welt am Montag* 18 (5 May 1919); Georg Metzler, 'Die verruchte Lüge' *Die Weltbühne* 2 (9 January 1919), p. 37.

[596] Eduard Bernstein, 'Bekennen ist die Losung!' *Vorwärts* 277 (1 June 1919). For biographical information on Eduard Bernstein see Appendix I, p. 323.

Bernstein, like other politicians and journalists in *Die Freiheit*, *Die Welt am Montag* and *Die Weltbühne* emphasized the domestic importance of a war guilt investigation, focusing equally on the need to provide people with explanations for Germany's post-war situation and the futility of deceiving the Entente about German responsibility.[597] Based on such arguments these publications embarked on a crusade promoting a thorough public investigation of German war guilt as an important means to stabilise the democratic state.

From a historian's perspective, the official obstruction of the war guilt debate for fear of its international consequences motivated the government to neglect the debate's domestic implications which ultimately shaped the political development of the Weimar Republic. The question as to whether or not an admission of war guilt would have improved Germany's international position by proving that the country had undergone a genuine ideological change, cannot be conclusively proven or disproved on the basis of the sources analysed here.[598] Although Eisner's admission of German war guilt in Berne had a more positive impact on the willingness of Allied socialists to co-operate with German socialists than the belligerent stance of the SPD, it remains unclear whether similar confessions would also have motivated the Entente leaders to make more concessions than they ultimately did.[599] It can, however, definitively be established that the extensive campaign to refute German war guilt had no positive effect in moderating the peace terms or improving the German image abroad.[600] The law professor and active republican Hermann Kantorowicz - who undertook the most unbiased assessment of the war guilt question, as an expert for the Parliamentary Commission in 1923, because of which he suffered severe political and professional hostility - also recognised the government's error in prioritising the war guilt question as a means to achieve a revision of the Treaty of Versailles.[601] In a manuscript for an article in 1921 he formulated the following recommendation:

---

[597] 'Die Entlarvung' *Die Freiheit* 353 (27 July 1919); 'Die Schuldfrage' *Die Freiheit* 253 (27 May 1919); 'Eisner über das Auswärtige Amt' *Die Welt am Montag* 48 (2 December 1918); Eduard Bernstein, 'Bekennen ist die Losung!' *Vorwärts* 277 (1 June 1919); Hellmut von Gerlach, 'Haß ohne Ende' *Die Welt am Montag* 18 (5 May 1919).

[598] Although the project would be fascinating, the evaluation of official Allied documents relating to the Entente perception of Germany's treatment of the war guilt question by far exceeds the parameter of this thesis.

[599] For positive press evaluations of the USPD conduct in Berne see 'Die Berner Konferenz' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 126 (16 February 1919); 'Die Internationale Sozialistenkonferenz. Die Schuldfrage' *Die Freiheit* 64 (5 February 1919); Hellmut von Gerlach 'Der Überstaat' *Die Welt am Montag* 6 (10 February 1919). For opposing views regarding the respective positive and negative effects of an admission of German war guilt abroad see 'Eine Abfuhr des "Vorwärts"' *Die Freiheit* 25 (28 November 1918); 'Erklärungen Eisners' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 118 (13 February 1919); 'Kurt Eisner und das bayerische Volk' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 332 (30 November 1918); 'Zur Psychologie des Friedensschlusses' *Vorwärts* 407 (11 August 1919).

[600] Dreyer and Lembcke, *Kriegsschuldfrage*, pp. 140, 153-155. Even after the Treaty of Versailles was signed, Germany's Foreign Ministry still continued to publish material aimed at disproving the alleged allegation of sole German war guilt which completely failed. Ibid, pp. 209-217.

[601] In the preface of his edition of Kantorowicz's *Gutachten zur Kriegsschuldfrage*, Fritz Fischer's student Imanuel Geiss particularly showed the antagonism of the war guilt department of the Foreign Ministry to Kantorowicz's conclusion that the Central Powers carried an overwhelming

> [i]n all probability, there is not the slightest chance that our interpretations and propaganda with regard to the war guilt question will amend the foreign judgement with regard to Germany's responsibility for the war in our favour. It follows from this that the German war guilt propaganda should be stopped.[602]

The domestic implications of the official reluctance to address the failures and misjudgements of Germany's pre-wartime policies, on the other hand, are more clearly identifiable. Subordinating the internal clarification of German war guilt to perceived international necessities with regard to the peace settlement obstructed the establishment of a common republican identity on two counts. Firstly, USPD allegations implicating the SPD in the war guilt of Germany's former leadership contributed to the SPD's disinclination to investigate the matter more genuinely. Fusing this question of national interest with party-political rivalries increased the antagonism between the two socialist factions and obstructed the creation of a common republican strategy for undermining the influence of Germany's former elite in the new state. Secondly, a propagandistic rather than factual approach to the war guilt question continued the wartime custom of official censorship by withholding crucial political information from the German people. Kept ignorant about Germany's conduct before and during the war, the population remained unable to reassess German wartime propaganda which provided the basis for right-wing demagogy against the republic. Failure to address the war guilt question openly and publicly thus prevented the German people from analysing the genesis of Germany's post-war situation based on facts rather than political propaganda. Both *Die Weltbühne* and, in a lucid moment following the Kapp putsch and prior to the elections of June 1920, even the *Frankfurter Zeitung* defined the government's refusal to address German war guilt as a major contributor to the people's continued acceptance of deceptive propaganda evident in their support for radical left- and right-wing ideas.[603] In response to the murder of the pacifist Hans Paasche, the *Frankfurter Zeitung* referred to his pamphlet *Meine Mitschuld am Weltkriege* (My co-responsibility for the world war) in calling for a reassessment of individual responsibility for the conflict.[604] Questioning whether, in the light of their

---

part of responsibility for the war. Both Parliamentary Commission and Foreign Office subsequently attacked Kantorowicz's report and ultimately prevented its publication. See Imanuel Geiss (ed.), *Hermann Kantorowicz: Gutachten zur Kriegsschuldfrage 1914* (Frankfurt, 1967), pp. 21-23, 31-43.

[602] ISSH, Rudolf Breitscheid Papers, B2 26: Hermann Kantorowicz, 'Die Aussichtslosigkeit der deutschen Kriegsschuldpropaganda', 1921, p. 4.

[603] Franz Wolff, 'Deine Schuld, Wähler!' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 394 (1 June 1920); Georg Metzler, 'Die verruchte Lüge' *Die Weltbühne* 2 (9 January 1919), pp. 36f.

[604] Franz Wolff, 'Deine Schuld, Wähler!' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 394 (1 June 1920) Hans Paasche, a former naval officer from a wealthy nationalist background, developed into an outspoken opponent of the First World War during the conflict. Idealistic, unconformist and led by strong moral ideals Paasche demanded a distinct break with Germany's wartime regime through a thorough investigation of German war guilt. In response to an anonymous denunciation that Paasche hid weapons for a communist rebellion, 50 soldiers appeared at his estate without a search warrant or an arrest warrant and shot him in the back in front of his children because he was allegedly trying to flee. The murder evoked a strong response throughout the republican press, which castigated the brutal conduct of the soldiers. See Lothar Wieland 'Vom kaiserlichen Offizier zum Deutschen

toleration of Germany's old regime, the German people have the right to judge the republic quite as harshly, the article argues that:

> [i]t is no disaster that those who demanded cleansing [as the only means to be accepted into the League of Nations] during the collapse had little success. It is a disaster, however, that all of the individuals who make up the German nation have changed so little that they do not want to hear the word guilt at all. One seeks to associate guilt with the enemy or with inevitable circumstances. Some have even reached the point at which they consider the old days as almost acceptable again, have forgotten all dread and see the past with the same fogged up glasses that they wore when we stumbled into the catastrophe.[605]

To a small extent republican discourse thus recognised that the implicit rehabilitation of Germany's former elites, which Lothar Wieland has defined as the consequence of Germany's war guilt denial, threatened the republic's legitimacy.[606]

The perception that the Treaty of Versailles would collapse if allegations of German war guilt could be disproved continued to prevent a genuine investigation of Germany's responsibility for the outbreak of war even after the peace settlement.[607] Because it regarded the war guilt issue as Germany's strongest weapon against the Treaty of Versailles, the government upheld the pretence of German innocence and promoted an official position which admitted certain German mistakes but refused to acknowledge that Germany deserved more blame than the other belligerent nations.[608] Desire to control the public discourse on the war guilt question along the lines of its own narrative motivated the government to backtrack from an initial commitment to publish Kautsky's document edition both promptly and in full. Not only did the government postpone the publication of the documents until 9 December 1919 (although Kautsky had declared in a letter dated 26 March 1919 that they were ready for publication), it also took responsibility for the publication's editorial away from the USPD politician Kautsky, who was an outspoken advocate of admitting German war guilt, and instead put Walther Schücking and Count Max Montgelas in charge of the project.[609] Both were renowned pacifists of international

---

Revolutionär – Stationen der Wandlung des Kapitänleutnants Hans Paasche (1881-1920) in Wolfram Wette, Helmut Donat (eds.) *Pazifistische Offiziere in Deutschland 1871-1933)* (Bremen, 1999), pp. 169f, 176ff, 'Die Ermordung des Kapitänleutnants Paasche' *Die Freiheit* 191 (25 May 1920); 'Die Erschießung Kapitänleutn. Hans Paasches' *Die Welt am Montag* (25 May 1920); 'Hans Paasche erschossen! Grenzschutzsoldaten die Täter' *Vorwärts* 263 (25 May 1920); 'Kapitänleutnant Paasche erschossen' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 376 (25 May 1920); Heinrich Ströbel, 'Vor dem neuen Putsch' *Die Weltbühne* 23 (3 June 1920), p. 641.

605 Franz Wolff, 'Deine Schuld, Wähler!' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 394 (1 June 1920).

606 Wieland, *Belgien 1914*, pp. 401f.

607 Dreyer and Lembcke, *Kriegsschuldfrage*, p. 182.

608 Ibid; Also see 'Frankfurt, 8. Mai' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 338 (8 May 1919).

609 Letter from Karl Kautsky to Count Max Montgelas (26 March 1919) in IISG, Kautsky Archiv, G 11/12. In this context, another letter from Foreign Minister Hermann Müller to Karl Kautsky is interesting, because it stresses the government's commitment to enabling the German people 'to form an objective judgement about the reasons for the outbreak of war'. The same letter - dated 8 July 1919 and thus five month before the actual publication of the war guilt documents - argued, however, that Kautsky's selection of documents would have to be amended by representatives of the Foreign Ministry. See IISG, Kautsky Archive, G 11/54 Letter from Hermann Müller to Karl Kautsky (8 July 1919).

reputation who were willing to present the collection of documents according to the government's wishes in order to undermine USPD attempts to foster the admission of German war guilt as a decisive sign of change in German foreign policy.[610] The historical controversy following Fritz Fischer's study of German war guilt in 1961 illustrated that the government's version of the war guilt question remained the generally accepted historical consensus in Germany for more than 40 years.[611]

For similar reasons to those underlying the obstructed war guilt investigation, a public inquiry into responsibility for Germany's political and military miscalculations during the war also remained a taboo subject before the conclusion of the peace negotiations. Some republican publications acknowledged that it would be necessary to investigate and punish those responsible for the people's suffering.[612] Nevertheless, republican allegations regarding right-wing war guilt remained rather vague, because the government was reluctant to release official documents clarifying the details of German wartime politics for fear of influencing the peace terms adversely.[613] This was particularly evident in a session of the National Assembly on 19 February 1919 during which Prime Minister Philipp Scheidemann argued that he could not reveal the full truth about the *OHL*'s role during the armistice, although this information would have disproved allegations holding the republic responsible for defeat.[614] The signing of the peace settlement was thus regarded as the decisive moment in allowing a full-scale investigation of Germany's wartime decisions which contributed to its military collapse.

It is evident from the press coverage commenting on plans to set up a supreme court which would investigate Germany's role during the war that the main aim of this exercise was to curtail the political influence of Germany's wartime elite, whose ideology was still represented by the right-wing parties of the Weimar Republic. The *Frankfurter Zeitung*, for example, commenting on a speech by Scheidemann, stressed that the constitution of an official inquiry into Germany's wartime politics was necessary because

> the German republic that we want has no room for reactionary intrigues, romanticised reminiscences of the grandeur of better times of the Wilhelmine variety, and the

---

[610] Montgelas was a member of the team of four academic experts called in by Brockdorff-Rantzau to publish a memorandum in May 1919 that rejected the Allied allegation of the Central Powers' war guilt, while Schücking wrote the covering note to Germany's counterproposal to the Allied peace terms, which focused on the war guilt question rather than Germany's concessions as the central theme of international discourse. See Heinemann, *Verdrängte Niederlage*, p. 45; Klaus Schwabe, 'German Peace Aims and the Domestic and International Constraints' in Manfred F. Boemeke, Gerald D. Feldman and Elisabeth Glaser (eds.), *The Treaty of Versailles. A reassessment after 75 years* (Cambridge, Washington, 1998), p. 55.

[611] Dreyer and Lembcke concisely summarised this historiographical dispute in *Kriegsschuldfrage*, pp. 13-22. Also see Heinemann, *Die verdrängte Niederlage*, pp. 14-16.

[612] 'Was ist eine Schmach – und was ist keine' *Die Freiheit* 34 (3 December 1918); Rudolf Breitscheid, 'Die Schuldigen' *Die Freiheit* 182 (15 April 1919); Robert Breuer, 'Die Schuldigen' *Die Weltbühne* 42 (17 October 1918), p. 353; Alfons Goldschmidt, 'Hat man vergessen?' *Die Weltbühne* 6 (6 February 1919), pp. 146f. For biographical information on Goldschmidt see Appendix I, p. 327.

[613] Ibid; 'Nach verlorener Schlacht' *Vorwärts* 384 (30 July 1919).

[614] 'Deutsche Nationalversammlung' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 134 (19 February 1919).

> corrupting jumble which we, at the right time but arousing the anger of many, once dared to call Pan-German deceit.[615]

At the SPD party conference in June 1919, Hermann Müller explained the delay in establishing an official inquiry 'to hold those responsible for Germany's boundless misery accountable' as due to a period of mourning following the peace settlement, which could not have been disturbed by internal disputes.[616] In spite of his spirited declaration that the government would not rest until it had identified the relevant culprits, the initial release of official documents proving wartime miscalculations only took place in order to defend the republic against reactionary allegations rather than from a position of strength.[617]

In late July 1919 Matthias Erzberger 'lift[ed] the veil' on Germany's wartime politics by blaming the old regime for failing to follow up a papal offer to mediate for a conciliatory peace in response to an attack by the DNVP deputy Graefe.[618] In order to explain why republican propaganda did not exploit their political ammunition against Germany's former elite more successfully, both the timing and the circumstances of this political duel need to be taken into account. In the aftermath of the revolution which had disoriented Germany's reactionary forces, republican propaganda failed to use the available evidence tactically in order to politically disarm their political rivals. Prioritising the Allies as a more dangerous threat to the new state than the anti-democratic domestic opposition, republican forces missed their chance to curtail the political influence of Germany's former elite, before the harsh Treaty of Versailles provided German reactionaries with ammunition against the republic. Both *Die Freiheit* and the *Frankfurter Zeitung* criticised this delay in opening the archives at the time, defining it as a failure of the republican government which was only compelled into action by the need to defend itself against right-wing allegations.[619]

Ultimately, even the Second Parliamentary Commission - set up to investigate the war guilt question - which had its first public hearing on 20 October 1919, was not capable of undermining right-wing attacks on the republic.[620] Hellmut von Gerlach in *Die Welt am Montag* argued that the commission included individuals representing the old regime which was to be investigated, and consequently failed to scrutinise, challenge, or focus the

---

[615] 'Frankfurt, 27. März' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 233 (27 March 1919).
[616] 'Wels Referat auf dem Parteitag' *Vorwärts* 293 (11 June 1919).
[617] Ibid; 'Die große Klärung' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 556 (30 July 1919); 'Der Schleier wird gelüftet' *Vorwärts* 378 (26 July 1919); 'Der Stein ist im Rollen' *Die Freiheit* 359 (30 July 1919); 'Frankfurt, 29. July' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 554 (29 July 1919).
[618] 'Der Schleier wird gelüftet' *Vorwärts* 378 (26 July 1919). For biographical information on Erzberger see Appendix I, p. 325.
[619] 'Die Entlarvung' *Die Freiheit* 353 (27 July 1919); 'Frankfurt, 26. Juli' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 547 (26 July 1919).
[620] The Second *Untersuchungsausschuß* (Parliamentary Commission) was set up to replace initial plans for a supreme court to try those responsible for the war which was dropped as legal difficulties and concerns regarding its destabilising political impact emerged. In response to Erzberger's allegations in the National Assembly, the Parliamentary Commission intended to investigate missed chances for a conciliatory peace during the war. See Heinemann, *Die verdrängte Niederlage*, pp. 155f, 159.

witness statements provided, instead giving them free reign to express themselves.[621] It was furthermore alleged that the lack of legal means to deal with reactionary attempts to undermine both credibility and progress of the commission prevented it from questioning those regarded as defendants rather than expert witnesses more determinedly.[622] Both Hindenburg's brazen declaration that defeat was due to the fact that the army had been stabbed in the back and Helfferich's stubborn refusal to recognise the commission as a legal authority were sad indications of the republic's impotence against right-wing demagogy.[623] The Parliamentary Commission thus, inadvertently, provided a public platform for Germany's deposed leaders rather than dealing them the desired blow to undermine their political influence. Although the institution itself failed to destroy the wartime 'myths and legends' which had obscured people's political views - as *Vorwärts* had hoped it might - it nevertheless provided the republican press with evidence to back up its defence of the republic against right-wing allegations.[624]

CASE STUDY 2: RESPONSIBILITY FOR DEFEAT

In addition to the war guilt question, the allocation of blame for Germany's defeat also played a significant role in attempts to establish a legitimising narrative which would strengthen the republican claim to government. All parties defined their post-war claims to power in accordance with their analysis of the political lessons derived from Germany's war experience.[625] The unexpected military collapse and its far-reaching repercussions for Germany's national identity turned interpretations of defeat into a central political talking-point, used by republicans and reactionaries alike in order to stake their claim to

---

[621] Hellmut von Gerlach, 'Die verhöhnte Republik' *Die Welt am Montag* 46 (17 November 1919). For similar evaluations of the Commission's weaknesses see Georg Metzler, 'Schuld und - Sühne?' *Die Weltbühne* 47 (13 November 1919), pp. 598-601; Heinrich Ströbel, 'Die Untersuchungsposse' *Die Weltbühne* 2 (8 January 1920), pp. 33-38.

[622] 'Der parlamentarische Untersuchungsausschuß - eine Erklärung Dr. Petersens' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 877 (23 November 1919); 'Revolte gegen die Wahrheit' *Vorwärts* 587 (16 November 1919); 'Der Vorstoß gegen den Untersuchungsausschuß' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 862 (17 November 1919); Rudolf Breitscheid, 'Der Putsch des Herrn Helfferich' *Die Freiheit* 556 (16 November 1919); Rudolf Breitscheid, 'Warnung an den Untersuchungsausschuß' *Die Freiheit* 605 (13 December 1919); Heinrich Ströbel, 'Die Attacke der Reaktion' *Die Weltbühne* 49 (27 November 1919), pp. 661-663.

[623] Heinemann, *Die verdrängte Niederlage*, pp. 162, 164.

[624] Dr. Hugo Sinzheimer, 'Der Untersuchungsausschuß' *Vorwärts* 553 (29 October 1919). The lawyer and journalist Dr. Hugo Sinzheimer, who had belonged to theNational Social Party and the Democratic Organisation, joined the SPD in 1914 and was appointed as city councillor of Frankfurt from 1917 to 1933. He represented the SPD in the National Assembly and was involved in drawing up the constitution of the Weimar Republic. An advocate of workers' education, Sinzheimer co-founded and taught at the *Akademie der Arbeit* (Academy of Work) in Frankfurt. He criticised the legal system of the Weimar Republic in *Die Justiz*, organ of the *Republikanischer Richterbund* (Republican Judges' League), while promoting the reform of German labour law. Sinzheimer fled to the Netherlands in 1933 and his university revoked his doctorate. He was interned in Theresienstadt in 1940, dying soon after the war as a consequence of his imprisonment. See Michael Sunnus, 'Sinzheimer, Hugo' in Benz and Graml, *Biographisches Lexikon*, pp. 315f.

[625] See chapter 2, pp. 103-107.

leadership by discrediting their political opponents.[626] Many contributions to this dispute referred to the 'stab in the back' myth as the original premise of the controversy, either promoting or condemning the allegation which constituted the basis of most anti-republican propaganda.[627]

Although the myth took many forms, its basic formula after the revolution defined various forces at the home front - representing revolution and republic - as conspirators in having undermined the German war effort, thus equating revolution with defeat.[628] This allegation was evident in literal versions of the 'stab in the back' myth, which claimed that socialists had gone to the front, bribing soldiers to desert, in order to undermine Germany's defence.[629] It consequently insinuated that without revolutionary agitation Germany could have achieved victory.[630] More abstract interpretations of the myth, on the other hand, claimed that Germany did not achieve the honourable peace close at hand in November 1918, because 'the idiocy of the revolution tore the weapons from our hands, surrendering us to the enemy defencelessly and powerlessly'.[631] The third main assumption of the myth alleged that the home front's war weariness and agitation had undermined the soldiers' fighting spirit, thus weakening Germany's military defence.[632] These different versions of the allegation, which were taken from individual DNVP leaflets but represented common manifestations of the right-wing 'stab in the back' myth, illustrate the lack of logical cohesion within anti-republican propaganda.[633] In order to argue that the revolution destroyed Germany's military strength it would have to be assumed that German soldiers could have continued to defend Germany's military position in November 1918.[634] If one claims, however, that the soldiers' morale was destroyed by socialist infiltration to such an extent that it affected their ability to fight, it is unlikely that the army would have been strong enough to achieve victory had the war continued beyond 1918. The mix of alleged treachery and counterfactual assumptions avoided the necessity of providing unavailable evidence for such allegations, thus enabling

---

[626] For example BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DVP, Berlin, 1919: Dr. Aner, *Deutsche Christen!* (Berlin, 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DDP, A-D, Braunschweig, 1918: DDP, *Handwerker, Gewerbetreibende, Kaufleute!* (Braunschweig, 1918); FES, NUR 1919 Januar III: DNVP, *Lügen, Phrasen, Wahrheit!* (n.p., 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, KPD, 1919, o.O.: KPD, *Wir Kommunisten und der Friede* (n.p., 1919); FES, NUR 1918 Dezember I SPD, *Nieder mit den verkleideten Junkern!* (Berlin, 1918); FES, 1919 Undatiert I: USPD, *HeimgekehrteKriegsgefangene, Genossen, Brüder!* (n.p., 1919).

[627] Out of 65 political leaflets from all political parties commenting on Germany's military defeat 48 (74%) referred to the 'stab in the back' myth.

[628] Krumeich, 'Dolchstoßlegende' in Hirschfeld, Krumeich and Renz (eds.), *Enzyklopädie*, pp. 444f.

[629] FES, NUR 1919 Januar III: DNVP, *Lügen, Phrasen, Wahrheit!* (n.p., 1919).

[630] Sammet, 'Dolchstoss', pp. 54, 180. Gerd Krumeich identifies the allegation that the home front only abandoned the army, rather than intentionally weakening it as a moderate version of the 'stab in the back' myth. Yet, in republican propaganda during the analysed period both were used interchangeably as political means to undermine the republican government. See Krumeich, 'Dolchstoßlegende' in François and Schulze (eds.), *Erinnerungsorte*, p. 591.

[631] FES, 6/FLBL005037: DNVP, *Deutsches Volk wache auf!* (Berlin, 1919).

[632] Barth, *Dolchstosslegenden*, pp. 77-79; Krumeich, 'Dolchstoßlegende' in François and Schulze (eds.), *Erinnerungsorte*, pp. 592f.

[633] Krumeich, 'Dolchstoßlegende' in François and Schulze (eds.), *Erinnerungsorte* , p. 584.

[634] Sammet, 'Dolchstoss', p. 184.

right-wing propaganda to uphold its version of Germany's defeat based on inconsistent evidence and conscious deceit.

According to a definition by Daniel Pipes, the 'stab in the back' myth exhibited most elements of a classic conspiracy theory.[635] Pipes initially defines a conspiracy theory as containing some truth which is distorted by fabrications and the creation of false causalities.[636] Additionally, he describes it as an obscure hypothesis, rejecting common knowledge, relying on a basic assumption repeated in contradictory versions, refusing to acknowledge counter-evidence or other historical explanations for a phenomenon, and treating facts carelessly.[637] Pipes finally characterises a conspiracy theory as arising from a deep sense of dissatisfaction reflecting people's sense of impotence, which aimed to challenge those who allegedly benefited from a historical event while hiding their own motives.[638] The 'stab in the back' myth, which revived traditional allegations accusing the left for being unpatriotic, conformed to all of these characteristics. In order to escape responsibility for defeat and discredit their political opponents, reactionary forces reversed the causality of defeat and revolution, attributing the undeniable decline in soldiers' morale to treacherous agitation.

In response to such accusations, SPD propaganda reinforced the notion that the party had only reluctantly accepted the leading political role because they wanted to spare the people a complete collapse.[639] In this manner, SPD publications and the Centre Party Minister of Finance Matthias Erzberger alike acknowledged the necessity to manage the assets of the bankrupt former government, but rejected responsibility for the bankruptcy.[640] The appeal to people's sense of disaffection rather than their logic as well as the tabloid-style presentation of misinformation as self-evident truth impeded republican attempts to disprove the 'stab in the back' myth. Two *Vorwärts* articles in particular stressed the difficulty of countering such allegations with reason: in response to the antisemitic version of the 'stab in the back' legend, which reflected the most logically incomprehensible of all the constructions allocating responsibility for defeat, *Vorwärts* simply gave up on providing evidence to disprove right-wing myth making on a factual

---

635 Daniel Pipes's historical analysis of the inter-war period, which solely focuses on antisemitic myths which were later adopted by the Nazis and alleged Masonic conspiracies, is very journalistic and questionable with regard to his sources. His detailed definition of the different characteristics of conspiracy theories, however, provide an useful formula which also applies in the case of the 'stab in the back' myth. See Daniel Pipes, *Verschwörung. Faszination und Macht des Geheimen* (Munich, 1998), pp. 59, 71-78 for relevant definitions; pp. 148-153, 158-163 for conspiracy theories in Weimar Germany.

636 Ibid, p. 59.

637 Ibid, pp. 71-73

638 Ibid, pp. 75f, 78.

639 'Die Kaiserfrage' *Vorwärts* 309 (9 November 1918); 'Nationalversammlung zu Weimar' *Vorwärts* 160 (28 March 1919). For the SPD's lack of enthusiam for revolution which enabled their rise to power see Winkler, *Arbeiter und Arbeiterräte*, pp. 38-42; Kluge, *Die deutsche Revolution*, p. 56.

640 'Erzberger über die Lage' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 10 (5 January 1920); 'Vor den Staatsgerichtshof!' *Vorwärts* 377 (26 July 1919).

basis.[641] Commenting on a Pan-German leaflet which blamed the Jews for both the outbreak and the outcome of the war, the publication merely stressed that the author evidently underestimated the 'intelligence of his nation of poets and thinkers if he dares to confront them with such absurd nonsense'.[642] Bernhard Rausch's response to Ernst zu Reventlow's attempts in the reactionary *Deutsche Tageszeitung* to blame the SPD for defeat also reflected the difficulty of disproving slanderous propaganda.[643] Rausch concluded a number of *Vorwärts* articles, which aimed to disprove Count Reventlow's arguments in a logical manner, with the following judgement:

> Count Reventlow is acting like a real octopus, which covers itself in a cloud of ink as soon as it is challenged. Three times we have tried in vain to force him to stick to objective evidence, yet he slips out of one's grasp like a lathered eel. He does not want to argue, he wants to bluster. He does not aim for logic, but for prevarication. Even if one proved to him ten times that white is white, he would still claim that white is black and that the Pan-Germans were never anything but veritable angels of peace. For these reasons, further discussion with him is pointless.[644]

A caricature in *Der wahre Jacob* also, very aptly, addressed both the nature of the 'stab in the back' myth and its continued repetition in right-wing propaganda: it depicts the DNVP chairman Oscar Hergt as a bull, feeding on "stab in the back' myth' fodder, while his conservative party comrades are waiting to re-use his 'nutritious shit'.[645]

Defining these deceptive propaganda tactics as equivalent to the wartime propaganda which had been Germany's downfall, Lothar Persius, a former naval captain turned pacifist, wrote in *Die Weltbühne* that responsibility for defeat would have to be addressed.[646] He argued, less than a week after the revolution, that only a thorough investigation of the reasons for Germany's military collapse would prevent those responsible from covering up their guilt by falsely blaming the revolution for defeat.[647] Persius, like the *Frankfurter Zeitung* and socialist leaflets, thus equated the post-war propaganda of Germany's right-wing parties with their deceptive demagogy during the war.[648] This depiction of Germany's right-wing parties as a continuation of its wartime

---

[641] 'Juden, Freimaurer und Sozialdemokraten. Ein Kapitel zur Volksverdummung' *Vorwärts* 395 (5 August 1919).
[642] Ibid.
[643] Bernhard Rausch, 'Die Schuld der Alldeutschen' 429 *Vorwärts* (23 August 1919). For biographical information on Rausch see Appendix I, p. 335.
[644] Quotation from Bernhard Rausch, 'Ein Tintenfisch' *Vorwärts* 435 (26 August 1919). For the remaining *Vorwärts* articles referring to Reventlow's column in the Deutsche Tageszeitung see idem, 'Wo sind die Reichszerstörer?' *Vorwärts* 418 (17 August 1919); Idem, 'Vom Scheidemann- zum Reventlow-Frieden' *Vorwärts* 421 (19 August 1919); Idem, 'Die Schuld der Alldeutschen' *Vorwärts* 429 (23 August 1919).
[645] 'Ein Jubiläum', *Der wahre Jacob* 921 (11 February 1921). See Illustration VIII, p. 157.
[646] Lothar Persius, 'Die Unheilstifter' *Die Weltbühne* 46 (14 November 1918), p. 460. For biographical information on Persius see Appendix I, p. 334.
[647] Ibid, This warning illustrates that 'stab in the back' allegations were already prevalent in the political discourse of the republic from the first week of the revolution rather than, as Barth and Krumeich argue, on 17 December. See Barth, *Dolchstosslegenden*, p. 324; Krumeich, 'Dolchstoßlegende' in François and Schulze (eds.), *Erinnerungsorte*, p. 592.
[648] For other examples of this allegation see 'Der militärische Zusammenbruch' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 419 (8 June 1919); 'Der Zusammenbruch' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 342 (11 May 1920); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, SPD, 1920, Berlin: SPD, *Der Feind steht rechts!* (Berlin, 1920); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933,

elite aimed to direct the people's sense of betrayal, arising from Germany's unexpected defeat, against the republic's political opposition.

The obvious right-wing refusal to be confined to the realm of facts – evident in claims, made by DNVP leaflets, that England could only have continued fighting until January 1919 or that the German offensive in 1918 had been successful – forced republican propaganda to find means other than logical debate to defend the republic against right-wing attacks.[649] Commenting on *Reichsbanner* attempts to disprove right-wing myths regarding the war with reference to the 'truth', Benjamin Ziemann states the impossibility to disprove myths with facts.[650] Faced with the same problem in the revolutionary period, republican propaganda thus attempted to match the emotional appeal of right-wing attacks in their counter-allegations. This was particularly evident in republican attempts to define the 'stab in the back' myth as an attempt by Germany's former elite to shift the blame for a responsibility they did not have the courage to admit.[651] By defining deception and cowardice as the guiding motivations behind such enthusiastic right wing allegations of republican treachery, the republic justified its response that those promoting such propaganda did not deserve the people's support. *Vorwärts* summarised this view by stressing that

> [i]t would be a sad state of affairs if, only eight months after the victorious revolution, this miserable riffraff who are responsible for our current situation were allowed to go scot-free and resume their old criminal antics.[652]

Republican newspapers furthermore reinforced the unethical and deceptive nature of the 'stab in the back' myth by emphasizing that its inventors were spreading the myth against their own better knowledge. *Die Freiheit*, for example, contrasted Hindenburg's statement to the Second Parliamentary Commission that the army had been stabbed in the back by the home front with quotations from two of his wartime directives.[653] These illustrated that during the armistice negotiations, Hindenburg had disproved his own 'stab in the back' allegation by blaming the military superiority of Germany's enemies for the necessity of the armistice, while lauding the spirit and heroism of the German troops.[654]

SPD, 1919, Berlin: SPD, *Ludendorff und die Deutschnationalen sind schuld!* (Berlin, 1919); FES, NUR 1918 Dezember II: USPD, *Frauen und Mädchen des arbeitenden Volkes!* (n.p., 1919).

[649] FES, NUR 1919 Januar III: DNVP, *Lügen, Phrasen, Wahrheit!* (n.p., 1919); Flugblätter 1918-1933, DDP, o.O: DNVP, *Mitbürger! Deutsche Männer und Frauen!* (n.p., 1918/1919).

[650] Ziemann, 'Republikanische Kriegserinnerung' in *Historische Zeitung*, pp. 392f.

[651] Sammet quotes the Social Democrat Kurt Heinig as stating that the 'stab in the back' allegation was only an excuse of those responsible in the preface of his book *Die große Ausrede von der erdolchten Front*. See Sammet, 'Dolchstoß', p. 178. Also see 'Zwei Warner' *Vorwärts* 17 (10 January 1920); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DDP, Berlin, 1920: DDP, *Wer waren die Kriegsverlängerer und die falschen Siegespropheten?* (Berlin, 1920); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, Reichsfreunde, Berlin, 1919 Reichsfreunde, *Warum verloren wir den Krieg?* (Berlin, 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, SPD, 1918-19, o.O.: SPD, *Noch eine Gemeinheit der "Allgemeinen Zeitung"* (n.p., 1918/1919).

[652] 'Sie werden immer frecher! Wann wird endlich zugepackt?' *Vorwärts* 327 (29 June 1919).

[653] 'Der vergeßliche Feldmarschall' *Die Freiheit* 570 (24 November 1919).

[654] Ibid.

Quoting from his wartime book *Der Weltkrieg*, *Vorwärts* also attacked the wartime Minister of Finance and vice-chancellor Karl Helfferich in a similar manner.[655] The paper pointed out that contrary to his and his party's current political propaganda, the DNVP politician had not blamed the revolution, but the Hindenburg Programme for Germany's economic distress, the failure of the mistaken U-Boat campaign for the population's sinking morale and the unsuccessful campaign of March 1918 for Germany's military retreat into a defensive position.[656] It is significant that Hindenburg and Helfferich in particular were revealed as conscious liars, because both men continued to play active political roles in the republic.

The central position of republican attacks on the right-wing 'stab in the back' myth reflects their importance in establishing republican governing legitimacy. Efforts to discredit the right-wing narrative of defeat by questioning the moral credibility of its advocates were complemented by numerous attempts to challenge the truthfulness of its content. In order to structure republican attempts to deal with the 'stab in the back' myth, this analysis will focus on republican challenges to the three main components of the allegation: the alleged possibility of German victory, the soldiers' ability to continue fighting in November 1918, and the attribution of the soldiers' sinking morale to revolutionary agitation.

1. The chance for German victory

If one assumed that a final German victory had been militarily possible, the reactionary insistence that treacherous influences had frustrated the nation's victorious potential would appear plausible. By disproving the theory that German victory had been either possible or likely, republican newspapers thus undermined a crucial legitimising factor for the 'stab in the back' myth. The left-wing publications *Die Weltbühne* and *Die Freiheit* argued that the conduct of the former military leadership and its Pan-German supporters made Germany's military collapse inevitable.[657] All of the newspapers analysed furthermore defined the two battles of the Marne as proof that the *OHL* rather than the republican government was responsible for Germany's military collapse.[658] Interestingly, articles in both *Die Freiheit* and *Vorwärts* focused on the two unsuccessful battles of the

---

[655] For further details of Helfferich's biography see Walther F. Peterson, 'Helfferich, Karl' in Benz and Graml (eds.), *Biographisches Lexikon*, pp. 134f.
[656] 'Helfferich gegen Helfferich. Oder: Die erdolchte Front' *Vorwärts* 280 (3 June 1920).
[657] 'Bande!' *Die Freiheit* 352 (26 July 1919); 'Haases Anklage gegen die Regierung' *Die Freiheit* 356 (29 July 1919); Georg Metzler, 'Die Schuld des Reichstags' *Die Weltbühne* 48 (28 November 1918), pp. 501-505; Heinrich Ströbel, 'Die Verantwortlichen' *Die Weltbühne* 34 (14 August 1919), pp. 183ff.
[658] 'Frankfurt, 20. November' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 869 (20 November 1919); 'Lest die Akten!' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 381 (27 May 1920); 'Die Ursachen des Zusammenbruchs' *Die Freiheit* 413 (28 August 1919); 'Wer hat die Front erdolcht? Dokumente zur deutschen Niederlage' *Die Freiheit* 184 (20 May 1920); 'Wir geben weiter. Ein zeitgemäßes Flugblatt' *Vorwärts* 384 (30 July 1919); Richard Gädke, 'Die Ursache unserer Niederlage' *Vorwärts* 331 (2 December 1918); Heinrich Ströbel, 'Die Verantwortlichen' *Die Weltbühne* 34 (14 August 1919), pp. 181-185.

Marne in 1914 and 1918, respectively defining each as an antecedent of German military defeat.[659] Meanwhile, the *Frankfurter Zeitung* simply identified both as evidence that Germany had lost the war on military rather than ideological grounds.[660] Each failed battle of the Marne was taken as proof of Germany's strategic weakness, suggesting that Germany could not have achieved victory by military means.

The republican decision to define these symmetrical military failures as signifiers of German wartime policies implied that in spite of occasional victories Germany's military planning had been based on misconceptions from the first to the last year of the war.[661] In this context Sammet's definition of sources blaming enemy superiority for Germany's defeat as a 'neutral explanation' rather than an 'accusation of responsibility' for defeat has to be challenged.[662] A number of evaluations of military enemy superiority as a failure of military strategy throughout the republican press suggested that the allegation was clearly intended to lay the blame for Germany's defeat on Germany's former military leadership.[663] In order to prove the extent of Ludendorff's failures as a military strategist *Die Freiheit* also alleged that he had revoked an order for cannon barrels in 1917 because he had assumed that they could be taken from the enemy.[664]

The republican press furthermore criticised the military leadership's failure to confine its war aims to military goals Germany was capable of achieving as its most grievous mistake. The allegation's centrality for the republican narrative of defeat is evident in the immediate republican appropriation of Erzberger's charge that the *OHL*, in collaboration with its right-wing supporters, had prevented negotiations for a conciliatory peace.[665] The public sessions of the Second Parliamentary Commission, set up to investigate the wartime possibilities for peace and to clarify the allegations Erzberger had raised in the National Assembly, had a similar impact. Irrespective of former chancellor Bethmann Hollweg's reluctance to admit the *OHL*'s decisive role in German wartime politics, republican newspapers portrayed the mediation attempts of US President Wilson and the Pope as potential chances to end the war, which the *OHL* had wilfully obstructed

---

[659] *Vorwärts,* Ibid; *Die Freiheit,* Ibid.

[660] 'Frankfurt, 20. November' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 869 (20 November 1919); 'Lest die Akten!' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 381 (27 May 1920).

[661] This is explicitly expressed in Richard Gädke, 'Die Ursache unserer Niederlage' *Vorwärts* 331 (2 December 1918).

[662] Sammet, *"Dolchstoss"*, p. 180.

[663] 'Ludendorff und Scheidemann' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 204 (17 March 1919); 'Der unmögliche Krieg. Das Urteil eines Generals' *Vorwärts* 267 (26 May 1919); 'Wie das deutsche Heer geschlagen wurde' *Die Freiheit* 624 (23 December 1919).

[664] 'Der Volksbetrüger Ludendorff' *Die Freiheit* 319 (18 July 1919). Wilhelm Deist supports the view that the OHL completely failed towards the end of the war, ordering offensives in May and June 1918 without a strategic concepts beyond defeating the enemy or a realistic assessment of Germany's military strength. See 'Der militärische Zusammenbruch des Kaiserreichs' in Büttner, *Das Unrechtsregime*, pp. 113f.

[665] For a concise summary of the conflict between Erzberger and von Graefe in the National Assembly which initiated this debate see Heinemann, *Die verdrängte Niederlage*, p. 159.

in order to pursue their annexationist war aims.[666] The German refusal to commit itself to Belgian independence and the obstruction of Wilson's plans by declaring German war aims and resuming unrestricted U-Boat warfare were thus identified as *OHL* attempts to sabotage a negotiated peace.[667]

Republican discourse particularly condemned the military leadership's failure to pursue the unrestricted U-Boat warfare instead of following up Wilson's offer to arbitrate a 'peace without victors and vanquished'.[668] The publications analysed here portrayed this decision as the cause of America's entry into the war, defining the rejection of moderate peace terms in favour of the utopian aim of an absolute German victory as an irresponsible gamble which determined Germany's defeat.[669] In a *Vorwärts* article, the renowned pacifist Friedrich Wilhelm Foerster provided the most articulate summary of the republican evaluations of the U-Boat campaign, which formed a significant part of the republican narrative of defeat. He asked:

> [...] were certain and undeniable possibilities of peace carelessly missed in 1916 and 1917? Was an enormously fateful instrument of war deployed without careful consideration of all its positive and negative consequences? Was the entire future of a large nation irresponsibly staked on a single card? The answer to all these questions is three times 'yes'! All witnesses have confirmed – willingly or unwillingly, deliberately or unwittingly - that the decision for unrestricted U-Boat warfare and against Wilson's mediation was taken in spite of entirely insufficient information and severe warnings. [...] The presumptuous arrogance of the OHL to unilaterally push through decisions which by far exceeded their competence solely on emotional judgement while stopping through censorship any participation by those who think differently in creating public opinion – this presumptuousness [...] has to be regarded as criminal and should be identified as such before the entire nation [...] The German people will start to recognise [...] that their great leaders had proven to be extremely small-minded in their self-defence. Instead of admitting openly 'Yes, we have erred and miscalculated horribly' they continuously diverted public opinion from the key issue [...] that the OHL had made itself the henchmen of the insane policies of heavy industry from 1916 and therefore blatantly feared an agreement between German politics and Wilson's principles. [...] Prussian militarism recognised that it was about to be beaten [...] and therefore only wanted to accept a peace securing it an advantage for a Second World War in order to prevent [its demise] by any means. This is the cause for which people are supposed to bleed to death again.[670]

---

[666] Ibid, p. 161; 'Ludendorff heißt Haase' *Vorwärts* 378 (26 July 1919); Rudolf Breitscheid, 'Klarheit' *Die Freiheit* 561 (19 November 1919); Friedrich Wilhelm Foerster, 'Der Kernpunkt I' *Vorwärts* 662 (29 December 1919); Heinrich Ströbel, 'Die Verantwortlichen' *Die Weltbühne* 34 (14 August 1919), p. 183.

[667] 'Der erste Tag' *Vorwärts* 540 (22 October 1919); 'Ludendorff heißt Haase' *Vorwärts* 378 (26 July 1919); 'Tatsachen I' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 956 (23 December 1919); Rudolf Breitscheid, 'Ein schändliches Spiel' *Die Freiheit* 354 (28 July 1919); Heinrich Ströbel, 'Untersuchungsausschuß' *Die Weltbühne* 46 (6 November 1919), pp. 555-559. The selection of newspapers illustrates that the view that a conciliatory peace could have been possible was not, as Sammet claims, a minority view confined to the left. See Sammet, *"Dolchstoss"*, p. 184.

[668] For example 'Der Beginn der Abrechnung' *Die Freiheit* 510 (22 October 1919); 'Tatsachen II' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 959 (23 December 1919); 'Die Verfehlte Kriegspolitik. Akten und Dokumente' *Vorwärts* 270 (28 May 1920). For a summary of the genesis of this decision to reintroduce the unrestricted U-Boat warfare see Chickering, *Imperial Germany*, pp. 92-94.

[669] 'Bethmann Hollweg wird vernommen' *Vorwärts* 558 (31 October 1919); 'Frankfurt, 24. Oktober' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 798 (24 October 1919); 'Die Verfehlte Kriegspolitik. Akten und Dokumente' *Vorwärts* 270 (28 May 1920).

[670] Friedrich Wilhelm Foerster, 'Der Kernpunkt I' *Vorwärts* 662 (29 December 1919). For biographical information on Foerster see Appendix I, pp. 325f.

A briefer commentary in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* accused the *OHL* of not having attempted to pursue a negotiated peace even though they recognised that Germany was heading towards the abyss.[671] These allegations plainly identified the former military leadership as those responsible for the crushing nature of the military defeat, because they had failed to accept its military inevitability. Additionally, they appealed to people's anger by suggesting that their suffering during the war could have been ended much earlier.[672] The *Frankfurter Zeitung* summed up this argument by claiming that Ludendorff did not recognise Germany's limitations, but 'played out all his cards and was left with nothing when he requested the armistice'.[673] In this manner Germany's former military leadership was not only portrayed as incompetent, but also as intentionally obstructive to ending the war with significantly more favourable peace terms for Germany.[674] In defining the only potential for a favourable peace settlement by reference to the principles of the *Reichstag* peace resolution, rather than to the annexationist war aims of the military leadership, republican propaganda reinforced a sense of continuity in the republican parties' policies which was unrelated to the disastrous outcome of the war.[675] Two articles in *Vorwärts* consciously inverted right-wing allegations, reinterpreting the accusation levied against 'criminals who stabbed us in the back' to address Ludendorff, while the traditional insult for SPD members as 'scoundrels without fatherland' was attributed to the Pan-Germans.[676]

The SPD particularly exploited these allegations against the former military leadership and wartime annexationists, claiming that its wartime commitment to a peace

---

[671] 'Der Weg zum Abgrund' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 635 (28 August 1919). For similar views in the other republican publications also see 'Hintze gegen Ludendorff' *Die Freiheit* 443 (13 September 1919); 'Schicksalstragödie' *Vorwärts* 559 (1 November 1919).

[672] Otto Lehmann-Russbüldt spelled out this allegation, while other articles and leaflets only insinuated that the refusal of the mediation offers prolonged the war and people's suffering. See 'Ludendorffs verbrecherischer Größenwahn - Deutschlands Unglück' *Vorwärts* 342 (13 December 1918); Otto Lehmann-Russbüldt, 'Die Friedensfühler von 1915' *Die Freiheit* 371 (6 August 1919).

[673] Rudolf Kircher, 'Das Wunder' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 431 (14 June 1919). For biographical information on Kircher see Appendix I, p. 329.

[674] 'Frankfurt, 29. Oktober 1919' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 811 (29 October 1919); 'Der unmögliche Krieg. Das Urteil eines Generals' *Vorwärts* 267 (26 May 1919); 'Das unmögliche Kriegsziel' *Vorwärts* 256 (20 May 1920).

[675] The 1917 peace resolution was decided upon by SPD, Progressives and the Centre Party and announced the *Reichstag*'s commitment to a peace without annexations against reservations of Bethmann Hollweg and the *OHL*. The announced pride in this resolution was somewhat problematic, however, because the new chancellor Georg Michaelis presented it in a way that destroyed its impression as a genuine commitment to a just peace. See Chickering, *Imperial Germany*, pp. 163f; Erdmann, *Weltkrieg*, pp. 205f. While the right alleged that the peace resolution had weakened Germany's will for victory and illustrated German weakness to the Allies, USPD critics attacked it as too lame. See 'Die Friedensresolution von 1917. Eine "Angeklagte" im Erzberger Prozess' *Vorwärts* 126 (9 March 1920); 'Die Juli-Resolution vor Gericht' *Die Freiheit* 63 (2 March 1920); 'Keine Schuldverschiebung! Ein unabhängiges Parteimanöver' *Vorwärts* 379 (27 July 1919).

[676] 'Deutschnationale Schimpforgie. Sie machen es mit dem Maul' *Vorwärts* 314 (22 June 1919); 'Selbstbeschimpfung der Alldeutschen' *Vorwärts* 293 (11 June 1919). With reference to the communist manifesto of 1848, which stated that 'workers have no fatherland', the term 'vaterlandslose Gesellen' traditionally expressed the imperial elite's suspicion that the SPD's commitment to the socialist international could not be reconciled with German patriotism. The reversal of this insult against Germany's former elite thus implied a complete role reversal in German politics. For the background of the term see Helga Grebing, *Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung* (Munich, 1971), p. 134.

without annexations proved the party's suitability to represent a republican people who had rejected their former leaders' wartime ideology through the process of revolution.[677] In response to allegations made in the National Assembly by the DNVP deputy Graefe, Philipp Scheidemann expressed pride in the SPD's opposition to wartime annexations. He argued that:

> [t]he German people had to experience this collapse because of the irresponsible wartime policies of Herr Graefe and his friends [...] You carry a good measure of responsibility for the outcome and the continuation of war. [...] This horrific end to the war was not inevitable and, because of this, we promoted a conciliatory peace from the beginning of 1915. We were badly insulted for this, but continued unwaveringly.[678]

Die Freiheit's response to this self-representation by its main political rival expressed opposition to this claim almost as a matter of protocol. The newspaper published speeches by the USPD's founder Hugo Haase, who claimed that his party had been the only one to promote a conciliatory peace, while the SPD had supported nationalist demands to keep Belgium.[679] In retaliation, *Vorwärts* equated the wartime conduct of the USPD with that of the Pan-Germans, alleging that both parties equally had failed to recognise Germany's desperate military situation throughout the war.[680] *Vorwärts* consequently alleged that both USPD and right-wing propaganda declaring German victory as possible and likely obstructed Germany's chances for a conciliatory peace, because it underestimated and strengthened the Allies.[681] Neither of these painfully manufactured allegations among the socialist parties benefited the construction of a legitimising republican narrative of defeat. Instead, they diverted attention away from the common republican goal of containing the political influence of Germany's former elite.

The Second Parliamentary Commission proved even more damaging to republican attempts to undermine the 'stab in the back' myth than had the socialist rivalries. In a carefully staged appearance before the commission, which was accompanied by a nationalist frenzy of monarchists, university students, pupils and representatives of the army, Hindenburg reinforced the notion that the army and navy had been 'stabbed in the back'.[682] Heinemann argues that this official statement lent

---

[677] FES, NUR 1918 Dezember I: SPD, 'Die klerikale Hetze während des Krieges' (Berlin, 1919); 'Wahlen am 19. Januar' *Vorwärts* 349 (20 December 1918); 'Wähler! Wählerinnen!' *Vorwärts* 1 (1 January 1919).
[678] 'Deutsche Nationalversammlung' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 134 (19 February 1919).
[679] 'Die Geschichte der deutschen Kriegspolitik' *Die Freiheit* 369 (5 August 1919). The historian Friedhelm Boll reinforces the USPD allegation that the SPD, at least to some extent, shared the *OHL*'s war aims. He suggests that the SPD leadership was still willing to prolong the war for another year in 1917 in order to avoid paying compensation for Belgium and that the party's right wing supported the annexationist treaty of Brest Litowsk. Friedhelm Boll, *Frieden ohne Revolution? Friedensstrategien der deutschen Sozialdemokratie vom Erfurter Programm 1891 bis zur Revolution 1918* (Bonn, 1980), pp. 225, 249.
[680] 'Reventlows Fälschungen' *Vorwärts* 561 (2 November 1919).
[681] 'Ludendorffs Kriegserinnerungen' *Vorwärts* 422 (19 August 1919); 'Das Treiben der Reaktion' *Vorwärts* 154 (25 March 1919).
[682] Heinemann, *Die verdrängte Niederlage*, pp. 162f. The entire republican press severely criticised this nationalist agitation - even the *Frankfurter Zeitung* noted its counter-revolutionary nature and

historical legitimacy to the right-wing wartime allegation.[683] Although the revolutionary discourse had long since established the 'stab in the back' myth as alleged historical truth by the time Hindenburg made his statement on 18 November 1919, his public support for the 'stab in the back' myth was nevertheless dangerous for the republic because it made the allegation more accessible for more moderate political forces.[684] It was also important because it made the respected military leader's refusal to back down in the face of contradictory evidence into a symbolic victory for irrational right-wing propaganda. Hindenburg's conduct illustrated that even a provable republican narrative of defeat, which blamed the *OHL* for preventing a moderate negotiated peace as the only possible German victory, could not undermine a conviction based on hatred rather than logic.

2. Soldiers' ability to continue fighting

Another republican attempt to disprove the 'stab in the back' myth attacked right-wing assumptions that the undefeated German army had only been rendered defenceless by the revolution in 1918. This idea was most prominently expressed by Hindenburg, who portrayed the revolution as cutting off provisions from a weakened, yet undefeated German front.[685] In a similar manner, DVP and DNVP leaflets alleged that the revolution had weakened Germany's bargaining power during the armistice negotiations because it left the troops in disarray.[686] As part of this political discourse, divergent interpretations of the mental and physical constitution of German soldiers played a significant role in reactionary and republican narratives alike. Even after the revolution anti-republican forces upheld the wartime creed that the *Stahlbad* of their experience at the front had transformed the soldiers into more highly evolved human beings.[687] This depiction of the soldiers as invincible warriors who were not adversely affected by the war experience implied, yet again, that the reasons for defeat would have to be sought outside the realm of

---

attacked the Freikorps for not cancelling a provocative public rally. In line with its positive view of Hindenburg outlined in chapter 2, *Vorwärts* stressed that Ludendorff rather than the Commission had insisted on Hindenburg's testimony. See 'Frankfurt, 15. November' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 858 (15 November 1919); 'Helfershelfer Clemenceaus' *Vorwärts* 585 (15 November 1919); 'Der Hindenburg-Skandal' *Vorwärts* 584 (14 November 1919); 'Nationalistische Kundgebungen' *Die Freiheit* 553 (14 November 1919); 'Ungehinderte Provokation' *Die Freiheit* 560 (18 November 1919).

[683] Heinemann, *Die verdrängte Niederlage*, p. 163.

[684] Pyta, *Hindenburg*, p. 405; chapter 1, p. 61.

[685] 'Warum der Kaiser nach Holland ging?' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 210 (19 March 1919).

[686] FES, 6/FLBL005856: DNVP, *Achtung Kameraden!* (Berlin, 1919); Flugblätter 1918-1933, DDP, o.O: DNVP, *Mitbürger! Deutsche Männer und Frauen!* (n.p., 1918/1919); FES, 6/FLBL005041: DVP, *Was hat die Revolution gebracht?* (Berlin, 1919); FES, 6/FLBL005116: Sonderabdruck aus Nr. 350 der Deutschen Zeitung, *Ist kein Yorck da?* (Berlin, 1918).

[687] This right-wing catchphrase, which literally translates as bath of steel, implies that the war strengthened the soldiers mentally and physically. It is evident in right-wing reviews of Remarque that this issue was still central to the anti-democratic creed in the late 1920s. For examples see Bärbel Schrader (ed.), *Der Fall Remarque. Im Westen nichts Neues. Eine Dokumentation* (Leipzig, 1992), pp. 34, 36f, 84f; Fries, *Katharsis*, pp. 6f; Manfred Hettling, 'Kriegserlebnis' in Hirschfeld, Krumeich and Renz (eds.), *Enzyklopädie*, pp. 638f.

the army. The reactionary narrative of defeat thus constructed a division between treacherous revolutionaries and reliable soldiers, which was used to justify the claim that the disruptive influence of the revolution had 'stabbed the German army in the back'.[688] In the context of these propaganda leaflets, Gerd Krumeich's claim that the emergence of the reactionary warrior myth was not anti-republican from the outset merits revision.[689]

Irrespective of the intentions of individual authors promoting the reactionary view of soldiers as fighting machines, which cannot be addressed as part of this thesis, republican responses to the warrior myth reflected the profoundly political nature of divergent constructs of the soldiers' fighting spirit. In a conceptual rather than a direct manner, republican propaganda challenged the right-wing glorification of German soldiers on which the 'stab in the back' myth was based through an alternative narrative of the soldiers' war experience. In newspaper articles, pamphlets, and novels dealing with the impact of the war on soldiers' attitudes, republican sources promoted images of exhausted, submissive, and resentful human beings, who had no stronger desire than to survive and get away from the front.[690] The extent to which soldiers hated their existence was illustrated by the fact that they were portrayed as welcoming serious injuries as a means to escape the war.[691] Such portrayals of the soldiers' morale challenged propagandistic concepts of heroism and self-sacrifice. Trapped at the lowest level of the hierarchical chain, soldiers were depicted as deprived of individuality, free will and any control over their own fate.[692] Additionally they had no legal means to challenge their

---

[688] Boris Barth traces this view to those parts of the front troops who continued to fight until the armistice and consequently regarded the dissolution of administrative troops with disdain. The perception of the administrative units in the rear as an extension of the home front the perception of its treacherous role emerged among the soldiers who interpreted the gradual dissolution of the army as a consequence of the revolution. See Barth, *Dolchstosslegenden*, pp. 71f.

[689] Gerd Krumeich, 'Einleitung: Die Präsenz des Krieges im Frieden' in Jost Dülffer and Gerd Krumeich, *Der verlorene Frieden: Politik und Kriegskultur nach 1918* (Essen, 2002), p. 8.

[690] 'Es war einmal!' *Die Welt am Montag* 6 (14 February 1921), 'Totentanz' *Die Freiheit* 287 (20 June 1919), 'Heil Dir im Siegerkranz' *Vorwärts* 599 (23 November 1919), 'Gericht der Toten' *Vorwärts* 407 (11 August 1919), 'Aus dem Tagebuch' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 390 (30 May 1920) Also see the depiction of soldiers in other contemporary publications like Lehmann-Russbüldt, *Warum?*, p. 5; Zech, *Das Grab der Welt*, pp. 15, 84, 85; Latzko, *Menschen im Krieg*, pp. 42, 72f; Fritz von Unruh, *Opfergang* (Berlin, 1919), p. 145. Benjamin Ziemann has shown that this view of the soldiers' front experience later provided the ideological basis of the republican (yet SPD dominated) war-veterans' organisation *Reichsbanner* which was founded in 1924. Additionally, the organisation adopted the republic's foundation narrative that the armistice was welcomed by the soldiers and strongly opposed the 'stab in the back' myth. Ziemann's argument that the *Reichsbanner* provided a means for socialists to seek 'a symbolic interpretation and representation' of their front experience suggested that this was no longer provided by republican discourse in 1924. See 'Republikanische Kriegserinnerung in einer polarisierten Öffentlichkeit' in *Historische Zeitschrift*, pp. 366f, 372-376, 390. George Mosse also solely refers to the *Reichsbanner* when noting left-wing attempts to utilise the war, while ignoring that the *Reichsbanner's* interpretation of the war emerged from the republican foundation narrative. See 'Über Kriegserinnerungen und Kriegsbegeisterung' in Linden and Mergner (eds.), *Kriegsbegeisterung*, p. 29. For biographical information on von Unruh and Zech see Appendix I, pp. 339f.

[691] Lehmann-Russbüldt, *Warum?* , p. 10, Latzko, *Menschen im Krieg*, p. 136.

[692] 'Militaria – Unser Militär' *Weltbühne* 28 (3 July 1919), pp. 25f; 'Die Kerle' *Weltbühne* 30 (17 July 1919), pp. 69f; Unruh, *Opfergang*, p. 3.

officers' decisions as the military understanding of discipline did not tolerate dissent.[693] Soldiers in republican narratives endured their fate grudgingly and under threat of death upon desertion.[694]

Several historians have argued that at least some soldiers committed acts of defiance by deserting or attacking their officers.[695] Although Christoph Jahr has shown that the desertion gained attention disproportionate to its limited cases during the war, it is generally acknowledged that towards the end of the conflict the levels of soldierly disobedience had reached dimensions of a 'covert military strike'.[696] Yet active opposition by soldiers played almost no role in the republican accounts of the war although the protagonists had actually voiced their grievances and therefore personally confronted the nationalist doctrine of enthusiastic sacrifice. The majority of soldiers in republican narratives either resentfully accepted their subordinate role in the military treadmill or broke under the pressure of combat.[697] While the republican descriptions of soldiers' mindsets during the fighting resembled the brute force of what Jünger described as the ideal of the primitive man, this recovery of animal instinct in republican war narratives was solely motivated by desperation and fear.[698] Even when fictionalised soldiers realised that pushing the limits of their endurance threatened their own sanity, they did not consider deserting.[699] Lacking the strength to rebel against their fate, individual soldiers in republican narratives threw themselves into the enemy fire or completely lost control over their bodies and minds.[700] The portrayal of soldiers as impotent victims of the war machinery whose wills and sanity had been destroyed by the front experience distinguished republican war narratives, suggesting that this shared portrayal had a political dimension.

The obvious lack of pacifist anti-heroes among the soldiers in republican war narratives illustrates that the portrayal of the devastating psychological impact of combat distinctly aimed to deconstruct an important component of the 'stab in the back'

---

693 Lehmann-Russbüldt, *Warum?*, pp. 7f, 14f; 'An den Herrn Verfasser der Militaria' *Weltbühne* 13 (28 March 1919), p. 315.

694 'Gericht der Toten' *Vorwärts* 407 (11 August 1919); 'Hedwig Dohm' *Die Freiheit* 273 (8 June 1919); Leonhard Frank, *Der Mensch ist gut* (Potsdam, 1919), pp. 73f.

695 For example Lipp, *Meinungslenkung*, p. 122; Bessel, *Germany*, pp. 225f. Benjamin Ziemann, 'Enttäuschte Erwartung und kollektive Erschöpfung. Die deutschen Soldaten an der Westfront auf dem Weg zur Revolution' in Duppler and Gross (eds.), *Kriegsende 1918*, p. 165.

696 Christoph Jahr, *Gewöhnliche Soldaten. Desertion und Deserteure im deutschen und britischen Heer 1914-1918* (Göttingen, 1998), pp. 155, 157; Wilhelm Deist, 'Verdeckter Militärstreik im Kriegsjahr 1918?' in Wolfram Wette (ed.), *Der Krieg des kleinen Mannes* (Munich, 1992), pp. 148f, 152-160. Also see Bernd Ulrich and Benjamin Ziemann, 'Das soldatische Kriegserlebnis' in Wolfgang Kruse (ed.), *Eine Welt von Feinden. Der Große Krieg 1914-1918* (Frankfurt, 1997), pp. 153f, 156-158.

697 'Aus dem Tagebuch' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 390 (30 May 1920); Unruh, *Opfergang*, pp. 51f, 110; Wilhelm Lamszus, *Das Irrenhaus* (Hamburg, 1919), pp. 16, 54; Zech, *Das Grab der Welt*, pp. 30, 168f, 174; Latzko, *Menschen im Krieg*, pp. 15f. For biographical information on Lamszus see Appendix I, p. 330.

698 Müller and Baron, 'Die Weltkriege im Roman der Nachkriegszeiten' in Riesenberger and Niedhart (eds.), *Lernen aus dem Krieg?*, p. 302; Unruh, *Opfergang*, pp. 145-149.

699 Zech, *Das Grab der Welt*, p. 79.

700 Unruh, *Opfergang*, p. 51; Lamszus, *Das Irrenhaus*, pp. 54f.

allegation. Republican war narratives of the early post-war period implicitly claimed to bear witness to 'a generation which was destroyed by the war, even if it escaped the grenades' long before Erich Maria Remarque coined the phrase, thus undermining the reactionary portrayal of soldiers as brave and noble warriors.[701] Hugo Haase transferred this republican portrayal of the soldiers into the political discourse by quoting from a pamphlet written by the pacifist war-veteran Dr. Karl Vetter during a speech in the National Assembly.[702] The editor of the liberal *Berliner Volkszeitung* concluded his description of the soldiers' sad but relieved acceptance of the armistice as a military necessity and argued that

> [...] had it not happened at the time, had the armistice been agreed only 4 or 5 weeks later, had the great rebellion of the blue comrades not accelerated the last act's final scene – the situation would have been a lot worse. Everything would have been taken from us, would have been destroyed.[703]

Vetter's evaluation of the armistice constituted a response to common right-wing allegations which merged accusations against the revolution with an unrealistic interpretation of the soldiers' ability to continue fighting. Boris Barth's analysis of the genesis of the armistice illustrates that the *OHL* immediately tried to hide Ludendorff's responsibility for the armistice request by blaming it on the democratic *Reichstag*.[704] In line with this version of the armistice, right-wing propaganda blamed the revolution for its harsh terms because it allegedly undermined the resilience of German soldiers, thus preventing a continuation of the war for better armistice conditions. The DVP deputy Wilhelm Kahl, for example, claimed in the National Assembly that a military last-ditch defence, which was prevented by the revolution, would have led to more moderate armistice terms.[705] If the German army had been able to continue resisting the enemy in autumn 1918, a last-ditch defence of the kind he suggested could have resulted in a stronger negotiating position.

---

[701] *Wiener Zeitung* (25 April 1929) in Schrader (ed.), *Der Fall Remarque*, p. 32. The republican analysis of the psychological impact of the war experience hence challenges Bruno Schulze's assumption that Remarque had no precursors. See Schulze, 'Politics and the War novel' in Stanzel and Löschnigg (eds.), *Intimate Enemies*, p. 308. This perception furthermore challenges George Mosse's claim that 'most Germans' idealised a martial idea of manhood. See Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers*, pp. 167f.

[702] 'Haases Anklage gegen die Regierung' *Die Freiheit* 356 (29 July 1919). Vetter was a co-founder of the *Friedensbund der Kriegsteilnehmer* (War-veterans Peace League) and the Republikanische Partei Deutschlands (German Republican Party). Reinhold Lütgemeier-Davin, 'Basismobilisierung gegen den Krieg: Die Nie-wieder-Krieg-Bewegung in der Weimarer Republik in Karl Holl and Wolfram Wette (eds.), *Pazifismus in der Weimarer Republik: Beiträge zur historischen Friedensforschung* (Paderborn, 1981), pp. 51, 68.

[703] Karl Vetter, *Die Anklage der Feldgrauen. Ludendorff ist schuld.* (Berlin, 1919), p. 13.

[704] Barth, *Dolchstosslegenden*, pp. 81f. Volker Ullrich argues in this context that the *OHL* consciously pushed the newly founded government into requesting armistice negotiations in order to shift the blame for Germany's defeat. See Ulrich, *Ende des Hohenzollernreiches*, p. 186.

[705] Transcript of the session in 'Deutsche Nationalversammlung' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 140 (21 February 1919). For similar allegations in right-wing leaflets see FES, 6/FLBL005037: DNVP, *Deutsches Volk wache auf!* (Berlin, 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DNVP, 1919, o.O.: DNVP, *Preussens Baumeister!* (n.p., 1919).

In the light of these allegations, the republican portrayal of the armistice and the soldiers' morale at the end of the war was an important means to undermine the 'stab in the back' myth. Covering all nuances of the reactionary accusations, republican propaganda initially established that the *OHL* rather than the newly established government had initiated the armistice request on 3 October 1918.[706] Only a week after the revolution, the chancellor of Germany's first democratic government, Prince Max von Baden, for example, emphasized his vehement opposition to this decision by the military leadership, because it would demonstrate Germany's military weakness to the Allies.[707] An official document collection clarifying the development of the armistice, which the government published in July 1919, proved furthermore that von Baden had explicitly informed the *OHL* that their request would cause painful territorial losses for Germany.[708] The republican narrative subsequently maintained that in spite of these warnings, Hindenburg and Ludendorff had insisted on sending the armistice request within 24 hours after the new government's formation, because they regarded the collapse of the German front as imminent.[709] Republican narratives thus clearly established that the *OHL* had to be held responsible for the armistice as well as the collapse of the German army.

A number of republican publications did not stop at blaming the former military leadership for the armistice request, but offered a political evaluation of its role in Germany's defeat which proved somewhat inconsistent. In order to discredit Ludendorff, some republican newspaper articles maintained that Ludendorff, in his panic which motivated him to demand an immediate armistice, had overestimated the danger of imminent collapse.[710] The *Frankfurter Zeitung* held this miscalculation responsible for the

---

[706] See for example FES, NUR 1918 Undatiert III *Kameraden von der Front!* (n.p., 1918); 'Wie der Waffenstillstand zustande kam' *Vorwärts* 158 (27 March 1919); 'Zur Geschichte des Waffenstillstandsangebots' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 169 (4 March 1919); FES, NUR 1919 Undatiert II DDP, *Deutsche Männer, deutsche Frauen! Mitbürger in Stadt und Land!* (Berlin, 1919); Job, 'Wer hat den großen Fehler gemacht?' *Die Freiheit* 279 (12 June 1919); FES, 6/FLBL005868: SPD, *Soldaten!* (Berlin, 1918/1919). In this context, Rainer Sammet compares the polemic nature of the left's propaganda with that of the right, having previously identified a similar diction within both sets of allegations. It is noteworthy, however, that there was also a significant dissimilarity between the divergent narratives, namely their respective relation to provable evidence. While the right-wing narrative mainly aimed to cover up its failures with deceptive allegations, the republican depiction of the armistice's genesis was largely based on facts. See Sammet, *"Dolchstoss"*, pp. 78, 184f. For a description of the right-wing approaches to portraying the armistice see Barth, *Dolchstosslegenden*, pp. 78-83.

[707] 'Die Vorgeschichte der Revolution - Die Veröffentlichungen des Prinzen Max' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 318 (16 November 1918). For biographical information on Max von Baden see Appendix I, p. 322.

[708] 'Dokumente zum Waffenstillstand. Von der Niederlage zur Revolution' *Vorwärts* 388 (1 August 1919). The article refers to the *Vorgeschichte des Waffenstillstands* (Berlin, 1919) the publication of which had been commissioned by the Reich Chancellery.

[709] 'Prinz Max zur Vorgeschichte der Revolution' *Vorwärts* 316 (16 November 1918); 'Die Vorgeschichte der Revolution - Die Veröffentlichungen des Prinzen Max' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 318 (16 November 1918); 'Die Vorgeschichte des Waffenstillstandes' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 562 (1 August 1919). This chapter provides only a very simplified summary of the far more detailed republican narrative of the armistice's genesis, because it is less concerned with its details than with the broad strokes which defined its importance as a means to defend the republic.

[710] 'Dokumente zum Waffenstillstand. Von der Niederlage zur Revolution' *Vorwärts* 388 (1 August 1919); 'Die Konferenz vom 25. Oktober 1918' *Vorwärts* 562 (3 November 1919); 'Der

harsh peace terms because it revealed to the Allies that Germany could not continue fighting.[711] Commenting with glee that even General Groener had defined his predecessor's armistice request as a major miscalculation which had inevitably led to Germany's collapse, the publication equated the armistice request with a German capitulation.[712] *Vorwärts* and the *Frankfurter Zeitung* furthermore blamed the *OHL* for the complete collapse of both front and home front, arguing that the military leadership had underestimated the psychological impact of the armistice.[713] In a reversal of the 'stab in the back' myth the SPD publication argued that people could have endured more suffering or could have been roused for a last-ditch defence, had they but known that they were fighting for survival rather than the *OHL*'s annexationist war aims.[714] *Vorwärts* consequently blamed the annexationist victory propaganda for obstructing people's commitment to a defensive *levée en masse* once it became clear that the war could no longer be won.[715]

While maintaining that Ludendorff's rushed armistice request was a strategic miscalculation that backfired both domestically and internationally, republican discourse nevertheless emphasised that the army's weakened condition had necessitated ending the war. In order to disprove the notion that the revolution had undermined the front, republican propaganda focused on the soldiers' exhaustion. A newsletter of the pacifist *Friedensbund der Kriegsteilnehmer*, for example, offered the following explanation for the armistice:

> [t]he revolution indeed prevented the army from continuing to fight and thus stabbed the army in the back. Yet it only prevented the army from being crushed from the front. This would have been significantly worse, more painful, and more agonising. Further battles could, as far as one can judge, not achieve any successes for us anymore, but would have demanded countless blood-sacrifice and caused horrific destruction for which we would have been forced to pay reparations. The armistice protected us from the greatest military collapse of world history.[716]

Zusammenbruch. Die Irreführung der Öffentlichkeit' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 533 (22 July 1919). Also see Richard Gädke's interpretation of the armistice, quoted in Sammet, *"Dolchstoss"*, pp. 186f.

[711] 'Illusionen' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 369 (20 May 1919); 'Ludendorffs Rechtfertigung' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 157 (27 February 1919); 'Zur Geschichte des Waffenstillstandsangebots' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 169 (4 March 1919).

[712] 'Der Irrtum des Waffenstillstandsangebots' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 394 (1 June 1920). The historian Gunther May shared this evaluation, arguing that Germany ultimately 'surrendered unconditionally'. See *Ende des Kaiserreichs*, p. 153.

[713] 'Briefwechsel zwischen Ludendorff und Scheidemann' *Vorwärts* 138 (16 March 1919); 'Dokumente zum Waffenstillstand. Von der Niederlage zur Revolution' *Vorwärts* 388 (1 August 1919); J. Wallach, 'Ein Rückblick' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 841 (9 November 1919).

[714] 'Ludendorffs Rechtfertigungsversuch' *Vorwärts* 106 (27 February 1919).

[715] 'Ludendorff gegen das Weißbuch. "Der Impuls von Innen"' *Vorwärts* 390 (2 August 1919).

[716] 'Der "Dolchstoss der Heimat"' in *Der Friedensbund. Mitteilungen vom Friedensbund der Kriegsteilnehmer* 1 (December 1919).

Such counter-evidence to the soldiers' allegedly unbroken fighting spirit was promoted throughout the republican press.[717] In this republican narrative the state of the army was responsible for the practical impossibility of a last-ditch defence. The *Frankfurter Zeitung* noted, for example, that in spite of his subsequent allegations against those who allegedly obstructed a last-ditch defence, Ludendorff had explicitly rejected a *levée en masse* in October 1918 because he did not consider it likely to achieve the desired result.[718] Although Ludendorff revised this opinion in response to Wilson's second note which detailed the armistice terms, *Vorwärts* and the *Frankfurter Zeitung* stressed that this change of opinion was not based on new evidence, but was only another desperate gamble.[719] This version of events proved that the revolution was not to blame for the army's weakness or the resulting armistice terms. Rather, it held the *OHL* responsible for the army's weakness which in turn was portrayed as the reason for both defeat and armistice. Emphasizing the absurdity of the reactionary assumption that the army would have been able to continue fighting, *Vorwärts* and *Frankfurter Zeitung* furthermore denied that the revolution had had any influence on the nature of the armistice because the latter had been requested weeks before 9 November 1918.[720]

This republican foundation narrative clearly established 'war mongers and annexationists' in collaboration with the former military leadership as responsible for the armistice and therefore for Germany's defeat. In spite of its factual basis this narrative could not overcome the myth that the revolution was to blame for the armistice. Within the parameters of this thesis, the reasons for this failure to establish the republican narrative of the armistice as the lasting one can only be hypothesised. It is likely, however, that the *OHL*'s decision to put the democratic government, rather than a representative of the old regime, in charge of the armistice negotiation contributed to the public willingness to hold the messenger (in this case the democratic government) responsible for the harsh armistice terms.[721] This strategy was evident in the right-wing persecution of Matthias Erzberger who was singled out as responsible for the armistice because he had negotiated

---

[717] 'Konservative Kriegserklärung' *Vorwärts* 338 (5 July 1919); 'Der militärische Zusammenbruch' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 419 (8 June 1919); Job, 'Wer hat den großen Fehler gemacht?' *Die Freiheit* 279 (12 June 1919); Major Paulus, 'Heimat und Oberste Heeresleitung' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 68 (26 January 1919).

[718] 'Die Vorgeschichte des Waffenstillstandes' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 562 (1 August 1919). Also see BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, Reichsfreunde, Berlin, 1919 Reichsfreunde, *Warum verloren wir den Krieg?* (Berlin, 1919).

[719] 'Das Ende einer Legende' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 563 (1 August 1919); 'Die Konferenz vom 25. Oktober 1918' *Vorwärts* 562 (3 November 1919).

[720] 'Dokumente zum Waffenstillstand. Von der Niederlage zur Revolution' *Vorwärts* 388 (1 August 1919); 'Die Flucht des Kaisers' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 211 (19 March 1919); J. Wallach, 'Ein Rückblick' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 841 (9 November 1919).

[721] Ullrich, *Ende des Hohenzollernreiches*, p. 186. Boris Barth argues that Ludendorff's attempt to blame the armistice on Germany's democratic parties was not Machiavellian strategy but simply an expression of his personal views. Irrespective of this argument's plausibility, the OHL's attempt to shift the blame nevertheless betrays its refusal to acknowledge their responsibility for defeat. See Barth, *Dolchstosslegenden*, pp. 79f.

it.[722] Even the *Frankfurter Zeitung* fell into the trap of attributing the harsh armistice terms to Erzberger's alleged incompetence rather than Germany's military weakness.[723] The republican reversal of the 'stab in the back' against Ludendorff, however, also assumed that better armistice terms might have been possible and thus moved its argument to a hypothetical level. The adoption of a premise on which right-wing propaganda was also based diverted attention away from Germany's military collapse, which had completely ruled out the possibility of a successful last-ditch defence, and undermined the factual republican argument.

3. Republican 'stab in the back' allegations

Republican propaganda did not only attempt to dissect individual components of the 'stab in the back' myth but also adapted the basic allegation of this legend - namely a treacherous subversion of the German morale - for its own purposes. Like the reactionary 'stab in the back' myth, which depicted the soldiers as victims of revolutionary propaganda, its republican counterpart blamed their decreasing morale on official wartime propaganda.[724] Although some articles admitted that revolutionary propaganda material had been spread among soldiers at the front, there was a consensus among the newspapers analysed that this material did not have much effect on the soldiers until their experience could no longer be reconciled with the promises of imminent victory in official propaganda.[725] Although not all of the analysed articles could agree on whether or not there had been attempts to undermine the front, they did agree that the soldiers' recognition that the promised victory would not be forthcoming severely undermined morale within the army.[726]

---

[722] Fulda, *Press and Politics*, pp. 46-49.

[723] 'Erzberger' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 104 (8 February 1919); 'Verteidigung Erzbergers' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 117 (13 February 1919)'; 'Foch und Erzberger' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 113 (11 February 1919); 'Verderbliche Taktik' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 120 (14 February 1919).

[724] 'Franz T.' *Die Weltbühne* 6 (6 February 1919), p. 147; 'Der militärische Zusammenbruch' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 419 (8 June 1919); 'Ursachen des deutschen Zusammenbruchs' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 322 (20 November 1918). Rainer Sammet also quotes a number of extracts suggesting that the soldiers had been adversely affected by official war propaganda. See Sammet, 'Dolchstoss', pp. 186f.

[725] 'Der militärische Zusammenbruch' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 419 (8 June 1919); Adolph Köster, 'Ein falsches Datum' *Vorwärts* 151 (23 March 1919).

[726] 'Der Dolchstoß. Warum das deutsche Heer zusammenbrach' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 538 (23 July 1920); 'Die Ursachen des Zusammenbruchs' *Die Freiheit* 413 (28 August 1919). Like the majority of republican sources, Boris Barth's analysis of the agitation of the radical left defines its influence on the front troops as insignificant. See Barth, *Dolchstosslegenden*, pp. 220-223. Benjamin Ziemann also notes the front soldiers' opposition to the January strikes, outlining their antagonism towards the strikers' agitation because they perceived that it would prolong the war. See Ziemann, 'Enttäuschte Erwartung' in Duppler and Gross (eds.), *Kriegsende 1918*, pp. 170f. Rainer Sammet's treatment of the issue is somewhat questionable because his summary of the right-wing sources which are used to illustrate the alleged propagandistic undermining of the front are not contextualised sufficiently. In relation to a statement from Ludendorff, for example, which claims that soldiers spoke of preparations for an imminent post-war revolution, Sammet comments without relevant evidence that Ludendorff hardly thought of apportioning responsibility for defeat during the preparations of the

A number of publications defined the failed summer offensive in 1918 and the American entry into the war as the final blows which broke the soldiers' spirit because they then recognised that they had been deceived.[727] In a narrative of the revolution, printed in 1921, Eduard Bernstein summarised the military situation following the failed July offensive thus:

> [t]he army's offensive strength broke in July 1918, followed by the resistance of the German army at the Western front in August 1918. Attempts to restore its strength by shortening the frontline failed. No amount of reassurance could deceive the soldiers about the real state of affairs anymore.[728]

Die Freiheit summarised this version of defeat as proof that the attempt to boost soldiers' morale through deception had failed.[729] The publication concluded that dissatisfaction with the war had first emerged at the front rather than at the home front.[730] Even the mainstream liberal *Frankfurter Zeitung* argued that the home front was still strong in 1918 because the people were ignorant of Germany's military situation, while the soldiers were demoralised because they had already recognised Germany's desperate position.[731] The concept of a home front that had allegedly stabbed the army in the back with revolutionary propaganda was inverted into the concept of a military leadership stabbing the army in the back with deceptive promises. Recent research confirmed that the latter allegation was, in fact, true: Dieter Storz argues that the massive losses during the German offensives in March and April 1918 severely weakened the German army and demoralised the soldiers.[732] He concluded that the German army had been too weak to achieve its goals even months before the failed July offensive.[733]

An even more prominent source of soldiers' disillusionment with German warfare, which all of the analysed papers identified as the most powerful negative influence on soldiers' morale, was the conduct of officers during the war. The division between officers and men, evident in the military hierarchy itself and in its exploitation by individual officers, was portrayed as a significant factor enhancing the soldiers' feeling of impotence

---

March offensive in 1918. Barth shows, however, that Ludendorff was well aware before the spring offensive that its failure would be Germany's downfall. Ibid, p. 60; Sammet, *"Dolchstoss"*, pp. 84ff.

[727] 'Der militärische Zusammenbruch' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 419 (8 June 1919); 'Das Problem Ludendorff II' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 649 (2 September 1919); 'Ursachen des deutschen Zusammenbruchs' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 322 (20 November 1918); Adolph Köster, 'Ein falsches Datum' *Vorwärts* 151 (23 March 1919).

[728] Eduard Bernstein, *Die deutsche Revolution von 1918/19: Geschichte der Entstehung und der ersten Arbeitsperiode der deutschen Republik* (Berlin, 1921), p. 35. See Dieter Storz, '"Aber was hätte geschehen sollen?" Die deutschen Offensiven an der Westfront 1918' in Duppler and Gross (eds.), *Kriegsende 1918*, pp. 79-81, 93.

[729] 'Ludendorffs Kriegserinnerungen' *Die Freiheit* 407 (25 August 1919).

[730] Ibid. The historian Volker Ullrich argued along the same lines that the soldiers on leave spread the news of Germany's catastrophic military situation at the home front. See Ullrich, 'Zur inneren Revolutionierung' in Duppler and Gross (eds.), *Kriegsende 1918*, p. 281.

[731] 'Der militärische Zusammenbruch' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 419 (8 June 1919).

[732] See Storz, "Aber was hätte geschehen sollen?" in Duppler and Gross (eds.), *Kriegsende 1918*, pp. 79-81.

[733] Ibid, p. 93.

and bitterness.[734] The realities of separate canteens, toilets and graves for the different ranks at the front, for example, were understood as manifestations of an unfair and obsolete system which undermined the soldiers' fighting spirit.[735] In response to an article in which Reventlow had, yet again, reiterated the 'stab in the back' accusation, *Vorwärts* launched into an attack on wartime officers whom it defined as Reventlow's 'Pan-German friends'. The article defined

> [...] those officers who stole food from their men and sent crates of provisions from the canteens to their friends at home, those tormentors who remained in the safest dugouts during the barrage while turning into daring superiors in the rear where they spoilt even the last minute of the rest which the exhausted soldiers had allegedly been granted with exercise and punitive drill, [...] those base wallahs with leather gaiters, monocles and medal-decorated chests who never regarded the soldiers' salutes as disciplined enough, and who were so devoted to the daughters of the occupied lands they forgot to look after their starving front troops [...]'

as those 'who had really stabbed the army in the back' and destroyed the soldiers' morale.[736] It is interesting that while Boris Barth clearly establishes that front soldiers distinguished between officers at the front and officers in the rear, republican propaganda does not make that distinction.[737] This suggests that the republic aimed to establish a stereotype of the officer which would reflect soldiers' wartime grievances in order to secure their support for the republic.

Although this antagonistic view of officers had been prevalent from the time of the revolution, the trials of Lieutenant Hans Hiller in late 1919 and early 1920 reinvigorated republican attacks on the army's officers as the main reason for soldiers' disillusionment. Hiller was accused of torturing to death the soldier Karl Helmhake, whom the newspapers described as a fervent volunteer in 1914, during a military campaign in the Carpathian Mountains.[738] In March 1915 Helmhake had been tied to a tree and subsequently kept in a hole in the ground in minus twenty degrees temperatures because he had made a wrong

---

[734] 'Die Dolchstoßlegende. Deutsche Offiziere in der Türkei' *Vorwärts* 268 (27 May 1920); 'Der Offiziershaß' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 664 (7 September 1919); 'Die Schuldigen der Niederlage' *Vorwärts* 580 (12 November 1919); 'Die Ursachen des Zusammenbruchs' *Die Freiheit* 413 (28 August 1919); 'Zwei unglückliche Verteidiger' *Vorwärts* 342 (7 July 1919); Dr. Frosch, 'Die Anbetung des Rocks' *Die Welt am Montag* 48 (2 December 1918); Arno Voigt, 'Wie sie starben' *Die Weltbühne* 25 (23 July 1921), pp. 678ff. Also see Sammet, *"Dolchstoss"*, pp. 187f for examples of allegations against officers. For biographical information on Dr. Frosch see Appendix I, p. 326.

[735] Lehmann-Russbüldt, *Warum?*, p. 7; Arno Voigt, 'Die Kerle' *Weltbühne* 30 (17 July 1919), pp. 70f.

[736] 'Der Hellseher aus Hinterland' *Vorwärts* 604 (26 November 1919).

[737] Barth, *Dolchstosslegenden*, pp. 69-75. Dennis Showalter also stressed that many active officers -- up to 40% in 1914 – died during duty at the front, suggesting that they had been actively involved in military campains. Such practices, however, were abolished in the following years. Dennis Showalter, 'Niedergang und Zusammenbruch der deutschen Armee 1914-1919' in Papenfuß and Schieder (eds.), *Deutsche Umbrüche*, pp. 46f. Benjamin Ziemann criticises the contemporary equation of the conduct in the administrative quarters with the corruption in the army. See Benjamin Ziemann, *Front und Heimat: ländliche Kriegserfahrungen im südlichen Bayern 1914-1923* (Essen, 1997), p. 231. Yet this lack of nuances in the depiction of the army's conduct during the war was deliberately chosen to stylise officers into scapegoats for the republic.

[738] 'Das Martyrium des Kriegsfreiwilligen' *Vorwärts* 221 (30 April 1920); 'Brutalste Grausamkeit' *Die Freiheit* 538 (6 November 1919).

movement during an exercise drill.[739] Already in a weak condition in the aftermath of a severe infection, which Hiller had not accepted as a reason to excuse Helmhake from the drill, the volunteer died miserably after several days in the snow, during which he received neither food nor water.[740] Details of the abuse emerging during the trial, Hiller's arrogant refusal to acknowledge any wrongdoing and the court's ridiculously lenient sentence roused outraged protest among the republican press and its readers.[741] The public impact of these descriptions of abuse was evident in the fact that both *Vorwärts* and *Frankfurter Zeitung* subsequently printed readers' responses, providing additional evidence on the Hiller case and on many other incidents of abuse by officers, proving that the German army was not 'stabbed in the back' but rather 'beaten to death' by 'the brutal and barbaric conduct of its superiors'.[742]

In this manner, the republican press created its own version of the 'stab in the back' allegation in order to prove that socialist agitation was not a significant factor in causing the soldiers' sinking morale. This portrayal of the soldiers' fighting spirit as a decisive factor in Germany's military progress was somewhat problematic. By providing proof of the ideological undermining of the army through war propaganda and abuse by officers, republican newspapers reinforced the notion that defeat was due to the decline in soldiers' morale rather than strategic miscalculations. It therefore diverted attention away from the perception that the war was lost militarily rather than ideologically. This portrayal of defeat reinforced the right-wing conviction that the war had been lost because the soldiers' morale had been deficient, thus implicitly reinforcing a basic assumption of the 'stab in the back' myth. Only *Die Freiheit*, outlining the reasons for the soldiers'

---

739 'Der Fall Hiller' *Vorwärts* 38 (21 January 1920); 'Das Martyrium des Kriegsfreiwilligen' *Vorwärts* 221 (30 April 1920); 'Brutalste Grausamkeit' *Die Freiheit* 538 (6 November 1919).

740 'Der Fall Hiller' *Vorwärts* 38 (21 January 1920).

741 Ibid; 'Triumph der Militärjustiz' *Die Freiheit* 633 (30 December 1919); Hellmut von Gerlach, 'Ludendorffs Erbe' *Die Welt am Montag* 1 (5 January 1920); Ferdinand Nübell, 'Ergänzung' *Die Weltbühne* 26 (24 July 1920), pp. 746f, 750.

742 Quote from 'Die Karpathentragödie' *Vorwärts* 665 (30 December 1919). For examples of further accounts of officers' misconduct see 'Der Dolchstoß von hinten' *Vorwärts* 103 (25 February 1920); 'Der Dolchstoß. Warum das deutsche Heer zusammenbrach' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 538 (23 July 1920); 'Die Fronterdolchung' *Vorwärts* 99 (23 February 1920); Wilhelm Sollmann, 'Deutschnationale Dolchstöße' *Vorwärts* 220 (30 April 1920). Sabine Behrenbeck identifies war veterans as sources for the 'stab in the back' myth. Not a single article throughout the analysed press, however, supports the perception that soldiers spread such ideas. While it was noted that officers' tried to reinforce the notion that the army had been stabbed in the back, soldiers' narratives in republican sources generally testified to a horrific war experience which was sufficient to undermine their morale. See 'Heldenkult' in Linden and Mergner (eds.), *Kriegsbegeisterung*, p. 154. Benjamin Ziemann argues that, in the case of Bavaria, returning soldiers rejected the 'stab in the back' myth. See *Front und Heimat*, p. 379. Wilhelm Sollmann (1881-1941) joined the SPD in 1906 and founded the socialist youth movement *Freie Jugend* in Cologne in 1907. He worked mainly for the *Rheinische Zeitung* from 1911 onwards, serving as editor-in-chief in 1920-33. He chaired the SPD in Cologne from 1915, representing the party in the National Assembly and the Reichstag until 1933. Sollmann was involved in the foundation of a Social Democratic News Agency in 1920 and was appointed Minister for the Interior under Stresemann in 1923. He was forced to flee to the Saar region in 1933, before emigrating to Philadelphia in 1937, where he taught at a Quaker college. See Heinz Boberach, 'Sollmann, Wilhelm' in Benz and Graml, *Biographisches Lexikon*, p. 317.

disillusionment, recognised this potential pitfall of the republican 'stab in the back' allegation, pointing out that 'defeat would have been inevitable even if the spirit of 1914 had still been alive among the soldiers, because Ludendorff's calculations were wrong'.[743]

Republican attempts to focus on the failures of German military strategy as explanations for defeat were also obstructed by the political propaganda of the radical left. Concluding his summary of the radical left's various attempts to claim credit for having made the revolution, Boris Barth argues that the self-portrayal of these political forces significantly bolstered the credibility of the 'stab in the back legend' because they provided evidence of the myth.[744] Although *Vorwärts* vehemently dissociated the SPD from involvement in revolutionary agitation at the front, the 'admission' of having indoctrinated the front soldiers made by the USPD council member Albert Vater in Magdeburg was often quoted in right-wing propaganda justifying the 'stab in the back' myth.[745] While it simply discredited Vater as an insignificant figure trying to brag about his wartime activities, *Vorwärts* responded more worriedly to Emil Barth's revolutionary theories because the former USPD member of the provisional government was considered significantly more influential than the council member from Magdeburg.[746] One article commented that Barth's theory of a 'constructed' revolution contradicted significant numbers of documents presented to disprove the 'stab in the back' myth, suggesting that he should be made an honorary member of the DNVP.[747] While Boris Barth retrospectively identified Emil Barth's book, detailing his role in making the revolution, as a significant contributor to a contorted image of the left, contemporary discourse saw his agitation as more damaging to the republic and referred more often to Vater than Barth.[748] The subsequent tendency of right-wing propaganda to quote Vater, however, may support Rainer Sammet's claim that the republican contributions to the 'stab in the back' debate were partly counter-productive because they kept the issue in the political debate of the Weimar Republic.[749]

---

743 'Die Ursachen des Zusammenbruchs' *Die Freiheit* 413 (28 August 1919).
744 Barth, *Dolchstosslegenden*, pp. 220-223.
745 FES, 6/FLBL005451: *Das verlorene Paradies* (Berlin, 1918/1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DNVP, 1919, o.O.: DNVP, *Preussens Baumeister!* (n.p., 1919). Also see republican articles either rebutting right-wing allegations on the basis of Vater's claims or referring to the excessive exploitation of his claim that the revolution had been prepared: 'Die Fronterdolchung' *Vorwärts* 99 (23 February 1920); 'Konservative Kriegserklärung' *Vorwärts* 338 (5 July 1919). '"Vater"freuden der "Post". Ein nicht umzubringender Schwindel' *Vorwärts* 138 (16 March 1919).
746 'Die Fronterdolchung' *Vorwärts* 99 (23 February 1920); 'Konservative Kriegserklärung' *Vorwärts* 338 (5 July 1919); '"Vater"freuden der "Post". Ein nicht umzubringender Schwindel' *Vorwärts* 138 (16 March 1919). The pre-war SPD member Emil Barth opposed war credits from 1914 onwards and joined the USPD during the war. He led the revolutionary shop stewards in Berlin and became a member of the Council of People's Representatives after the revolution, serving on the council until the USPD left the government on 27 December 1918. Barth was, in fact, less politically influential than his memoirs implied. See Imanuel Geiss, 'Barth, Emil' in Benz and Graml, *Biographisches Lexikon*, p. 16.
747 'Emil Barth - Deutschnationales Ehrenmitglied' *Vorwärts* 269 (28 May 1920). Also quoted in Sammet, *"Dolchstoss"*, p. 195.
748 Barth, *Dolchstosslegenden*, p. 221. Throughout the analysed propaganda Vater was referred to 5 times and Barth only once.
749 Sammet, 'Dolchstoss', p. 264.

In spite of these factors which weakened republican attempts to undermine the reactionary 'stab in the back' myth, revolutionary conspiracy was not a commonly accepted explanation for defeat in the first years following the First World War. Unlike in 1924, when the editor of the *Süddeutsche Monatshefte* Paul Nikolas Cossmann was willing to defend the 'stab in the back' allegation before a court, the conservative *Kreuzzeitung* refrained from taking a similar step in May 1920 in order to reinforce their allegations against the SPD.[750] When a *Vorwärts* employee took legal action against the *Kreuzzeitung* in response to its accusation that *Vorwärts* had been close to forces having provided foreign money to finance the sailors' revolt in 1918, the conservative publication revoked its claims.[751] While Rainer Sammet only notes the court's rejection of the case without commentary, the implications of the *Kreuzzeitung's* decision to renounce their claims publicly merits more critical attention.[752] *Vorwärts* noted this retreat with glee, commenting that they had back-pedalled so furiously because they were aware of how much they would have humiliated themselves.[753] The outcome of this dispute illustrated that in the wake of the Kapp-Putsch and prior to the elections of 1920, the right-wing did not feel confident enough to measure their strength with the SPD on grounds of the 'stab in the back' myth. The 1920 elections, however, did not turn out to be a 'demonstration against the 'stab in the back' legend', as Karl Vetter had hoped, but rather one against the treaty of Versailles, demonstrating an increasing support for the right-wing parties who had opposed the signing of the peace treaty most forcefully.[754]

The analysis of republican discourse on the war guilt question and the allocation of responsibility for Germany's defeat as case studies illustrates that both issues were potentially useful as means to establish the republican forces' claim to government. Each of these topics also reveals different reasons for why republican propaganda failed to exploit the full political potential of a legitimising narrative for the republic. An interpretation of the war guilt question which emphasized the people's innocence with regard to Germany's wartime policies by laying the blame solely at the feet of the nation's former leadership, for example, could have provided an explanation for the war that aided the republic on two counts. While discrediting the political credibility of Germany's former elite it could also have illustrated a German willingness to address its past mistakes. Yet

---

[750] For a summary of the 'stab in the back' trial see Krumeich, 'Dolchstoßlegende' in Hirschfeld, Krumeich and Renz (eds.), *Enzyklopädie*, p. 445.
[751] 'Die kneifende "Kreuz-Zeitung". Sie nimmt die Dolchstoßlegende zurück' *Vorwärts* 270 (28 May 1920).
[752] Sammet, *"Dolchstoss"*, p. 263.
[753] Ibid.
[754] 'Gegen die Dolchstoß-Legende' *Die Freiheit* 193 (26 May 1920). The election breakdown shows that in spite of their approval of the ideas of the Kapp-Lüttwitz putsch, DNVP and DVP gained a vote increase of 1/3 and 2/3 respectively in the 1920 elections. See Kolb, *Weimar*, p. 193. In addition to violent unrest and the Germany's economic deprivation, Richard Bessel also cites the peace as a main reason for the 'end of the first democracy's honeymoon' evident in the 1920 elections. See Richard Bessel, '1918-1919 in der deutschen Geschichte' in Papenfuß and Schieder (eds.), *Deutsche Umbrüche*, p. 175.

socialist inter-party rivalries and the Foreign Ministry's definition of the war guilt question as a danger to Germany's position in the peace negotiations created a culture of denial which, although in a more moderate manner, mirrored the right-wing position on the issue.

In this manner, republican propaganda upheld the wartime sense of *Burgfrieden* against an external enemy, which prevented a thorough demobilisation of public discourse. Additionally, it continued a wartime convention of selective censorship by withholding crucial evidence that could have enabled the German population to evaluate and reject right-wing demagogy on a factual basis. This republican readiness to promote disinformation even when contradictory facts were available furthermore gave credibility to the right-wing propaganda machinery which had transformed this practice into an art form. By promoting a similarly aggressive agenda as its reactionary opposition, and by promoting it with comparable means, republican discourse weakened both the republic's international position and one of its most potent weapons against Germany's anti-republican forces. The government's decision to postpone any critical investigation of Germany's wartime conduct until after the peace settlement, furthermore, limited the impact of the republican evidence against Germany's former elite because in the wake of the peace settlement the harsh terms of the Versailles Treaty took precedence in the public debate.

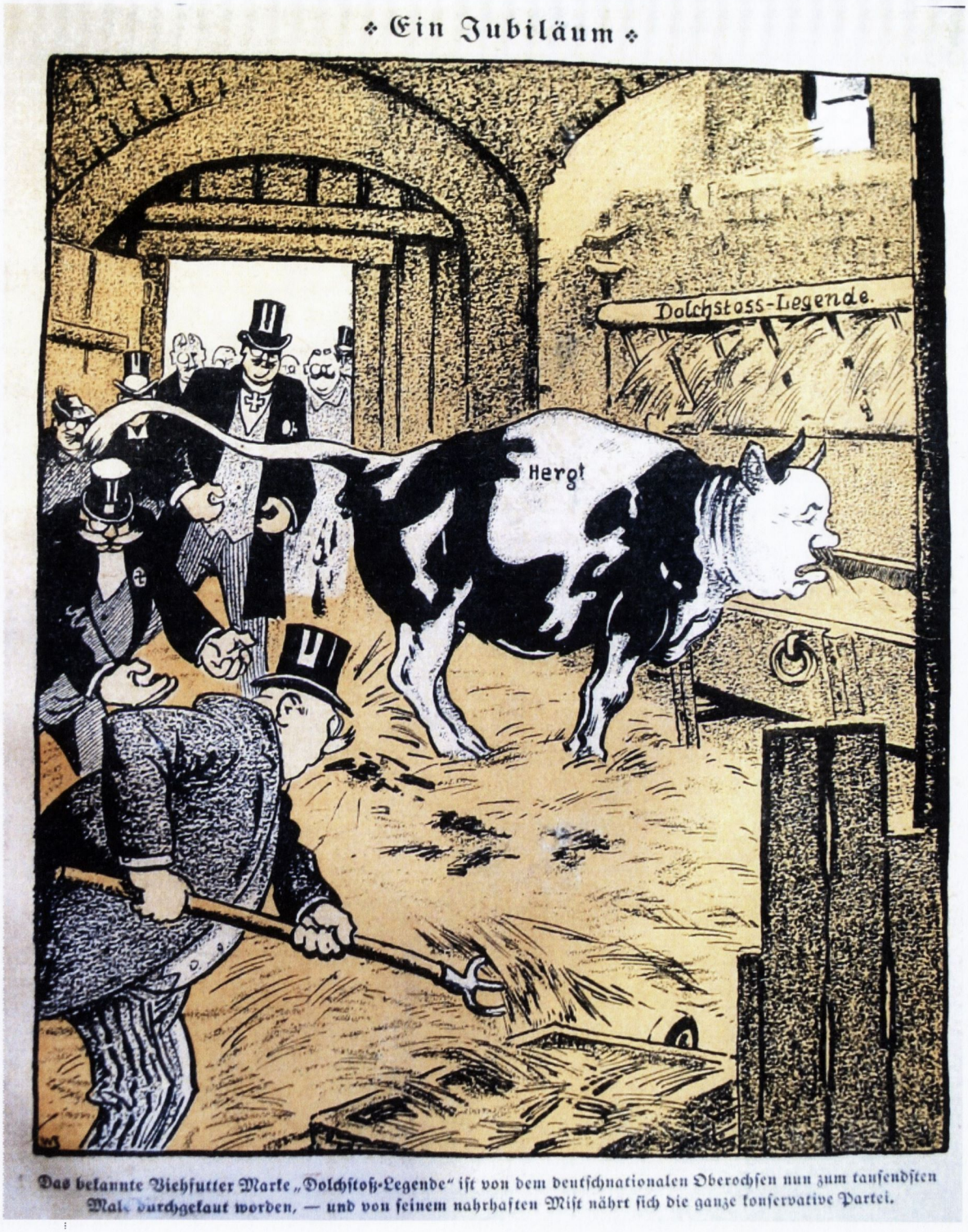
While republican conduct regarding the war guilt question must be assessed as an obvious political miscalculation, the failure of republican discourse to blame Germany's wartime leadership for defeat must be regarded under mitigating circumstances. The main deficiency of the republican narrative aimed at sanctioning the new republic was its defensive nature. Rather than attacking Germany's former elite from a position of strength as Germany's legitimate representatives, most of the republican publications referred to the 'stab in the back' myth, thus drawing attention to the challenges questioning their claim to power. The irrational nature of the 'stab in the back' allegation, furthermore, made it more difficult to disprove its foundations, particularly because its advocates blatantly refused to be confined to reason.

Republican propaganda consequently established a narrative, focusing on strategic miscalculations of the *OHL* which rejected a conciliatory peace and forced the soldiers to fight until they reached a state of complete exhaustion, as the main cause of Germany's defeat. At the same time, however, counter-allegations aiming to reverse the 'stab in the back' myth drew attention to the disillusionment of the soldiers as a root of Germany's military decline. Republican attempts to disprove each component of the 'stab in the back' myth thus contributed to the fact that the republican narrative of the war displayed the same logical inconsistencies as the original right-wing allegation. In spite of various attempts to disprove the 'stab in the back' legend and discredit its ideological architects, the republican narrative was too complex to be accepted as a common truth.

Nevertheless, Richard Bessel's conclusion that 'the Germans fled into a mythical image of the heroic spirit at the front, instead of addressing their war experience honestly' is too generalised.[755] While this chapter has also established that even Germany's republican parties had difficulty in distancing themselves from wartime values in relation to the war guilt question, the republican discourse steered clear of glorifying depictions of the war experience between November 1918 and June 1920. Instead, the political utilisation of the pacifist narrative of the soldiers' war experience was repeatedly evoked in order to undermine the right-wing continuation of war propaganda. Narratives of the war experience consequently remained central in the public debate because they were closely linked to political concepts of the new state. It can be argued that the glorification of the war did not take place due to the exclusion from the 'truth about the 1914-1918 conflict, its causes and consequences [...] from mainstream public discussion' but in spite of its inclusion in it.[756] The prominence of the glorified war experience in the public debate in the Weimar republic should therefore not be seen as a cause, but a consequence of the increasing tendency towards an anti-republican ideology in the last years of the Weimar Republic.

[755] Richard Bessel, 'Kriegserfahrungen und Kriegserinnerungen: Nachwirkungen des Ersten Weltkrieges auf das politisch und soziale Leben der Weimarer Republik' in Linden and Mergner (eds.), Kriegsbegeisterung, p. 138.
[756] Bessel, 'The 'front generation' in Roseman (ed.), *Generations in conflict*, p. 135.

Illustration VIII: An Anniversary[757]



[The well-known animal fodder 'stab in the back legend' has been rehashed for the thousandth time by the Pan-German lead bull – the entire Conservative Party lives off his nutritious shit.]

[757] 'Ein Jubiläum', *Der wahre Jacob* 921 (11 February 1921).

CHAPTER 4: DEMOBILISATION AND REMOBILISATION

In the aftermath of the revolution, the foremost priority of the new republican government was Germany's progression from war to peace. This process, which involved economic, financial, military, political, logistical, and ideological considerations, would have been complex even in the best possible circumstances. In Germany the starting point for such a fundamental transition was exceptionally unfavourable. While the revolutionary upheaval had already created a domestic sense of disruption, Germany's military defeat and the harsh armistice conditions complicated the return from wartime belligerence to a civilian society.

As dictated by the armistice, the military demobilisation of Germany's army was among the first tasks the preliminary government had to face in co-operation with the army leadership.[758] This process did not only require the dissolution of the wartime army, which still contained approximately 6 million men in November 1918, but also necessitated the social reintegration of all German citizens whose lives had been affected by the consequences of the front experience.[759] In addition to the ordinary soldiers, roughly 4.4 million war victims - encompassing both war invalids and dependants of fallen soldiers – and around 1.1 million prisoners of war belonged to the group whose reintegration into civilian society required significant government attention.[760] The government's concern for the reintegration of soldiers, war victims, and prisoners into the new state was also reflected throughout the republican press which devoted 523 articles to the demobilisation and reintegration of these three groups.[761]

The previous three chapters of this study have established a number of republican failures to distance the new state's identity from concepts and principles of Germany's wartime ideology. Propagandistic republican attempts at restoring and shaping Germany's identity as a civilian society in the context of the military demobilisation provide a most compelling example for such failure. This chapter aims to investigate to what extent Germany's military demobilisation was complemented by an ideological equivalent. The discussion will involve broadening John Horne's concept of a 'cultural demobilisation' into

---

[758] The armistice terms demanded the immediate removal of German troops from 'the occupied areas in Belgium, France, Luxemburg, as well as Alsace Lorraine' within 15 days after the acceptance of the armistice terms, threatening to take remaining German soldiers as prisoners of war. Furthermore it demanded the removal of German troops from territory left and right of the Rhine. See 'Die Bedigungen von Compiègne. Die endgültigen von Marschall Foch festgesetzten Waffenstillstandsbedingungen' in Deutsche Waffenstillstands-Kommission (ed.), *Der Waffenstillstand 1918-1919* (Berlin, 1928), pp. 23, 27, 29.

[759] For the number of soldiers still mobilised on 11 November 1918 see Bessel, *Germany*, p. 69.

[760] See Whalen, *Bitter Wounds*, p. 95; Rainer Pöppinghege, '"Kriegsteilnehmer zweiter Klasse"? Die Reichsvereinigung ehemaliger Kriegsgefangener 1919-1933' in *Militärgeschichtliche Zeitschrift* 64 (Munich, 2005), p. 401.

[761] These 523 articles made up almost 15% of the full body of analysed press sources.

a definition of any political attempts to construct alternative cultural and political concepts to address the legacy of war and overcome a nation's wartime ideology.[762]

In this context, the individual assessment of the demobilisation of ordinary soldiers, war victims, and prisoners of war merits particular attention. The portrayal of each respective group within republican discourse emphasises the difficulties that this process posed to the creation of a distinctly republican identity. The republican evaluation of the soldiers' return largely reflected the symbolic difficulties in codifying a republican version of Germany's transition to peace which legitimised the new state on a national level. The press interpretation of the war victims' concerns, on the other hand, illustrated the practical obstacles to a constructive republican narrative, while the return of Germany's prisoners of war reflected the continuation of wartime ideology on an international level. The analysis of political attempts to invest Germany's military demobilisation with a republican significance helps to elucidate the main reasons why republican propaganda fell short of dissociating republican discourse from Germany's wartime ideology. This chapter will show that divergent approaches to portray Germany's military demobilisation both exemplified the ideological dilemmas which the republic faced in addressing the legacy of war and offered different explanations for Germany's inability to do so in a constructive manner.

THE SOLDIERS' RETURN

Although Germany's military demobilisation was largely defined by the terms of the armistice enforced by the Allies, it was nevertheless a symbolic act for the new state.[763] On an international level it signified the termination of warfare: with the return of its soldiers Germany illustrated its commitment to initiating the peace and fulfilling the terms of the armistice. The republican depiction of the quick completion of the military demobilisation as a sign of Germany's goodwill was evident in a number of articles referring to it as a justification for more moderate armistice terms.[764] On a domestic level the troops' return, as the most ceremonial part of the military demobilisation, provided a chance for the republic to portray itself as active, in control and capable of managing the transition from war to peace. Boris Barth has established that the government consciously

---

[762] John Horne defines the concept of 'cultural demobilisation' as the revision of (political) 'convictions, values and mentalities' which complemented the military and economic demobilisation. Unlike Horne, however, this analysis includes the investigation of mourning or commemoration as an integral components of the ideological and political transition from war to peace. John Horne, 'Kulturelle Demobilmachung 1919-1939' in Wolfgang Hardtwig (ed.), *Politische Kulturgeschichte der Zwischenkriegszeit 1918-1939* (Göttingen, 1995), pp. 129f.

[763] For the perception that the Allies had enforced the demobilisation see 'Der neue Waffenstillstand' *Die Freiheit* 80 (14 February 1919).

[764] 'Die Ausführungen Erzbergers' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 125 (15 February 1919); 'Die Rede Erzbergers' *Vorwärts* 85 (15 February 1919); 'Der Waffenstillstand' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 4 (2 January 1919). For biographical information on Erzberger see Appendix I, p. 325.

imposed restrictions on the military planning for the soldiers' welcoming parades, thus proving the government's interest in controlling the ceremonies.[765]

Although Barth depicted this SPD intervention in military affairs as motivated by fear of counter-revolutionary putsches, the symbolic nature of the troops' return also suggests that the republican forces intended to seize its political potential. Unlike the signing of the armistice, carried out by a political delegation in Compiègne, the welcome celebrations for the soldiers were immediately accessible to the German people.[766] In *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning* Jay Winter identifies the celebrations of Armistice Day as a means for those who suffered during the war to shape a collective memory and express their common bonds.[767] In Germany, however, Armistice Day was not celebrated and had no such positive integrative function because it marked the nation's defeat.[768] Instead, celebrations of the soldiers' return fulfilled a similar function, because they provided a possibility for the people to play an active part in the nation's transition to peace.

While the population's enthusiastic participation in the welcome ceremonies expressed the home front's gratitude to the soldiers, as Richard Bessel and Rainer Sammet have argued, they also reflected the German need to mark the end of the war.[769] Sammet's assessment of the celebrations suggests that the people's eagerness to welcome the soldiers' return was also motivated by relief that the war had ended and that those who had survived were returning.[770] This chapter's definition of the political function of military demobilisation simply reverses this perception and implies that the welcome ceremonies for the soldiers provided a popular outlet to express these emotions in a manner at least partly regulated by the republic.

Most of the historiography dealing with Germany's military demobilisation evaluates its organisational success in reintegrating the returning troops both

---

[765] Barth, *Dolchstosslegenden*, p. 215.

[766] Bernhard Fulda suggests that the remoteness and the secrecy of the armistice negotiations limited their immediate impact on political discourse in Germany. See *Press and Poltics*, p. 46.

[767] Winter, *Sites of Memory*, p. 30.

[768] In spite of persistent agitation, the largely nationalist *Volksbund Deutscher Kriegsgräberfürsorge* (People's War Graves Association) secured only some official support for their commemoration of the *Volkstrauertag* (National Remembrance Day) in 1925. Until 1933, however, the occasion was not recognised as an official public holiday. See Brandt, *Vom Kriegsschauplatz zum Gedächtnisraum*, pp. 135ff, 147-152. Winter's failure to acknowledge this fact signifies a major problem in his otherwise inspiring comparative approach. His focus on the common search for means to legitimise loss among all of the belligerent nations tends to overlook the particularities arising from Germany's defeat. Winter, *Sites of Memory*, p. 227. It is interesting in this context that, even in 1998, Germany's chancellor Gerhard Schröder declined an invitation to take part in the 80th commemoration of the armistice with Queen Elizabeth and Jacques Chirac, but chose to participate in commemoration for the German Volkstrauertag (National Remembrance Day) instead. This might suggest that the perceived divisions of victory and defeat while no longer politically relevant, were never completely overcome. See BBC News, 'Germany declines armistice day invite' (4 November 1998), accessed 15 September 2008 on: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/low/special_report/1998/10/98/world_war_i/206760.stm

[769] Richard Bessel, 'Die Heimkehr der Soldaten. Das Bild der Frontsoldaten in der Öffentlichkeit der Weimarer Republik' in Gerhard Hirschfeld, Gerd Krumeich and Irina Renz (eds.), *"Keiner fühlt sich hier mehr als Mensch..." Erlebnis und Wirkung des Ersten Weltkriegs* (Frankfurt, 1996), p. 261f; Sammet, 'Dolchstoss', pp. 69f.

[770] Sammet, ibid.

economically and socially.[771] Richard Bessel's outstanding study, for example, illustrates that at least in the short term the completion of the soldiers' reintegration proved largely unproblematic, because both state and soldiers pursued the same aim of a quick return into civilian life.[772] By also revising the largely unfounded view that the returning soldiers had not been welcomed with sufficient respect for their wartime sacrifice, Bessel provides a substantial and convincing analysis of the demobilisation's impact on German society.[773] In contrast to the available literature, this study is concerned neither with the organisational details of the demobilisation nor with its economic or social consequences. It rather aims to assess to what extent republican discourse made use of this opportunity to establish a republican symbolism through welcoming Germany's returning troops.

The first chapter of this thesis has established that the soldiers played a central role in the revolutionary foundation narrative.[774] During the military demobilisation, the elevated status which the republic had created for the soldiers forced the new state to promote its political identity in relation to their sacrifice. Articles and speeches welcoming the soldiers therefore aimed at introducing them to the political parameters of the republic.[775] This approach intended to prevent the soldiers' absence during the revolution from leaving them vulnerable to counter-revolutionary agitation and alienation from the new order. The depiction of the soldiers' welcome in the republican discourse furthermore provided an opportunity to strengthen the republican interpretation of the war and its legacy.[776] The following chapter will evaluate to what extent this political potential of the demobilisation was recognised and employed in the republican discourse discussing the military demobilisation.

Attempts to attribute a particularly republican significance to the welcome ceremonies were often obstructed by a perceived need to consolidate divergent political aims. An evaluation of themes addressed in the publications analysed reveals the contradictory intentions which republican discourse tried to merge in addressing the returning troops. The analysis of a range of articles dealing with addresses to the soldiers, descriptions of welcome ceremonies, assessments of the success of the demobilisation and

---

[771] Bessel, *Germany*; Wolfram Wette, *Militarismus in Deutschland 1871 bis 1945. Zeitgenössische Analysen und Kritik* (Münster, 1999). For a discussion of the economic dimension of the demobilisation see Gerald D. Feldman's article and the ensuing historical debate in 'Economic and Social Problems of the German Demobilization, 1918-1919', *The Journal of Modern History* 1 (1975), pp. 1-47.

[772] Bessel, *Germany*, for example pp. 79, 90, 122, 165.

[773] Bessel, 'Die Heimkehr der Soldaten' in Hirschfeld, Krumeich and Renz (eds.), *"Keiner fühlt sich hier mehr als Mensch..."*, pp. 260-282.

[774] See chapter 1, pp. 53-55.

[775] For example 'Frankfurt, 19. November' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 321 (19 November 1918); 'Die Truppenansammlungen vor Berlin' *Die Freiheit* 47 (10 December 1918); 'Willkommen in der Heimat' *Vorwärts* 339 (10 December 1918); Rat der Volksbeauftragten, 'An die heimkehrenden Soldaten!' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 324 (22 November 1918).

[776] For example 'Den heimkehrenden Kameraden!' *Die Freiheit* 46 (10 December 1918); 'Der Einzug der Jäger Division' *Die Freiheit* 49 (11 December 1918); 'Frankfurt, 19. November' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 321 (19 November 1918); 'Die Reichsleitung an die Soldaten' *Vorwärts* 321 (22 November 1918); Wilhelm Uhde, 'Den heimkehrenden Helden' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 325 (23 November 1918).

soldiers' experiences upon their return identifies the following themes as most prominent examples for the contradictory nature of republican propaganda.

1. Celebration and Mourning

In order to contextualise republican propaganda regarding Germany's military demobilisation, one needs to consider that it took place at a time of severe political instability. Both the unexpected armistice and the revolution had left a legacy of confusion during which the status of the provisional government was by no means stable.[777] In addition to radical right- and left-wing attacks trying to undermine the legitimacy of the temporary republican authorities, even those political forces who agreed on the parliamentary democratic system as the foundation of the new state promoted entirely divergent interpretations of how this system should be implemented.[778] These factors contributed to the fact that the demobilisation took place in a complex political climate. Additionally, the demobilisation itself evoked entirely antagonistic emotions, namely celebration of the soldiers who returned from the war and mourning for those who did not. This dualism simultaneously forced the republic to acknowledge the soldiers' wartime sacrifice and made this task more difficult. A short anecdote in the social democratic satire journal *Der wahre Jacob* provided an example for the emotional turmoil which marked the soldiers' return from a viewpoint of a small boy:

> 'Uncle Otto, father's regiment is coming'. Everybody is carrying flowers and flags. Come here and look at it!'. 'I can't really look at it, my dear boy, as much as I would like to' and he directed his empty eye sockets to the place where the boy's voice had come from. Rudolf was ashamed: in his enthusiasm, he had forgotten that his uncle was blind – since the day when an enemy attack hit his ammunition car. His father had been torn to pieces and his uncle who was in the same battalion had escaped with the loss of his eyesight. His mother had fallen unconscious when she heard the horrific news. 'Go and look at the spectacle' the uncle said in a friendly manner. 'Regard it as part of your Christmas present which will not be much at any rate. You will never experience anything similar again'. Yet the boy did not want to hear about it anymore. [...] 'Did you see the soldiers, Rudolf?' [his mother] asked quietly. 'Yes, Mum' he cuddled up to her and cried because he recognised that his father was not among them and would never return.[779]

Although this narrative is most likely fictional, it highlighted the harsh discord between the joy which was associated with the long desired return of the soldiers and sadness that many men would not return from the war. George Mosse and Jay Winter

---

[777] Kolb, *Weimar*, p. 34.

[778] For a summary of the different views outlining the options for the structure of Germany's democratic system see Winkler, *Weimar 1918-1933*, pp. 39-41; Mommsen, *Die verspielte Freiheit*, pp. 41f; Kluge, *Die deutsche Revolution*, p. 104.

[779] 'Heimkehr', *Der wahre Jacob* 846 (20 December 1918). The article also raises the problem of war invalids who could not be demobilised like ordinary soldiers, because their disability often prevented them from returning into their former lives. This aspect of the demobilisation, however, will be discussed in the second part of this chapter.

have both argued that in the wake of the First World War almost every family in the main belligerent nations was in mourning, if not for a family member then for a friend or acquaintance.[780] Many German citizens would therefore have experienced the military demobilisation as a reminder that a loved one would not return with the celebrated troops.

In recognition of the emotional dimension to the demobilisation, republican propaganda attempted to address and legitimise this loss of life in order to satisfy the perceived public need for commemoration.[781] The endeavours to commemorate Germany's war dead particularly illustrated the incompatibility of the republican narrative depicting the soldiers as resentful victims of the war machinery and the need to justify the loss of 2 million lives.[782] Friedrich Ebert's much criticised speech on 10 December 1918, from which all three of the analysed daily papers quoted passages, illustrated a surprisingly skilful approach to the issue. By focusing on the large number of war dead and the nation's willingness to repay their sacrifice through gratitude and loyalty to those who were left behind, Ebert drew attention to the republic's respect and acknowledgement of the fallen without reinforcing the traditional values that they had died for.[783]

Although this declaration of commitment backfired as Germany's financial inability to fulfil this promise became apparent, it was more likely to address the immediate public need for recognition of the soldiers' sacrifice than Hugo Haase's depiction of the war as 'futile mass carnage'.[784] While Haase's approach was a logically stringent conclusion of the republican narrative of the war experience outlined in chapter 1, it did not offer any positive legitimation of the German losses and was thus considered unsuitable as a means of rallying support for the republic.[785] To some extent, republican discourse tried to establish a republican significance of Germany's wartime losses between the extremes of depicting the fallen's sacrifice as meaningless and adopting the wartime perception that the war dead had died for 'Kaiser' and 'fatherland'.[786] Accordingly, a

---

[780] Mosse, *Fallen soldiers*, p. 6; Winter, *Sites of memory*, p. 2.

[781] For example 'Der Einzug der Truppen' *Vorwärts* 340 (11 December 1918); Wilhelm Uhde, 'Den heimkehrenden Helden' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 325 (23 November 1918); Artur Zickler, 'Sie kehren heim!' *Vorwärts* 326 (27 November 1918). For biographical information on Artur Zickler see Appendix I, p. 340.

[782] For the republican narrative of the soldiers' war experience see chapters 1 and 3, pp. 51f, 143ff. For the number of war dead see Overmans, 'Kriegsverluste' in Hirschfeld, Krumeich and Renz (eds.), *Enzyklopädie*, pp. 664f.

[783] 'Der Einzug der Garde in Berlin' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 343 (11 December 1918); 'Der Einzug der Truppen' *Vorwärts* 340 (11 December 1918); 'Der Einzug der Truppen in Berlin' *Die Freiheit* 48 (11 December 1918). For the full version of the speech see 'Ansprache Eberts an die Truppen beim Einzug in Berlin' (10 December 1918) in Longerich (ed.), *Die Erste Republik*, pp. 65f. For biographical information on Ebert see Appendix I, p. 324.

[784] 'Der Einzug der Jäger Division' *Die Freiheit* 49 (11 December 1918). For biographical information on Haase see Appendix I, p. 328.

[785] See chapter 1, pp. 44-48. It is striking that although a number of republican articles addressing the returning soldiers evoked the horror of war, only Haase's welcome speech was reported as addressing the wartime sacrifice as 'carnage'. The singularity of this argument in the welcome ceremonies allow the deduction that it was generally not regarded as a politically constructive way to deal with the legacy of Germany's war dead. For Haase's speech see 'Der Einzug der Jäger Division' *Freiheit* (11 December 1918).

[786] The welcome speech of the former Minister of War Heinrich Scheüch depicts the war dead as having died out of loyalty to the fatherland, which was very reminiscent of the wartime propaganda advocating a heroic death for

significant number of republican articles promoted the idea that the foundation of the new state gave meaning to soldiers' wartime suffering and sacrifice.[787] Wilhelm Uhde, for example, argued in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* that the war was necessary to break the power of the imperial state.[788] This construct only remained credible as long as Germany's post-war order defined itself against the wartime values of the old regime. The simultaneous revival of wartime propaganda in republican discourse rendered this explanation, aimed at justifying and acknowledging the soldiers' achievements, abstruse. If the soldiers were to be lauded for their achievements according to the wartime ideals of the old regime, which were codified in the public discourse due to their continuous repetition during the war, additional attempts to impose a republican significance appeared as artificial constructs. It is thus questionable whether attempts to depict revolutionary freedom as the true aim of the soldiers would have evoked more support for the republic during the military demobilisation than Ebert's empathic declaration of loyalty to the dead.

2. Reconciling the Irreconcilable

Republican addresses to the returning soldiers were not only influenced by evaluations of the population's emotional state, but also by consideration of the republican lack of both constitutional legitimacy and governing experience. It is striking in the light of the provisional government's fragile position of power that none of the publications analysed explicitly referred to the potential threat which the soldiers, as an armed force whose sympathy for the republic was uncertain, posed to the new state.[789] Even *Die Freiheit*, which generally warned that the reactionary army was dangerous to the republic, explicitly denounced rumours that the returning troops were counter-revolutionary.[790] According to Boris Barth, Ebert had been warned prior to the soldiers' return that individual military leaders planned to involve the returning troops in a military putsch.[791] In this context the soldiers' portrayal as supportive of the republic was more likely to be a reflection of the desire to convince them that they were rather than a genuine conviction to

---

'Kaiser and Empire' or the 'fatherland' which represented the imperial regime. See 'Der Truppeneinzug in Berlin' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 345 (13 December 1918). For wartime propaganda see Illustration IX, p. 202.

[787] For example 'Frankfurt, 13. Dezember' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 345 (13 December 1918); 'Die Reichsleitung an die Soldaten' *Vorwärts* 321 (22 November 1918); Robert Breuer, 'Die Schuldigen' *Die Weltbühne* 42 (17 October 1918), p. 351; Bertha Grabenwitz, 'Der letzte Feldpostbrief' *Vorwärts* 8 (5 January 1919); Rat der Volksbeauftragten, 'An die heimkehrenden Soldaten!' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 324 (22 November 1918); Wilhelm Uhde, 'Den heimkehrenden Helden' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 325 (23 November 1918); Artur Zickler, 'Sie kehren heim!' *Vorwärts* 326 (27 November 1918). For biographical information on Robert Breuer see Appendix I, pp. 323f.

[788] Wilhelm Uhde, 'Den heimkehrenden Helden' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 325 (23 November 1918). For biographical information on Uhde see Appendix I, pp. 338f.

[789] All of the following articles explicitly stressed that the soldiers posed no danger to the republic: 'Begrüßung ostpreußischer Truppen' *Vorwärts* 347 (18 December 1918); 'Der Einzug der Truppen' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 341 (9 December 1918); 'Willkommen in der Heimat' *Vorwärts* 339 (10 December 1918).

[790] 'Den heimkehrenden Kameraden!' *Die Freiheit* 46 (10 December 1918).

[791] Barth, *Dolchstosslegenden*, p. 215. For other accounts of these military plans see Guth, *Der Loyalitätskonflikt im deutschen Offizierskorps*, pp. 59-68; Wohlfeil, *Reichswehr und Republik*, pp. 50f.

that effect. Although there is no evidence that the returning soldiers at large were counter-revolutionary, Richard Bessel suggests that the undisciplined and occasionally threatening behaviour of the returnees indeed posed a danger to Germany's public order.[792]

Organisational announcements to the soldiers regulating the demobilisation process furthermore illustrated an acute awareness that a disordered return of the soldiers could potentially destabilise the republic.[793] Articles and leaflets addressing the soldiers at the front often issued explicit warnings that refusals to obey military orders would endanger the nation.[794] These appeals consequently threatened financial sanctions to punish soldiers who left their units prior to their orderly discharge.[795] The depiction of the demobilisation as a potential seed for disorder defined the soldiers as a latent threat to the Weimar Republic. Concern about the soldiers' potentially obstructive influence on the political consolidation of the new state therefore has to be seen as a significant factor in explaining the republican tendency to adopt ideological wartime constructs when addressing the returning troops.[796]

The republican assessment of the soldiers' mindset also played an important role in how the republic chose to address them upon their return. This is particularly evident in the *Frankfurter Zeitung,* which argued repeatedly that Germany's defeat had destroyed the hopes of August 1914 and predicted that the soldiers' mood would consequently be sombre and depressed.[797] In a similar manner, Wilhelm Uhde suggested that the soldiers had left with a song and a dream, but returned silent, defiant, and tired.[798] The impact of such considerations on the planning for the ceremonies' format was evident in an article

---

[792] Bessel, 'Die Heimkehr der Soldaten' in Hirschfeld, Krumeich, Renz (eds.), *"Keiner fühlt sich hier mehr als Mensch..."*, p. 268. Analysing the returning soldiers' attitudes in the case of rural Bavaria, Benjamin Ziemann argues that they were largely pro-republican, rejected the 'stab in the back myth' and often supported the SPD. See Ziemann, *Front und* Heimat, pp. 375, 379, 381-385. Ekkehart P. Guth also argues that the returning soldiers often formed soldiers' councils upon their return, thus adopting the revolutionary values. See Guth, *Der Loyalitätskonflikt des deutschen Offizierskorps*, p. 68.

[793] 'Der Rückmarsch der deutschen Truppen' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 322 (20 November 1918); 'Die Zurückführung in die deutsche Heimat' *Vorwärts* 313 (13 November 1918); FES, 6/FLBL005527: Armee-Soldatenrat, *An alle Soldatenräte* 1918); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DDP, E-J, Hamburg, 1918: DDP, *Arbeiter und Soldaten!* (Hamburg, 1919); FES, 6/FLBL005517: Der Vorsitzende des Soldatenrats Freiburg, *Extrablatt des Soldatenrats* (Freiburg, 1918); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, SPD, 1918, Berlin: SPD, *Deutschland als freie Volksrepublik. Den aus dem Felde heimkehrenden Volksgenossen!* (Berlin, 1918).

[794] 'Die Demobilisierung' *Vorwärts* 320 (20 November 1918); 'Die Zurückführung in die deutsche Heimat' *Vorwärts* 313 (13 November 1918); FES, 6/FLBL005527: Armee-Soldatenrat, *An alle Soldatenräte* 1918); FES, 6/FLBL005134: Das Garnisonskommando Düsseldorf, *Merkblatt für die heimkehrenden Soldaten* (Düsseldorf, 1918); FES, 6/FLBL005517: Der Vorsitzende des Soldatenrats Freiburg, *Extrablatt des Soldatenrats* (Freiburg, 1918).

[795] Ibid.

[796] Barth, *Dolchstosslegenden*, p. 215.

[797] 'Frankfurt, 2. Dezember' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 334 (2 December 1918); 'Frankfurt, 19. November' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 321 (19 November 1918); 'Reise nach Spaa' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 332 (30 November 1918); Wilhelm Schäfer, 'Fahnen heraus!' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 321 (19 November 1918); Wilhelm Uhde, 'Den heimkehrenden Helden' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 325 (23 November 1918).

[798] Wilhelm Uhde, 'Den heimkehrenden Helden' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 325 (23 November 1918).

which argued that the tired and ragged soldiers could not be greeted with flowers because such a welcome would be too much to bear.[799]

The fact that these predictions did not gather the mood of the subsequent ceremonies suggests that these assessments of the soldiers' mindset provide more information about the republican approach to the soldiers and the legacy of the war than about the troops' morale.[800] Initially it is striking that articles in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, comparing the soldiers' post-war return to the ceremonies of August 1914, portrayed Germany's war-enthusiasm marking the outbreak of war with distinct nostalgia.[801] Even if this portrayal of the 'spirit of 1914' is interpreted as an indication of desire to return to Germany's pre-war innocence, rather than a conscious promotion of the aggressive belligerence which accompanied this war enthusiasm, it nevertheless reflected the liberal publication's promotion of an uncritical acceptance of wartime values. The predominant desire for the feeling of unity associated with the 'spirit of 1914' prevented republican discourse from recognising the anti-democratic potential inherent in this concept which was intrinsically linked to wartime ideology.[802] In contrast, two articles in *Vorwärts* compared the soldiers' post-war return positively to the 'spirit of 1914'. One commentary noted that the soldiers' return to Berlin had a different quality than their departure in 1914, because both soldiers and onlookers were aware that the horrors of war, which had destroyed so many lives, were finally over.[803] A published letter by a soldier's wife aiming to lift her husband's spirit by outlining the great historical significance of the revolution, furthermore appealed to the soldiers to return prouder now than they left in 1914, because Germany had been victorious in overcoming itself.[804] These divergent interpretations of the 'spirit of 1914' in *Vorwärts* and the *Frankfurter Zeitung* reveal that the social democratic publication was more obviously concerned to prevent a nostalgic glorification of the past than the liberal newspaper. Considering that the DNVP repeatedly evoked the

---

[799] 'Frankfurt, 19. November' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 321 (19 November 1918).

[800] 'Begrüßung ostpreußischer Truppen' *Vorwärts* 347 (18 December 1918); 'Der Einzug der Garde in Berlin' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 343 (11 December 1918); 'Der Einzug der Truppen' *Vorwärts* 340 (11 December 1918).

[801] 'Reise nach Spaa' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 332 (30 November 1918); Wilhelm Schäfer, 'Fahnen heraus!' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 321 (19 November 1918); Wilhelm Uhde, 'Den heimkehrenden Helden' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 325 (23 November 1918).

[802] While Jeffrey Verhey argues that the 'spirit of 1914' ceased to evoke much interes in the 1920s, he subsequently suggests that all parties desired a return to the political unity of August 1914. Verhey fails to recognise that the two concepts were intrinsically linked. See Verhey, *Der "Geist von 1914"*, pp. 335f, 346-351. Michael Wildt, on the other hand, clearly links the origins of the *Volksgemeinschaft* (national unity) to the war. Although he notes that republican parties also referred to the concept in order to legitimise the republic, he concludes that it ultimately undermined the republic's constitutional basis. See Wildt, *Volksgemeinschaft*, pp. 26f, 54. Analysing the intellectual development of the 'ideas of 1914' throughout the war, Steffen Bruendel argues that they were increasingly annexed by the exclusive right-wing interpretation of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, while republican attempts to utilise the 'spirit of 1914' in 1924 proved unsuccessful. See Steffen Bruendel, *Volksgemeinschaft oder Volksstaat. Die „Ideen von 1914" und die Neuordnung Deutschlands im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Berlin, 2003), pp. 275, 311.

[803] 'Der Einzug der Truppen' *Vorwärts* 340 (11 December 1918).

[804] Bertha Grabenwitz, 'Der letzte Feldpostbrief' *Vorwärts* 8 (5 January 1919).

'spirit of 1914' as an ideal which Germany should return to, its uncritical promotion in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* had a distinctly political dimension.[805] Although the liberal publication by no means evoked it in a similarly anti-republican manner, the nostalgic glorification of the 'spirit of 1914' nevertheless created an analogy between republican and anti-republican propaganda, thus contributing to the fact that wartime ideology continued to play a decisive role in the political discourse during the Weimar Republic.

In a different context this phenomenon was not confined to the liberal press. Although the *Frankfurter Zeitung* was yet again most extreme in this respect, none of the analysed newspapers offered a critical evaluation of Germany's wartime ideology with regard to the assessment of the soldiers' achievements during the war. In order to emphasize the new state's recognition of the soldiers' endurance, republican discourse overemphasized the heroic nature of the soldiers' war experience. A number of articles in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* and Friedrich Ebert's welcome speech on 10 December, for example, show that the republican discourse tended to laud the soldiers' heroism and sacrifice in 'defending their native soil'.[806] This portrayal of the soldiers' role during the war undermined the republic' legitimising narrative, because it clashed with their depiction as suffering victims in republican narratives of the war experience which defined the nature of the revolution.

These ideological concessions to the soldiers suggest that the welcoming ceremonies were mainly perceived as a means to pacify the soldiers and lift their mood in order to persuade them to co-operate with the republic. Republican discourse thus avoided confronting them with uncomfortable truths about the Germany's defeat and its consequences. The search for an explanation for Germany's post-war situation which would not hurt the soldiers' sensibilities was particularly evident in republican depictions of Germany's military defeat. Leaflets of all political parties from the USPD to the DNVP expressed that whoever was to blame for the military collapse, it was not the German

---

[805] FES, NUR 1918 Dezember II: DNVP, *Deutsche Jugend!* (Berlin, 1918); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DNVP, Satzungen, Manifeste, Personen: DNVP, *Nationales Manifest der Deutschnationalen Volkspartei* (n.p., 1920).

[806] 'Der Einzug der Truppen' *Vorwärts* 340 (11 December 1918); 'Die ostafrikanischen Helden' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 320 (18 November 1918); Benno Reifenberg, 'Worauf ihr stolz sein müsst!' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 326 (24 November 1918); Wilhelm Uhde, 'Den heimkehrenden Helden' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 325 (23 November 1918). Considering that until the end of the war, German territory was not genuinely threatened by Allied occupation, the notion of the soldiers' as defenders of German soil has to be regarded as a remnant of the wartime myth that Germany had fought a defensive war. For the continuation of this belief that the war had been fought defensively see 'Der verlorene Krieg' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 334 (2 December 1918). Carl Benno Reifenberg (1892-1970) experienced the entire First World War at the front after volunteering in August 1914. Upon his return to Germany he began to contribute to the *Frankfurter Zeitung* upon his return and was appointed as editor-in-chief of its feuilleton section. In 1930 he became the publication's political correspondent in Paris, chairing its editorial commission from 1932. Reifenberg was briefly arrested in 1937 as a liberal critic of Hitler and was banned from continuing to write a year later. He became a co-publisher of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* aftter the Second World War. See Jan G. Reifenberg, 'Reifenberg, Benno Carl' in *Neue Deutsche Biographie* 21 (2003), pp. 327f on http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/artikelNDB_pnd11874402X.html

soldiers.[807] This interpretation fitted neatly into the right-wing narrative of the war which negated Germany's military defeat in order to blame its collapse on the revolution.[808] For the republican parties it was far more problematic to explain why Germany had lost the war if the soldiers had not been defeated.[809] In order to impose a republican significance on the defeat while lauding the soldiers' achievements, a significant number of republican leaflets addressing the returning troops claimed that the military collapse signified the defeat of the old regime rather than the soldiers.[810]

The problematic nature of this denial of military defeat for the political culture of the Weimar Republic in general and the manifestation of the republican failure to address Germany's defeat in Ebert's welcome speech to the allegedly undefeated army on 10 December 1918 in particular have been subject to considerable historical analysis.[811] Boris Barth meticulously analyses the widespread, non-partisan denial of Germany's military defeat as a main topos of the welcoming ceremonies which was consequently elevated to a central basis of anti-republican propaganda.[812] Rainer Sammet furthermore highlighted the paradoxical nature of the manifold attempts to reconcile the concepts of undefeated soldiers and military defeat.[813]

---

[807] FES, 6/FLBL005078: Arbeitsgemeinschaft für staatsbürgerliche und wirtschaftliche Bildung, *Rettung!* (Berlin, 1918); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DDP, E-J, Frankfurt, 1918: DDP, *Willkommen!* (Frankfurt, 1918); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DNVP, 1918, o.O.: DNVP, *Wahlaufruf der Deutschnationalen Volkspartei* (n.p., 1918); FES, 6/FLBL005041: DVP, *Was hat die Revolution gebracht?* (Berlin, 1919); FES, 6/FLBL005119: Sonderdruck der Deutschen Zeitung, *Anklage* (Berlin, 1918); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, SPD, 1918, Berlin: SPD, *Deutschland als freie Volksrepublik. Den aus dem Felde heimkehrenden Volksgenossen!* (Berlin, 1918); FES, NUR 1918 Dezember II: USPD, *Willkommen, Soldaten der Freiheit!* (Berlin, 1918).

[808] BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933: Alldeutscher Verband, *Erklärung des Alldeutschen Verbandes* (Bamberg, 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, 9 November 1918: Deutsche Zeitung, *Vier Wochen Revolution.* (Berlin, 1918); FES, 6/FLBL005856: DNVP, *Achtung Kameraden!* (Berlin, 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DNVP, 1919, o.O.: DNVP, *An das deutsche Heer und die deutsche Marine!* (n.p., 1919); Flugblätter 1918-1933, DDP, o.O: DNVP, *Mitbürger! Deutsche Männer und Frauen!* (n.p., 1918/1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DVP, Berlin, 1919: DVP, *An Alle!* (Berlin, 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DVP, Berlin, 1919: DVP, *Erwachet deutsche Männer! Erwachet deutsche Frauen!* (Berlin, 1919); FES, 6/FLBL005116: Sonderabdruck aus Nr. 350 der Deutschen Zeitung, *Ist kein Yorck da?* (Berlin, 1918).

[809] Bessel, Germany, pp. 85f.

[810] BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DDP, E-J, Hannover, 1920: DDP, *Viel Feind, viel Ehr!* (Hannover, 1920); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DDP, E-J, Frankfurt, 1918: DDP, *Wilkommen!* (Frankfurt, 1918); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, SPD, 1918, Berlin: SPD, *Deutschland als freie Volksrepublik. Den aus dem Felde heimkehrenden Volksgenossen!* (Berlin, 1918); FES, NUR 1918 Dezember II: USPD, *Wilkommen, Soldaten der Freiheit!* (Berlin, 1918).

[811] 'Der Einzug der Truppen' *Vorwärts* 340 (11 December 1918); 'Der Einzug der Truppen in Berlin' *Die Freiheit* 48 (11 December 1918). For evaluations of Ebert's speech in relation to the republic's political culture and the 'stab in the back' myth see Sammet, *"Dolchstoss"*, p. 67, Bessel, *Germany*, pp. 85f; Barth, *Dolchstosslegenden*, pp. 214f. Walter Mühlhausen clarifies that Ebert never actually used the phrase 'undefeated soldiers' although he had been advised to do so by Major Kurt von Schleicher. Instead he suggested that 'no enemy had overcome' them. Mühlhausen adds that Ebert also explicitly emphasized Germany's defeat in his opening speech to the National Assembly, Mühlhausen thus implies that Ebert did not deny the reality of defeat. Mühlhausen, *Friedrich Ebert*, p. 136. In the context of contemporary political rhetoric, however, the differentiation between soldiers' who had not been overcome and soldiers who had not been defeated was too subtle to suggest that Ebert consciously avoided evoking the myth of Germany's undefeated army.

[812] Barth, *Dolchstosslegenden*, pp. 214-220.

[813] Sammet, *"Dolchstoss"*, pp. 68f.

The comparative analysis of the republican press reveals that a number of articles, particularly in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, adopted the concept of the 'undefeated army' or quoted it uncritically.[814] Even articles which acknowledged that the soldiers had been defeated obscured the reality of the military collapse in their attempts to soften the perceived allegation by somehow attributing a victorious dimension to this defeat.[815] Rudolf Kircher in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, for example, absurdly appealed to the soldiers as 'defeated victors' ('besiegte Sieger'), noting that they were defeated although they had won numerous victories in East and West.[816] Even a poem by Josef Wiener-Braunsberg which attempted to depict the revolution as a worthwhile reward for the soldiers' sacrifice and therefore rejected traditional means of justifying the war, did not explicitly address Germany's defeat:

> [w]ith a celebratory ringing of bells
> you marched into battle years ago.
> And you brought home freedom
> as the wonderful spoils of victory.
> Even if the enemy has not been defeated
> your efforts and achievements in the waves of battle
> makes you worthy of the laurel wreath [...][817]

A quantitative analysis of the articles addressing the soldiers' return reveals that only 15 out of 61 articles offered some kind of explanation for Germany's defeat.[818] Although it was not the only focus of republican discourse dealing with the soldiers' return, it reflected a remnant of Germany's wartime ideology which particularly obstructed the republican self-representation because it questioned simultaneous republican attempts to establish that the war had been lost militarily.[819] Concepts of Germany's 'undefeated soldiers' also proved rather durable because they were adopted into Germany's commemorative culture. Michael Jeismann and Rolf Westheider establish that the majority of war memorials adopted the suppression of defeat, which was often linked to unconcealed appeals for revenge.[820] This continuation of the myth of the 'undefeated soldiers' suggests that its evocation during the welcome ceremonies for the

---

[814] 'Aufruf' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 331 (29 November 1918); 'Der Einzug der Garde in Berlin' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 343 (11 December 1918); 'Neujahrsgruß allen Schaffenden!' *Vorwärts* 1 (1 January 1919); 'Die ostafrikanischen Helden' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 320 (18 November 1918); 'Der Truppeneinzug in Berlin' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 345 (13 December 1918); Benno Reifenberg, 'Worauf ihr stolz sein müsst!' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 326 (24 November 1918).

[815] For example 'Frankfurt, 19. November' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 321 (19 November 1918); 'Neujahrsgruß allen Schaffenden!' *Vorwärts* 1 (1 January 1919); Rudolf Kircher, 'Der verlorene Krieg' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 334 (2 December 1918).

[816] Rudolf Kircher, 'Der verlorene Krieg' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 334 (2 December 1918). For biographical information on Kircher see Appendix I, p. 329.

[817] Josef Wiener-Braunsberg, 'Unsere Helden' *Ulk* 49 (22 November 1918).

[818] Three out of these 15 articles, which make up roughly 26% of the 58 articles dealing with the soldiers' return, only quote Friedrich Ebert's speech.

[819] See chapter 3, pp. 137ff.

[820] Michael Jeismann and Rolf Westheider, 'Wofür stirbt der Bürger? Nationaler Totenkult und Staatsbürgertum in Deutschland und Frankreich seit der Französischen Revolution' in Reinhart Koselleck and Michael Jeismann (eds.), *Der politische Totenkult. Kriegerdenkmäler in der Moderne* (Munich, 1994), p. 29.

returning troops established it as an acceptable formula to address the soldiers' sacrifice which harmed the republic, because it was closely associated with belligerent right-wing propaganda.

Attempts to avoid alienating the soldiers from the republic may have been successful in a practical manner. According to Richard Bessel, the majority of returning soldiers reintegrated into their civilian lives and did not pose a danger to the republic.[821] Of those who did get politically involved significantly more joined republican war-veteran organisations than right-wing ones.[822] Ideologically, however, the attempt to avoid alienating the soldiers from the republic alienated the republic from itself. Evocations of wartime ideals like the 'spirit of 1914', soldierly heroism and an allegedly undefeated army did not only feed into right-wing propaganda against the republic, but also undermined the republic's own legitimating narrative. The republican failure to apply the pacifist narrative of the war experience practically during the military demobilisation rendered it politically useless as a weapon against anti-democratic right-wing propaganda. Instead republican discourse returned to ideological concepts of a militarised culture, thus failing to establish a distinctly republican cultural identity. It needs to be taken into account, however, that a more confrontational approach carried a credible threat of fuelling antagonism towards the republic among the soldiers, which could have made them more accessible to their officers' agitation against the new state.[823] Only *Die Weltbühne* and *Die Welt am Montag* offered some minority opposition to obfuscating Germany's defeat, defining it as factually wrong and counter-productive to the development of the republic.[824]

3. Republican self-representation during the welcome ceremonies

In opposition to the glum predictions in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, articles throughout the republican press commenting on the soldiers' welcome ceremonies described their mood as 'jubilant', 'calm and positive', 'grateful', and 'delighted by the warm welcome'.[825] Descriptions of the soldiers' return furthermore stressed the population's great efforts to mark the special nature of the occasion. On 13 December the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, for example, stressed that even rain and snow had not stopped

---

[821] Bessel, *Germany*, pp. 257f.
[822] Ibid.
[823] Alan Kramer notes the potential danger of a clash between government and army in response to the admission of wartime misconduct. See Kramer, 'Der Umgang mit der Schuld' in Papenfuß and Schieder (eds.) *Deutsche Umbrüche*, p. 95.
[824] Georg Metzler, 'Die verruchte Lüge' *Die Weltbühne* 2 (9 January 1919), pp. 34f; Alfred Scholz, 'Den Heimkehrenden' *Die Welt am Montag* 50 (16 December 1918). For biographical information on Metzler see Appendix I, p. 332.
[825] 'Begrüßung ostpreußischer Truppen' *Vorwärts* 347 (18 December 1918); 'Der Einzug der Garde in Berlin' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 343 (11 December 1918); 'Der Einzug der Truppen' *Vorwärts* 340 (11 December 1918); 'Die Heimkehr der Truppen' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 320 (18 November 1918).

people from expressing their gratitude to the soldiers.[826] *Die Freiheit* and *Vorwärts* also depicted the onlookers' enthusiasm and their generosity towards the soldiers as defining characteristics of the ceremonies.[827] The prevalent excitement about the soldiers' return which both soldiers and civilians expressed during the celebrations allowed the republican press to portray the occasion as evidence of the unity of front and home front.[828] Very few articles in fact promoted diverging views: one editorial by the liberal journalist and *Tage-Buch* editor Leopold Schwarzschild suggested that there was a divide between the soldiers and the home front which needed to be bridged.[829] Another article in *Vorwärts* printed a war veteran's account of impressions upon his return in February 1919, expressing the view that the soldiers did not receive the gratitude they deserved, because the home front was desperately guarding advantages it had gained during the war.[830] The publication of such views within the republican press, however, was exceptional because press coverage of the soldiers' return largely emphasised the ceremonies' integrative tone and their unifying nature. The depiction of the ceremonies as finding approval from soldiers and civilians alike functioned as proof of the republic's successful handling of the demobilisation.

It is furthermore striking that descriptions of the welcome ceremonies throughout the republican press (with one exception) did not recognise that their ritual elements largely failed to reflect Germany's political change.[831] Most articles describing the setting of the celebrations, noted 'flags', 'flowers', and music as their most common characteristics.[832] All three of these elements were not only celebratory but expressed a political symbolism, leaning heavily on military rather than civilian traditions. Although flowers are generally regarded as part of the private rather than the political sphere – as emotional symbols for love or mourning – their utilisation during the welcome ceremonies seems to have had strong militaristic connotations. The *Frankfurter Zeitung*, for example, described the hall in which the welcome ceremony for General Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck's troops from Africa took place as being decorated with laurel.[833] As a classical symbol of victory, the laurel decorations were problematic for the republican self-image, irrespective

---

826 'Der Truppeneinzug in Berlin' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 345 (13 December 1918).
827 'Heimkehr der Westtruppen' *Vorwärts* 332a (3 December 1918).
828 'Der Einzug der Jäger Division' *Die Freiheit* 49 (11 December 1918); 'Der Einzug der Truppen' *Vorwärts* 340 (11 December 1918); 'Frankfurt, 2. Dezember' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 334 (2 December 1918); 'Der Truppeneinzug in Berlin' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 345 (13 December 1918); Wilhelm Uhde, 'Den heimkehrenden Helden' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 325 (23 November 1918).
829 Leopold Schwarzschild, 'An die Heimat' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 27 (11 January 1919). For biographical information on Schwarzschild see Appendix I, pp. 336f.
830 Fritz Kahrstädt, 'Wir kehrten zurück...' *Vorwärts* 75 (10 February 1919). For biographical information on Kahrstädt see Appendix I, p. 328.
831 Only one article in *Die Freiheit* explicitly criticised that the welcome ceremonies were too militaristic and did not sufficiently reflect the political change. See 'Der Einzug der Truppen in Berlin' *Die Freiheit* 48 (11 December 1918).
832 For example 'Der Einzug der Garde in Berlin' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 343 (11 December 1918); 'Der Einzug der Ostafrikaner' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 167 (3 March 1919); 'Der Einzug der Truppen' *Vorwärts* 340 (11 December 1918); 'Heimkehr der Westtruppen' *Vorwärts* 332a (3 December 1918).
833 'Der Einzug der Ostafrikaner' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 167 (3 March 1919).

of the reasons for its utilisation. No matter whether it reflected republican attempts to gloss over Germany's military defeat in order to appeal for the soldiers' support, or whether it was simply chosen as the traditional format to mark such occasions, the adoption of military conventions during the republican welcome ceremonies gave the occasions a reactionary air.[834]

Two articles in *Vorwärts* particularly illustrate the SPD's contradictory evaluation of this phenomenon. They reflect the schizophrenic nature of the republican narrative of the soldiers' sacrifice as part of the welcome ceremonies. One article describing the ceremonies in Berlin linked the decoration of gun shafts with flowers to the August days in 1914, thus referring to the expression of German enthusiasm for the outbreak of war as evidence of the successful celebration of the soldiers' return. Another more literary contemplation instead interpreted the guns' decorations as evidence of the German commitment to social and ideological change.[835] These diametrically opposed interpretations of the meaning of the floral decorations during the republican welcome ceremonies suggested that although contemporaries perceived the need for republican rituals which broke with the military past, they were too much influenced by traditional formats of public ceremony to put this recognition into practice.

The tendency to fall back on traditional rituals was also evident with regard to the flags which decorated the streets through which the soldiers would march. A large number of articles noted a mass of flags which the population had displayed.[836] The republican press, however, provides very little information about the nature of the flags used as decorations. Although the adoption of the colours of the 1848 revolution as the official flag of the republic was discussed from 9 November 1918, black, red, and gold were not officially constituted as the colours of the Weimar Republic until 3 July 1919.[837] Three different flags could therefore be displayed during the welcome ceremonies of the soldiers, which largely took place between November 1918 and March 1919: the revolutionary red flag, the republican tricolour, or the black, white, and red flag of the imperial regime.[838]

Only one article in *Die Freiheit* distinctly mentions that the government's car was decorated with a republican flag.[839] Considering that the same article complained about the lack of red flags on display, it can be assumed that the black, red, and gold tricolour of the 1848 revolution was defined as the republican flag in this case. The historian Bernd

---

[834] 'Der Einzug der Truppen' *Vorwärts* 340 (11 December 1918).
[835] 'Die Revolution der Seele' *Vorwärts* 67 (6 February 1919).
[836] 'Der Einzug der Garde in Berlin' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 343 (11 December 1918); 'Der Einzug der Truppen' *Vorwärts* 340 (11 December 1918); 'Reaktionäre Wühlereien an der Front' *Die Freiheit* 34 (3 December 1918); 'Der Rückmarsch der deutschen Truppen' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 322 (20 November 1918); 'Vor dem Einzug der Truppen' *Vorwärts* 339a (10 December 1918).
[837] Bernd Buchner, *Um nationale und republikanische Identität: Die deutsche Sozialdemokratie und der Kampf um die politischen Symbole in der Weimarer Republik* (Bonn, 2001), pp. 51, 68.
[838] Wolfram Wette, *Militarismus und Pazifismus Auseinandersetzung mit den deutschen Kriegen* (Bremen, 1991), p. 77; Bessel, 'Die Heimkehr der Soldaten' in Hirschfeld, Krumeich and Renz (eds.), *"Keiner fühlt sich hier mehr als Mensch..."*, p. 263.
[839] 'Der Einzug der Truppen in Berlin' *Die Freiheit* 48 (11 December 1918).

Buchner noted concern, expressed by Hugo Haase, that the old imperial flags dominated the welcome ceremonies.[840] Wilhelm Schäfer in the liberal *Frankfurter Zeitung*, on the other hand, did not seem to oppose such traditional expressions of national support.[841] He explicitly appealed to the German population to hoist flags during the ceremonies, suggesting that 'the colours of the flag remind us of the strength of the soldiers'.[842] This argument insinuated a reference to the black, white, and red flag of the imperial regime, which the German soldiers had carried into - and out of - battle.[843] This evidence of a predominance of imperial flags during the ceremonies and its acceptance in the liberal press undermined attempts to dissociate the soldiers from the values of the monarchy. It also suggests that neither USPD nor SPD attempts to let the soldiers' return under (and therefore in support of) new colours could compete with the natural association of the soldiers with the flag they allegedly had fought for. These inconsistencies in the republican narrative suggest that the representatives of the republic were overtaxed with separating wartime and republican symbolism and popularising such a separation.

The choice of the hymn *Deutschland, Deutschland über Alles* (Germany, Germany above everything) as the song which concluded Scheidemann's speech to the soldiers reveals a similarly questionable approach to representing the republic. Although Ebert adopted the song as an unofficial national anthem of the republic in 1922 it was by no means associated with republican values in the aftermath of the war.[844] It was not just, as Michael Jeismann argues, tainted by its association with the myth of Langemarck, but also generally associated with the Kaiser's aggressive imperialism, and counter-revolutionary activity of the reactionary right.[845] Throughout the analysed republican press the song is only twice associated with republican addresses to the troops, once in the context of the welcome ceremonies and once in Ebert's appeal to General Maercker's troops to support the government in spite of its decision to sign the peace settlement.[846] On the basis of the limited attention paid to the song in the republican press, one can assume that that the

---

[840] Buchner, *Um nationale und republikanische Identität*, p. 59.
[841] The novelist and publicist Wilhelm Schäfer edited the journal *Die Rheinlande* in Düsseldorf from 1900 to 1922. See: 'Schäfer, Wilhelm' in Joachim Bergmann (ed.), *Die Schaubühne. Die Weltbühne 1905-1933: Bibliographie und Register mit Annotationen* (Munich, 1991), p. 213.
[842] Wilhelm Schäfer, 'Fahnen heraus!' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 321 (19 November 1918).
[843] Buchner, *Um nationale und republikanische Identität*, pp. 57f.
[844] Michael Jeismann, 'Die Nationalhymne' in François and Schulze (eds.), *Erinnerungsorte* , p. 492.
[845] Ibid; Buchner, *Um nationale und republikanische Identität*, pp. 146-149. Also see Jost Düllfer, 'Frieden schließen nach einem Weltkrieg? Die mentale Verlängerung der Kriegssituation in den Friedensschluß' in Dülffer and Krumeich (eds.) *Der verlorene Frieden*, p. 32. For the song's association with the radical right in the republican press see 'Deutschnationale gegen Kriegsbeschädigte' *Vorwärts* 244 (14 May 1919); 'Das Drama von Mechterstädt. Taten studentischer Zeitfreiwilliger' *Vorwärts* 196 (17 April 1920); 'Ein Hohenzollern-Sieg bei Adlon' *Die Welt am Montag* 10 (8 March 1920); 'Ein neuer bedauerlicher Zwischenfall' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 185 (9 March 1920); 'Der Hindenburg-Skandal' *Vorwärts* 584 (14 November 1919); 'Joachim Albrecht macht Schule' *Vorwärts* 126 (9 March 1920); 'Raufexzess im "Adlon". Ein betrunkener Prinz prügelt anständige Personen' *Vorwärts* 124 (8 March 1920).
[846] 'Ebert an das Landjägerkorps' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 461 (25 June 1919); 'Der Truppeneinzug in Berlin' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 345 (13 December 1918).

song was chosen as a natural reflection of the soldiers' perceived or real ideological convictions.[847]

There is no evidence throughout the republican press that the song, as Jeismann claims, was popular among republican circles.[848] The *Frankfurter Zeitung*, *Vorwärts*, and *Die Welt am Montag* rather associated the hymn with right-wing excesses ranging from the turbulent student homage to Hindenburg to several attacks on Entente representatives as well as unjustified violence against war victims and civilians.[849] A *Vorwärts* article even explicitly noted that war veterans had protested against the inclusion of the song in a welcoming celebration the Siemens works had organised to acknowledge their employees' sacrifice. The paper reported that they had opposed the song in the same manner they had rejected overly 'Pan-German' speeches of their directors.[850] Bernd Buchner argues that the republican government partly chose to adopt the hymn as a representation of the republic in order to undermine its utilisation in anti-democratic propaganda.[851] The rehabilitation of the song as a republican hymn in 1922 in spite of previous negative associations also suggests that utilisation of the song in official rituals made it more acceptable to the general public. The people's desire to find consolation in familiar rituals and the government's desire to avoid alienating any potential support for the republic created a vicious circle, which established nationalist rhetoric and symbolism as an integral part of republican discourse.

In his comparative analysis of commemorative rituals in the aftermath of the First World War the cultural historian Jay Winter argues that a 'complex, traditional vocabulary of mourning' was universal throughout the belligerent nations.[852] He justifies the lack of emphasis on victory or defeat in his study by arguing that they should not obscure evidence of common approaches in dealing with the legacy of war.[853] Winter's study thus defines the return to traditional codes of iconography and expression as an international inability to deal with the immense legacy of the war.[854] Winter fails to acknowledge, however, that in the case of Germany, military defeat did not only have military, but also significant political consequences. Failure to create a distinctly republican code to address the legacy of the war had by far the most severe political consequences in Germany, not

---

[847] The article of 25 June only notes that the soldiers sang the hymn subsequent to Ebert's speech without clarification whether it had been chosen by the soldiers or the government representative. See 'Ebert an das Landjägerkorps' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 461 (25 June 1919).
[848] Jeismann, 'Die Nationalhymne' in François and Schulze (eds.), *Erinnerungsorte*, p. 492.
[849] 'Deutschnationale gegen Kriegsbeschädigte' *Vorwärts* 244 (14 May 1919); 'Das Drama von Mechterstädt. Taten studentischer Zeitfreiwilliger' *Vorwärts* 196 (17 April 1920); 'Ein Hohenzollern-Sieg bei Adlon' 10 *Die Welt am Montag* (8 March 1920); 'Ein neuer bedauerlicher Zwischenfall' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 185 (9 March 1920); 'Der Hindenburg-Skandal' *Vorwärts* 584 (14 November 1919); 'Joachim Albrecht macht Schule' *Vorwärts* 126 (9 March 1920); 'Raufexzess im "Adlon". Ein betrunkener Prinz prügelt anständige Personen' *Vorwärts* 124 (8 March 1920).
[850] 'Begrüßungsfeier für die Kriegsteilnehmer der Siemenswerke' *Vorwärts* 83 (14 February 1919).
[851] Buchner, *Um nationale und republikanische Identität*, pp. 134f, 139, 152, 155.
[852] Winter, *Sites of Memory*, p. 223.
[853] Ibid, p. 227.
[854] Ibid, p. 223.

predominantly because of its military defeat, but because of the revolution which arose from it. The foundation of the republic through revolution meant that in Germany, unlike in the Entente nations, the evocation of traditional values to explain the war undermined the legitimation of the state.

The articulated rather than symbolic self-representation of the republic during the welcome ceremonies accorded largely with the revolutionary addresses to the soldiers.[855] The renewed appeal to the soldiers largely stressed the republican role in ending the war and allowing the soldiers to return to their civilian lives while appealing for their active support in defending the republic.[856] Most of the republican appeals to the soldiers did not hide their intention to demand the soldiers' participation in the daunting reconstruction of Germany's economy. The same poem by Wiener Braunsberg which was already quoted above, for example, synthesized the general approach of the republican discourse thus

> You will not yet hear that you can enjoy a peaceful rest,
> because you will yet again have to work for Germany [...]
> Those who are only seeking rights without duties
> are not worthy of being called 'German'.[857]

According to Richard Bessel, these continued republican demands, which were complemented by numerous appeals to move into regions where labour was needed, did not find much approval among the soldiers.[858] Most of Germany's war veterans were not prepared to take up arms again and stubbornly resisted being relocated to revive the economy.[859] This evaluation suggests that republican discourse tried to compensate such unpopular demands with an overly laudatory appreciation of the soldiers' achievements, because it was aware that continued appeals for their duty to the state contravened republican claims to represent freedom.

The only ideologically ambiguous dimension of the republican self-representation regarding the soldiers' return was evident in divergent assessments of the role of soldierly values in the new state. The *Frankfurter Zeitung* debated the political legacy of the soldierly values most frequently and most adversely.[860] Two articles in the same edition on

---

[855] Chapter 1, pp. 58ff.

[856] For example FES, NUR 1918 Undatiert III: *Den Heimgekehrten!* (n.p., 1918); 'Der Einzug der Truppen in Berlin' *Die Freiheit* 48 (11 December 1918); 'Der Truppeneinzug in Berlin' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 345 (13 December 1918); 'Willkommen in der Heimat' *Vorwärts* 339 (10 December 1918); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, SPD, 1919, Berlin: SPD, *Wofür haben wir gekämpft?* (Berlin, 1919); Wilhelm Uhde, 'Den heimkehrenden Helden' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 325 (23 November 1918); Artur Zickler, 'Sie kehren heim!' *Vorwärts* 326 (27 November 1918).

[857] Josef Wiener-Braunsberg, 'Unsere Helden' *Ulk* 49 (22 November 1918).

[858] Bessel, *Germany*, pp. 138f; Bessel, 'State and Society in Germany in the aftermath of the First World War' in Eve Rosenhaft and W. Robert Lee (eds.), *State and social change in Germany 1880-1980* (New York, Oxford, Munich, 1990), pp. 205, 209.

[859] Ibid; Bessel, 'Die Heimkehr der Soldaten' in Hirschfeld, Krumeich and Renz (eds.), *"Keiner fühlt sich hier mehr als Mensch..."*, p. 269; Ziemann, *Front und Heimat*, pp. 396f, 399f.

[860] Of 7 articles dealing with the issue, six were in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* and 1 in *Vorwärts*. 4 of them portrayed soldierly values as exemplary, 3 depicted them as in need of revision. See 'Frankfurt, 2. Dezember' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 334 (2 December 1918); 'Vor dem Einzug der

2 December 1918, for example, offered completely contrasting views on the issue. While one lauded the soldiers' commitment to freedom, order, and discipline as exemplary goals for the new state, another one attacked the blind obedience of both soldiers and civilians, which needed to be overcome through the creation of new ideals.[861] This particular newspaper edition reflected the dualism of the republican rhetoric with regard to the soldiers, which was caught between flattering the soldiers and representing republican ideals different from the traditional values that had marked Germany's wartime culture. The lack of recognition, in both *Vorwärts* and the *Frankfurter Zeitung* that a translation of the soldiers' wartime values into the Weimar Republic's political discourse was de facto an ideological remobilisation of the nation, contributed to the fact that the republican approach to the soldiers' return reinforced military values as part of the new state's identity.

In his groundbreaking monograph, Richard Bessel argues that Germany's war experience had not necessarily militarised Weimar society, suggesting that the extended post-war period was mainly characterised by a popular antipathy towards war and militarism.[862] In a similar manner, Hans Mommsen defines the term of 'civil militarisation' purely in relation to its manifestation in military formations and their role in Weimar Germany.[863] While not aiming to challenge the validity of these claims, the previous analysis suggests that it may be useful to broaden the very literal definition of a militarised society which both historians provide by focusing on its manifestation through armed violence. In his study on the war guilt question, Alan Kramer has suggested that that it would be useful to extend Mommsen's concept of 'civilian militarisation' to the period's political culture.[864] The analysis of the military demobilisation reinforces this argument because it illustrates that while the physical dissolution of the troop formations was successful, the complementary ideological process was, at best, problematic. The republican evocation of wartime concepts as a means to reintegrate the soldiers in this way contributed to the fact that such wartime ideology was transferred into the discourse of the peacetime republic and prevented its cultural demobilisation.

Truppen' *Vorwärts* 339a (10 December 1918); Ferdinand Avenarius, 'Stirb und werde!' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 322 (20 November 1918); Rudolf Kircher, 'Der verlorene Krieg' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 334 (2 December 1918); Wilhelm Schäfer, 'Fahnen heraus!' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 321 (19 November 1918); Leopold Schwarzschild, 'An die Heimat' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 27 (11 January 1919); Wilhelm Uhde, 'Den heimkehrenden Helden' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 325 (23 November 1918). Ferdinand Avenarius (1856.1923) was a bourgeois idealist who advocated popular education through poetry and art. He published and edited the journal *Der Kunstwart* as well as poetry anthologies and wrote a number of poetry cycles evoking a classical ideal of aesthetic human education. See Paul Fechter, 'Avenarius, Ferdinand Ernst Albert' in Historische Kommission bei der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, *Neue Deutsche Biographie. Erster Band Aachen-Behaim* (Berlin, 1953), pp. 466f.

[861] 'Frankfurt, 2. Dezember' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 334 (2 December 1918); Rudolf Kircher, 'Der verlorene Krieg' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 334 (2 December 1918).

[862] Bessel, *Germany*, pp. 259f.

[863] Hans Mommsen, 'Militär und zivile Militarisierung in Deutschland 1914-1938' in Ute Frevert (ed.), *Militär und Gesellschaft im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart, 1997), p. 265.

[864] Kramer, 'Der Umgang mit der Schuld' in Papenfuß and Schieder (eds.), *Deutsche Umbrüche*, pp. 78f.

WAR INVALIDS

Like the returning soldiers, Germany's war victims – namely war invalids and dependants of the war dead – were another political force which the republican government had to deal with as part of First World War's legacy to the new state.[865] Their significant number, (the total of which a government pamphlet estimated at between 1 and 1.5 million war invalids and roughly 1.8 million dependent women, children, and elderly parents in 1920), and their high level of organisation defined them as an influential political pressure group in the first years of the republic.[866] The moral status associated with their sacrifice furthermore allowed them to exert significant influence over republican decisions regulating their provision in the initial post-war period.[867]

War invalids' persistent demands for recognition and sufficient pensions, which manifested themselves in a number of public demonstrations, also implied that they could pose a significant risk to the political stability of the new state.[868] Illustrating the dangerous potential of the war victims' anger, both Robert Whalen and Ewald Frie draw attention to a war invalids' demonstration in Dresden on 12 April 1919, during which an angry mob attacked the Saxon Minister of War Gustav Neuring, threw him into the Elbe, and shot him when he was trying to escape.[869] Attributing responsibility for this incident to the communist *Roter Soldatenbund* (Red Soldiers' League), the *Vorwärts* implied that such manifestations of political radicalisation threatened public order and the survival of the republic.[870] Similar considerations were also evident at government level, where the

---

[865] This depiction of war invalids as well as women and children who lost their provider as a consequence of the war as a common interest group has been adopted from their contemporary self-representation in the aftermath of the war. The largest republican war victims' organisation, the *Reichsbund der Kriegsbeschädigten, Kriegsteilnehmer und Kriegshinterbliebenen* (Reich Association of war invalids, war veterans and war dependants) represented the common interests of war victims, demanding an official recognition of their sacrifice expressed through sufficient financial, medical and logistic support from the republic. See Sabine Kienitz, 'Beschädigte Helden. Zur Politisierung des kriegsinvaliden Soldatenkörpers in der Weimarer Republik' in Dülffer and Krumeich (eds.), *Der verlorene Frieden*, p. 200; 'Die Forderungen der Kriegsbeschädigten und Kriegshinterbliebenen' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 588 (11 August 1919); 'Die soziale Kriegsvorsorge Reichssache' *Vorwärts* 73 (9 February 1919); FES, NUR 1918 Undatiert I Kriegsteilnehmer und Kriegshinterbliebenen (Ortsgruppe Berlin) Reichsbund der Kriegsbeschädigten, *Kriegsbeschädigte! Kriegshinterbliebene!* (Berlin, 1918).

[866] Robert Whalen provided different estimates. He argues that 2.7 million soldiers returned from the war with a permanent disability, and that 1.4 million Germans were organised in war victims organisations in 1921. See Whalen, *Bitter Wounds*, pp. 95, 128, 131.

[867] Ewald Frie, 'Vorbild oder Spiegelbild? Kriegsbeschädigtenfürsorge in Deutschland 1914-1919' in Michalka (ed.), *Weltkrieg*, pp. 563f; Kienitz, 'Beschädigte Helden' in Dülffer (ed.), *Der verlorene Frieden*, pp. 199f.

[868] Bessel, *Germany*, p. 276; Whalen, *Bitter Wounds*, pp. 124-126.

[869] Whalen, *Bitter Wounds*, pp. 125f; Frie, 'Kriegsbeschädigtenfürsorge' in Michalka (ed.), *Weltkrieg*, p. 563.

[870] 'Kriegsminister Genosse Neuring ermordet' *Vorwärts* 190 (13 April 1919). In this context *Vorwärts* also depicts the murder of Neuring and the need to restore order as sufficient justifications for Dresden's occupation by *Freikorps* troops. The war invalids' radicalisation is thus depicted as a justification for the government's employment of troops against the German population. See 'Die Lehre von Dresden' *Vorwärts* 191 (14 April 1919).

potential unrest among war victims was regarded as the main motivation to overrule the treasury's opposition to far-reaching pension reforms.[871]

Even more than the returning troops, war victims embodied the permanent social and financial repercussions with which the war had burdened the Weimar Republic. Unlike the soldiers neither war invalids nor dependants of the fallen could be demobilised as such and remained as a constant reminder of the conflict. While the majority of their able-bodied comrades could generally be reintegrated into their former lives without major complications, war victims often found it significantly more difficult to return to their pre-war lives.[872] Furthermore, Sabine Kienitz argues convincingly that the war invalids' desire for acknowledgement of their physical sacrifice and the necessity to justify their invalidity in order to receive or revise their pension often manifested itself in an exclusive identification through their war experience and its consequences.[873] War widows whose war experience at the home front had been characterised by deprivation, malnourishment, and sickness, were also fundamentally displaced from their social position as a consequence of their husband's death.[874] Many women who were forced to live on welfare pensions that did not cover the minimal cost of living were left in a desperate financial position forcing them to provide for their family.[875]

This brief summary illustrates that German war victims played a significant role in Germany's cultural demobilisation and influenced the state's efforts to come to terms with the social consequences of the war. Unlike most of the literature quoted above, this analysis is not concerned with the war victims' perception of their role, their growing disillusionment with the republic or with the government's balancing act between Germany's financial limitations and the commitment to provide sufficient pensions.[876] Rather, it aims to investigate how republican discourse attempted to demobilise the public image of the war victims and aimed to gain moral legitimacy through expressed commitment for their welfare. The evaluation of the 115 articles dealing with Germany's war victims' concerns provides an interesting insight into republican priorities with regard to this issue.

---

[871] Whalen, *Bitter Wounds*, p. 134; Frie,'Kriegsbeschädigtenfürsorge' in Michalka (ed.), *Weltkrieg*, pp. 563f.
[872] Bessel, *Germany*, pp. 140, 257f, 270; Whalen, *Bitter Wounds*, pp. 56f, 113f; Bernd Ulrich, '"... als wenn nichts gewesen wäre". Anmerkungen zur Behandlung der Kriegsopfer während des Ersten Weltkrieges' in Hirschfeld, Krumeich and Renz (eds.), *"Keiner fühlt sich hier mehr als Mensch..."*, p. 148.
[873] Kienitz, 'Beschädigte Helden' in Dülffer (ed.), *Der verlorene Frieden*, p. 205; Idem, *Beschädigte Helden. Kriegsinvalidität und Körperbilder 1914-1923* (Paderborn, 2008), p. 330.
[874] Whalen, *Bitter Wounds*, pp. 72f, 75.
[875] Ibid, p. 76. As women provided an increasing percentage of the German workforce since the 1890s, the necessity for women to work was by no means a post-war phenomenon. The challenge of seeking jobs became significantly more difficult after the war, however, because the soldiers' re-employment was partly facilitated by the removal of women from the republic's workforce. See Ute Daniel, 'Fiktionen, Friktionen und Fakten - Frauenlohnarbeit im Ersten Weltkrieg' in Michalka (ed.), *Weltkrieg*, pp. 532, 554f; Bessel, *Germany*, pp. 18f, 128.
[876] For example Whalen, *Bitter Wounds*, particularly, pp. 16, 107-140; Kienitz, 'Beschädigte Helden' in Dülffer (ed.), *Der verlorene Frieden*, pp. 199-214; Frie,'Kriegsbeschädigtenfürsorge' in Michalka (ed.), *Weltkrieg*, pp. 563-567, 576f; Bessel, *Germany*, particularly pp. 274-281.

It is initially striking that the stereotypical image of begging war invalids, which artists like George Grosz and Otto Dix have firmly established as common perceptions of Germany's post-war society, is hardly represented throughout the republican press in the period analysed.[877] Although there is no shortage of articles listing war invalids' post-war grievances, addressing incidents of disrespectful treatment, poverty, problems with the welfare bureaucracy, and difficulties in finding employment, only four articles explicitly portrayed images of war invalids as severely mutilated beggars or street musicians.[878] The reluctance to evoke such images is surprising, because they would have been a powerful medium to legitimise the republic. Sabine Kienitz has argued that the portrayal of severe mutilations was used both to raise awareness for the war invalids' plight and to illustrate the horrific consequences of the war.[879] Both of these main messages accorded with the republican interpretation of the war and the benevolent republican attitude to the war invalids.[880] Additionally, the depiction of war invalids as beggars who were ignored or mistreated by representatives of the social strata considered responsible for the veterans' suffering allowed the republican press to discredit their political opponents. Three of the articles consciously contrast the begging war invalids respectively with the warmongering wife of a businessman, antisemitic right-wing students, monarchist 'stab in the back' demagogy, and an officer denouncing the German soldiers as a 'field-grey mob'.[881] The implication that the representatives of Germany's former political and social elite, against whom the republic defined itself, were disrespectful to the soldiers' sacrifice which they had promised to value with 'eternal gratitude of the fatherland' provided republican discourse with a powerful moral weapon against their political opposition.

The explanation for the apparent refusal to use such images throughout the republican press has to be sought in the republican self-representation with regard to the

---

[877] Bessel, *Germany*, p. 264. See illustration X, pp. 203f.

[878] '"Feldgraues Gesindel"' *Vorwärts* 382 (29 July 1919); 'Im Vorübergehen' *Vorwärts* 53 (29 January 1920); Robert Heymann, 'Der tote Hund' *Der Drache* 12 (22 December 1920); Fritz Kahrstädt, 'Blinder Kamerad' *Vorwärts* 355 (14 July 1919). The only other article depicting severe mutilations as a characterisation of the war invalids' existence describes the despondency of two young men in a hospital upon the recognition that they will never be able to go dancing again. See Edgar Hahnewald, 'Der Stumpf' *Vorwärts* 253 (19 May 1919). The decorative painter Edgar William Hahnewald (1884-1961) was a social democrat whoworked as an editor for the *Reuß(ische) Volkszeitung* before joining the editorial staff of the *Dresdner Volkszeitung* in 1913. Following his emigration in 1933, Hahnewald continued to contribute to a number of exile SPD papers and pursued a career as a book illustrator. See Werner Röder and Herbert A. Strauss (eds.), *Biographisches Handbuch der deutschssprachigen Emigation nach 1933. Band I: Politik, Wirtschaft, Öffentliches Leben* (Munich, New York, London, Paris, 1980), p. 265.

[879] Kienitz, 'Beschädigte Helden' in Dülffer (ed.), *Der verlorene Frieden*, pp. 211, 214.

[880] For the republican focus on the horrific nature of war see chapter 1, pp. 40-53. The republican commitment to the war invalids' concerns is particularly evident in party political election leaflets: FES, 1919 VI: DDP, *Wahlaufruf!* (n.p., 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DDP, E-J, Frankfurt, 1918: DDP, *Wilkommen!* (Frankfurt, 1918); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, SPD, 1919, Berlin: Walther Oehme and Eduard Bernstein, *Deutscher Sozialistentag* (Berlin, 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, SPD, 1918, Berlin: SPD, *Deutschland als freie Volksrepublik. Den aus dem Felde heimkehrenden Volksgenossen!* (Berlin, 1918); FES, 6/FLBL006199: SPD, *Die Sozialdemokratie und die Nationalversammlung* (Hannover, 1918/1919). For biographical information on Eduard Bernstein see Appendix I, p. 323.

[881] '"Feldgraues Gesindel"' *Vorwärts* 382 (29 July 1919); 'Im Vorübergehen' *Vorwärts* 53 (29 January 1920); Robert Heymann, 'Der tote Hund' *Der Drache* 12 (22 December 1920).

victims of war. The largest thematically cohesive contingent of the press coverage dealing with war invalids' concerns was made up of articles pledging and specifying state support for the victims of war.[882] Robert Whalen has established that, unlike the imperial government which had refused to be burdened with the financial support for the war victims' pensions, the republican government officially declared that it accepted responsibility for the war victims' welfare in February 1919.[883] In line with this promise, many of the articles in *Vorwärts* and the *Frankfurter Zeitung* mainly outlined the government's improvements of the existing provisions in order to provide information about changed regulations.[884]

The informative character of these articles was complemented by a distinctly self-laudatory note as the republican press, with exception of *Die Freiheit*, outlined the government's great achievements in improving the war victims' living conditions. In line with a government press release, both *Vorwärts* and the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, for example, praised a decree for a pension increase in January 1919 as a 'Christmas present' for the war victims which proved that the government was prepared to 'make its promises come true'.[885] Both publications furthermore stressed the government's co-operation with the war victims' organisations in reforming their pensions and its commitment to accord with their wishes to the limit of Germany's financial capabilities.[886] By additionally emphasizing the implementation of laws forcing employers to provide employment for severely disabled war invalids, republican discourse defined the government's role as the main benefactor of German war invalids.[887]

Such promises to look after the war victims' welfare and depictions of the government as their benevolent guardian explained why republican discourse avoided

---

[882] Of the entire selection of press sources dealing with German war victims, 29% dealt with general and more specific declarations of state support, making up the largest thematic group of the articles.
[883] Whalen, *Bitter Wounds*, pp. 104f, 134.
[884] For example 'Eine Weihnachtsgabe an die Kriegsbeschädigten' *Vorwärts* 354 (25 December 1918); 'Für die Kriegsbeschädigten. Neue Maßnahmen der Regierung' *Vorwärts* 213 (27 April 1919); 'Fürsorge für die Kriegsbeschädigten' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 357 (25 December 1918); 'Die Kriegsbeschädigten-Fürsorge' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 312 (27 April 1919).
[885] 'Eine Weihnachtsgabe an die Kriegsbeschädigten' *Vorwärts* 354 (25 December 1918); 'Fürsorge für die Kriegsbeschädigten' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 357 (25 December 1918).
[886] For example 'Erfüllung der Kriegsbeschädigtenforderungen' *Vorwärts* 315a (15 November 1918); 'Erfüllung der Kriegsbeschädigtenforderungen' *Vorwärts* 212 (26 April 1919); 'Die Forderungen der Kriegsbeschädigten und Kriegshinterbliebenen' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 588 (11 August 1919); 'Für die Kriegsbeschädigten. Neue Maßnahmen der Regierung' *Vorwärts* 213 (27 April 1919); 'Die Kriegsbeschädigten-Fürsorge' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 312 (27 April 1919); 'Neue Mittel zur Fürsorge der Kriegshinterbliebenen' *Vorwärts* 406 (11 August 1919); 'Die Versorgung der Kriegsopfer' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 167 (3 March 1920).
[887] 'Einstellungszwang für Kriegsschwerbeschädigte' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 42 (16 January 1919); 'Einstellungszwang für Schwerkriegsbeschädigte' *Vorwärts* 37 (21 January 1919); 'Einstellungszwang zugunsten Schwerbeschädigter' *Vorwärts* 135 (14 March 1919); 'Gesetz über die Beschäftigung Schwerbeschädigter' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 762 (11 October 1919); 'Das Kündigungsverbot für Schwerbeschädigte' *Vorwärts* 413 (14 August 1919); 'Das Schwerstkriegsbeschädigten-Gesetz angenommen' *Vorwärts* 133 (12 March 1920).

stereotyping war invalids as severely mutilated, destitute beggars.[888] The republican acceptance of responsibility for war victims' welfare meant that such stereotyping would inevitably discredit the republic as unable to fulfil its promises to those particularly deserving of the 'gratitude of the fatherland'. The republican focus on the government's commitment to the war victims thus illustrated attempts to 'demobilise' the war invalids through the promise of state support. As part of Germany's cultural demobilisation this approach was unsuccessful. On a practical level, the war victims' demands overstretched Germany's financial and administrative capabilities. This problem severely increased disaffection with the welfare system - and the state held responsible for its shortcomings - among those forced to rely on its support.[889]

On an ideological level, the republican promise to translate the utopian wartime promise of the 'eternal gratitude of the fatherland' into political reality implied two main assumptions. Firstly, it suggested that the republican forces hoped to derive moral legitimacy from their commitment to the war victims. Additionally it also illustrated that the unquestioning acceptance of wartime expectations turned the republican forces into a target for popular disappointment when it proved impossible to meet them. Richard Bessel has argued - regarding Germany's military demobilisation - that 'the Weimar state was trapped between the impossibility of accomplishing such tasks and responsibility for the consequences of failing to accomplish them'.[890] This assessment also adequately describes the republican dilemma with regard to the war victims: while all political parties paid lip-service to the war victims' cause, those who did not have the power to act could safely criticise the republic for its failure to prevent the war victims from falling into destitution.[891] This republican approach illustrated that the republican attempt to live up to Germany's wartime aspirations, left the republic vulnerable to attacks when these illusions could not be upheld. It is telling in this context that only one article in *Die Freiheit* defined the promise of the 'fatherland's gratitude' as one that was initially made by Germany's nationalist forces.[892] This failure to blame the wartime political elite for the

---

[888] For political promises to Germany's war victims see BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DDP, E-J, Frankfurt, 1918: DDP, *Wilkommen!* (Frankfurt, 1918); FES, 6/FLBL006199: SPD, *Die Sozialdemokratie und die Nationalversammlung* (Hannover, 1918/1919).

[889] Whalen, *Bitter Wounds*, pp. 16, 141-149. Whalen points out that among the war victims' organisations only the *Reichsbund* still supported the republic by 1931, although the organisation's view was not shared by the majority of war victims. Ibid, pp. 172-174.

[890] Bessel, 'State and Society in Germany' in Rosenhaft and Lee (eds.), *State and social change*, p. 213.

[891] See for example BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DDP, E-J, Frankfurt, 1918: DDP, *Wilkommen!* (Frankfurt, 1918); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DNVP, 1918, o.O.: DNVP, *Wahlaufruf der Deutschnationalen Volkspartei* (n.p., 1918); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DVP, Berlin, 1919: DVP, *Für Recht und Freiheit! Für Volk und Vaterland!* (Berlin, 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DVP, Berlin, 1919: DVP, *Was wir wollen!* (Berlin, 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, KPD, 1919, o.O.: KPD, *Kein Pfennig für die Kriegsschulden!* (n.p., 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, SPD, 1920, o.O.: SPD, *Ein Wort in letzter Stunde!* (n.p., 1920); FES, 1919 Undatiert I: USPD, *Heimgekehrte Kriegsgefangene, Genossen, Brüder!* (n.p., 1919).

[892] 'Der Dank des Vaterlandes' *Die Freiheit* 99 (24 February 1919).

impossibility of fulfilling the demands that they had fostered shows to what extent the other republican publications had accepted this responsibility as their own.

In line with the commitment which the republican press had pledged to the war victims, the publications commented extensively on the social problems which they faced in Germany's post-war society.[893] The social exclusion of war victims, evident in their contemporaries' lack of respect towards them was the most common complaint in this regard. Sabine Kienitz has argued that this discourse about the public indifference towards the war invalids cannot be regarded as a reflection of the invalids' genuine experience of the post-war period, but rather illustrates their attempt to establish their symbolic status of victimhood as a basis for their demands for recognition.[894] Kienitz does not specify her press sources beyond specialised publications which exclusively targeted war victims' concerns. The fact that the entire republican press also frequently commented on these difficulties suggests that the political dimension of the issue went beyond the war invalids' self-representation.

The frequent appeals to the population in republican publications to treat war invalids with more consideration and value their sacrifice also demonstrated the desire to establish the republican concern for the country's heroes in a public forum.[895] This was particularly evident in two subsequent articles in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, the first of which described the desperation of a war invalid student, whose fraternity rejected him on the grounds that his disabled arm prevented him from 'proving his bravery' through fencing.[896] Although the publication depicted the case quite critically, arguing that the desire to prove one's worth through fencing wounds was anachronistic in the context of the republican values, the newspaper's reporting of the issue nevertheless compelled the government into action. Three days later, the *Frankfurter Zeitung* published a follow-up article highlighting a decree which prohibited fraternities from excluding or rejecting membership to war invalids who could not fence.[897] This case particularly illustrates that republican propaganda partly adopted the war victims' cause as an opportunity to stress the government's moral integrity.

---

[893] Articles addressing the war invalids' social problems in the aftermath of the war made up 28% of press coverage of war victims' concerns. Of these 32 articles 11 dealt with disrespectful behaviour towards war invalids, nine with poverty, four with social displacement resulting in violence, four with complaints about the welfare bureaucracy, three with problems finding employment, and one addressed a particular case in a hospital where war invalids had been deprived of their right to vote. In comparison, only nine narratives throughout the republican publications addressed the ordinary veterans' problems upon their return to Germany.

[894] Kienitz, 'Beschädigte Helden' in Dülffer, *Der verlorene Frieden*, pp. 202-204.

[895] See for example 'Der Dank des Vaterlandes' *Die Freiheit* 99 (24 February 1919); 'Der Kriegsbeschädigte und die Neugierigen' *Der wahre Jacob* 855 (25 April 1919); 'Nehmt Rücksicht auf die Kriegsbeschädigten!' *Vorwärts* 126 (10 March 1919); 'Nehmt Rücksicht auf Kriegsbeschädigte!' *Vorwärts* 31 (17 January 1920); Max Hiller, 'Wenn ein Hauptmann a.D. Arbeit sucht' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 551 (28 July 1919); Alfred Nassauer, 'Ihr Menschen, seht ihr nicht?' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 246 (1 April 1919).

[896] 'Republikaner' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 1 (1 January 1920).

[897] 'Kriegsbeschädigte und Mensuren' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 8 (4 January 1920).

There is no question that the discussion of the war victims' precarious situation in republican discourse was motivated by genuine concern at least as much as by party-political considerations. *Vorwärts* journalist Erich Kuttner, for example, initiated the SPD's war victim organisation *Reichsbund* after being wounded at Verdun and unquestionably cared for their concerns.[898] In spite of the fact that war victims' organisations generally claimed to be apolitical in order to widen their appeal, their activity was highly politicised.[899] The concern for the war victims throughout the republican press also had a similarly significant political dimension, which was particularly evident in attempts of the political left to gain an interpretative sovereignty with regard to the issue.

While *Vorwärts* articles and SPD leaflets emphasized that the war victims' provision had significantly improved since the revolution, USPD propaganda accorded with the position of the *Internationaler Bund der Kriegsbeschädigten und Hinterbliebenen* (International War Invalids' and Dependants' League) - a more radical left-wing splinter group of the *Reichsbund* led by the left-wing radical Karl Tiedt.[900] One of the radical organisation's leaflets explicitly defined the republican government as its main target by arguing that the 'new government has done nothing effective to relieve the suffering of the war victims,' implying that it had failed to keep its promises to take charge of expressing the 'gratitude of the fatherland'.[901] In a similar manner, various articles in *Die Freiheit* not only accused Germany's former elite of having failed in fulfilling their promises to the war victims, but also extended this accusation to the republican government.[902] Like *Die Weltbühne*, the USPD publication particularly focused on the war victims' pensions in comparison with post-war military spending in order to criticise the government for choosing wrong priorities.[903] The claim that both active and invalid *Freikorps* members received better provisions than Germany's war victims linked two of the main allegations of the left.[904] While openly accusing the republican government of

---

[898] Whalen, *Bitter Wounds*, pp. 121f; Prädikow, *Der Weimarer VORWÄRTS*, pp. 163f. This was evident in the large proportion of articles related to war victims' issues his newspaper published. *Vorwärts* featured more than half of all articles analysed in relation to war invalids. For biographical information on Kuttner see Appendix I, p. 330.

[899] Whalen, *Bitter Wounds*, pp. 122, 126-128.

[900] For example 'Der Schwerverwundete als Wahlvorspann. Wer hat sich der Schwerverwundeten angenommen?' *Vorwärts* 247 (15 May 1920); Friedrich Kleeis, 'Die neue Kriegsfürsorge' *Vorwärts* 132 (12 March 1920); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, SPD, 1918, Berlin: SPD, *Deutschland als freie Volksrepublik. Den aus dem Felde heimkehrenden Volksgenossen!* (Berlin, 1918).

[901] FES, NUR 1919 Undatiert IV: Internationaler Bund der Kriegsbeschädigten und Hinterbliebenen, *Kriegsbeschädigte und Hinterbliebene* (Frankfurt, 1919).

[902] For example 'Der Dank des Vaterlandes' *Die Freiheit* 99 (24 February 1919); 'Das Los der Zivil- und Kriegskrüppel' *Die Freiheit* 335 (16 July 1919); Johannes Hagge, 'Die Erregung unter den Kriegsgeschädigten' *Die Freiheit* 197 (25 April 1919). Also see FES, 1919 Undatiert I: USPD, *Heimgekehrte Kriegsgefangene, Genossen, Brüder!* (n.p., 1919).

[903] 'Demonstration der Kriegsgeschädigten' *Die Freiheit* 202 (28 April 1919); 'A.K.' *Die Weltbühne* 36 (28 August 1919), p. 275; 'Das Los der Zivil- und Kriegskrüppel' *Die Freiheit* 335 (16 July 1919); Johannes Hagge, 'Die Erregung unter den Kriegsgeschädigten' *Die Freiheit* 197 (25 April 1919).

[904] 'Demonstration der Kriegsgeschädigten' *Die Freiheit* 202 (28 April 1919); 'A.K.' *Die Weltbühne* 36 (28 August 1919), p. 275; Johannes Hagge, 'Die Erregung unter den Kriegsgeschädigten' *Die Freiheit* 197 (25 April 1919).

failing to fulfil its promises, the allegation implied that the new government had simply adopted the methods of the imperial regime. This was particularly evident in a letter in *Die Weltbühne,* which explicitly compared the SPD Defence Minister Gustav Noske with Wilhelm II, claiming that the revolution did not bring political change.[905]

Two months after a left-wing takeover attempt in the *Reichsbund*, which ultimately led to its split and the formation of the *Internationaler Bund*, *Vorwärts* made a number of allegations against the radical left, discrediting its proclaimed concern for the war invalids and justifying SPD expenditure with regard to the *Freikorps*.[906] In retaliation for the left-wing criticism of the government's role as a guardian of the war invalids, *Vorwärts* also repeatedly warned of alleged radical left-wing plans to turn war invalids into 'cannon fodder' during their demonstrations by using them as a shield against the government's troops.[907] *Vorwärts'* depiction of the unrest which resulted in the killing of the Saxon Minister of War Neuring as premeditated rather than spontaneous pointed to the danger of an intentional radicalisation of war victims, which warranted military intervention.[908] In line with the common stereotyping which the two socialist factions tended to throw at each other, the USPD promoted the image that the SPD and the post-war government did not sufficiently represent the war victims' concerns.[909] In retaliation, the SPD alleged that radical left-wing agitation not only aimed to abuse the war invalids, but also threatened the entire nation.

While the socialist factions exchanged political blows in order to establish each party as the legitimate representative of the war victims, the same discourse with Germany's right-wing forces remained rather one-sided. Although DVP and DNVP election leaflets included demands for sufficient provision for war invalids, there is relatively little evidence in the first years of the Weimar Republic that the reactionary forces intended to continue exploiting this issue.[910] Neither right-wing leaflets nor republican discourse, which generally commented on prominent right-wing propaganda, noted any

---

905 'A.K.' *Die Weltbühne* 36 (28 August 1919), p. 275. For biographical information on Noske see Appendix I, pp. 333f.

906 'Die Lehre von Dresden' *Vorwärts* 191 (14 April 1919); 'Spaltung des Reichsbundes der Kriegsbeschädigten' *Vorwärts* 96 (21 February 1919); 'Das Spiel mit dem Feuer - Ausnutzung der Kriegsbeschädigten zu putschistischen Zwecken' *Vorwärts* 181 (8 April 1919); 'Das Spiel mit dem Feuer - Kriegsbeschädigte als Spartakistisches Kanonenfutter' *Vorwärts* 188 (12 April 1919).

907 'Das Spiel mit dem Feuer - Ausnutzung der Kriegsbeschädigten zu putschistischen Zwecken' *Vorwärts* 181 (8 April 1919); 'Das Spiel mit dem Feuer - Kriegsbeschädigte als Spartakistisches Kanonenfutter' *Vorwärts* 188 (12 April 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, SPD, 1918-19, o.O.: SPD, *Die Unabhängigen für die "Noske-Garde"!* (n.p., 1918/1919). In response to this allegation *Die Freiheit* suggested that this conduct only reflected a continuation of the SPD's war propaganda. See 'Die Hetze gegen die Kriegsbeschädigten' *Die Freiheit* 182 (15 April 1919).

908 'Die Lehre von Dresden' *Vorwärts* 191 (14 April 1919).

909 See for example 'Der Dank des Vaterlandes' *Die Freiheit* 99 (24 February 1919); 'Massenkundgebung der Kriegsbeschädigten' *Die Freiheit* 381 (11 August 1919); 'Das Los der Zivil- und Kriegskrüppel' *Die Freiheit* 335 (16 July 1919).

910 For example BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DNVP, 1918, o.O.: DNVP, *Wahlaufruf der Deutschnationalen Volkspartei* (n.p., 1918); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DVP, Berlin, 1919: DVP, *Für Recht und Freiheit! Für Volk und Vaterland!* (Berlin, 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DVP, Berlin, 1919: DVP, *Was wir wollen!* (Berlin, 1919).

comprehensive right-wing involvement in war victims' concerns beyond general electoral slogans. While the republican press referred to a significant number of right-wing attempts to attack the government on the issue of prisoners of war – which will be discussed in more detail in the next section of this chapter – only a single article referred to reactionary attempts to turn war invalids against the government. Referring to a war invalid's letter in the *Deutsche Tageszeitung,* which alleged that under the SPD government there had been money for celebrations and gifts for the *Freikorps* which freed Berlin while the war invalids who were still in hospital had been forgotten, *Vorwärts* cuttingly replied that

> [...] one must not lose track of the fact that these pitiable men [who are still in hospital] do not have to thank the revolution, but the war and the Pan-German warmongers for their fate. [...] The unfortunate author of this letter needs to be told that he is seeking the heartless rich people in a place where they cannot be found. The moneybags who would be well able to help the war invalids but have callously forgotten them are not SPD members, but should be traceable in big crowds among the German Nationalists and German People's Party.[911]

In conclusion, the article argued that while these men needed all their money to destabilise the nation, the SPD had taken on the war victims' plight by significantly improving wartime welfare laws and increasing their pensions.[912]

This apparent lack of right-wing propaganda regarding the victims of war can be explained by two factors. Robert Whalen has established that according to the war victims' organisations in 1921 the SPD *Reichsbund* and the liberal *Einheitsverband* had more than twice the number of members than the equivalent right-wing organisations.[913] This fact, combined with the potential allegations which could be launched against those responsible for the unprecedented number of war invalids may have inclined Germany's reactionary forces to refrain from appealing to the war invalids until Germany's financial crisis alienated their majority from the republic and made them susceptible to Nazi propaganda.[914]

Republican press and republican propaganda thus seized on the war victims' concerns as a means to undermine the political credibility of Germany's former elite. By arguing that Germany's right-wing forces bore the responsibility for war and therefore also for the victims of the conflict, it was suggested that their moral guilt was too immense to tolerate their continuing political agitation.[915] *Ulk*, for example expressed this perception through an image of amputees in military uniforms, leaving a hospital which is captioned

---

[911] 'Der Schwerverwundete als Wahlvorspann. Wer hat sich der Schwerverwundeten angenommen?' *Vorwärts* 247 (15 May 1920).
[912] Ibid.
[913] Whalen, *Bitter Wounds*, p. 128.
[914] Ibid, pp. 172-174.
[915] 'Der Schwerverwundete als Wahlvorspann. Wer hat sich der Schwerverwundeten angenommen?' *Vorwärts* 247 (15 May 1920); Kurt Tucholsky, 'Nach fünf Jahren' *Die Weltbühne* 33 (7 August 1919), p. 172. For biographical information on Tucholsky see Appendix I, p. 340.

with the allegation that their professors were responsible for sending them into war.[916] Republican discourse also reinforced the notion of reactionary moral corruption by stressing their lack of compassion for those war invalids who had sacrificed their health for right-wing promises.[917] The most extreme example of such behaviour was described in *Vorwärts*, which reported that war invalids who had objected to right-wing demands for a war of revenge during a DNVP meeting had not only been told that they deserved to die, but were subsequently physically attacked by the audience.[918]

In order to reinforce the republic's role as the benevolent provider for the war invalids, republican discourse also focused on right-wing obstructions of attempts to improve the war victims' situation. As mentioned in chapter 2, *Vorwärts* particularly attacked Ludendorff by reporting that he intended to donate the profits for his memoirs to German war invalids which Ludendorff subsequently denied.[919] Not merely satisfied with marking Ludendorff with the moral stigma of the war profiteer, the publication also linked this perception to a heartless disregard for the men who had believed his promises.[920] The *Vorwärts* satirist Artur Zickler (Paulchen) turned the knife in this particular wound by formulating a war victim's address to Ludendorff, which outlined how he had sacrificed his health for Ludendorff's medals and congratulated him for his good fortune in the spirit of wartime 'comradeship loyalty'.[921] The focus on the inequality inherent in the fact that those who were responsible for the continued suffering of the soldiers were not willing to sacrifice their profits to relieve any of it consciously aimed to fuel popular anger against the old elite. Reports in *Vorwärts* furthermore revealed right-wing attempts to divert money from the wartime *Ludendorff Spende* – a collection intended to ease the suffering of war victims – into anti-republican agitation channelled through reactionary war veterans' organisations.[922] In this respect it can be argued that at least *Vorwärts* clearly attempted to mark Germany's right-wing parties as hostile to the people who had sacrificed their health for them.

---

[916] Willy Steinert, 'Das Stahlbad des Krieges' *Ulk* 31 (1 August 1919)

[917] 'Drückeberger und Heimkrieger' *Vorwärts* 646 (18 December 1919); '"Feldgraues Gesindel"' *Vorwärts* 382 (29 July 1919); 'Heimkriegers Klage' *Vorwärts* 650 (20 December 1919); 'Kriegsbeschädigte und Mensuren' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 8 (4 January 1920); 'Republikaner' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 1 (1 January 1920); 'Der Schwerverwundete als Wahlvorspann. Wer hat sich der Schwerverwundeten angenommen?' *Vorwärts* 247 (15 May 1920); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DDP, Berlin, o.D.: DDP, *Das deutsche Volk ist antinational!* (Berlin, n.d.).

[918] 'Deutschnationale gegen Kriegsbeschädigte' *Vorwärts* 244 (14 May 1919).

[919] 'Ludendorffs Hilfe für die Kriegskrüppel' *Vorwärts* 495 (27 September 1919); 'Ludendorff gibt nichts!' *Vorwärts* 498 (29 September 1919).

[920] Ibid.

[921] Paulchen, 'Herr Ludendorff, wie ick mir freue...' *Vorwärts* 498 (29 September 1919). In his monograph on the *Vorwärts* in the Weimar Republic, Klaus Prädikow attributed the pseudonym 'Paulchen' to the journalist and author Artur Zickler.

[922] 'Ein frecher Raubzug. Ausplünderung der Kriegsbeschädigten durch die Kriegsgewinner' *Vorwärts* 261 (23 May 1919); 'Heeringen schreit um Hilfe' *Vorwärts* 294 (11 June 1919); 'Heeringens Verstärkungen. Eine Berichtigung des Reichskriegerdanks' *Vorwärts* 297 (13 June 1919); 'Der Korruptionsfonds der Kriegervereine' *Vorwärts* 276 (31 May 1919); 'Der Raubzug der Kriegervereine gegen die Kriegsbeschädigten' *Vorwärts* 265 (25 May 1919); 'Die unpolitischen Kriegervereine. Mobilmachung der Gegenrevolution' *Vorwärts* 306 (18 June 1919).

When considering the entire republican discourse regarding the German war victims, it is striking that its almost exclusive focus lies on the practical necessity to provide for the war invalids.[923] Most articles implicitly or explicitly acknowledged that the war invalids deserved to be provided for because of their sacrifice. This approach revealed that the duty to express the fatherland's gratitude was largely understood in economic rather than psychological terms. Republican discourse dealing with affairs of war invalids and dependants of the fallen was far more focused on the post-war necessities than their wartime experience. Unlike propaganda addressing the returning soldiers, the discourse regarding war victims was largely devoid of explicit references to concepts like wartime heroism and fighting spirit.[924] Foreign Minister Hermann Müller, for example, adopted this approach when he defined war invalids as a living memorial to the horrors of war, who would prevent statesmen from going to war again.[925] Largely avoiding glorification of wartime ideals, republican discourse predominantly addressed war victims' concerns in relation to the republican context.

This successful 'demobilisation' of the public debate which presented an entirely different impression than the soldiers' welcome ceremonies proved somewhat problematic in the long run. As the government's inability to fulfil the financial demands of the war victims became increasingly evident, the republican focus on the war victims' welfare provided a basis for antagonism towards the new state. The concurrent lack of republican symbolism aiming to satisfy the war victims' desire for public acknowledgement rendered them vulnerable to National Socialist rhetoric which appealed for the recognition of wartime heroism.[926] The war victims' commitment to the 'front community', as a concept which gave meaning to their existence, was particularly evident in their support for prisoner of war demands to receive back pay for the duration of their captivity.[927] Although a number of previous articles had criticised pay increases of civil servants and the superior pay for *Freikorps* members with reference to the war victims' suffering, the *Reichsbund* explicitly defended their imprisoned comrades' demands for compensation.[928] The republican decision to refrain from prioritising the war victims' heroic sacrifice remained true to the republican narrative of the war experience by focusing on their

---

[923] Sabine Kienitz also highlights the republican reluctance to establish official rituals of commemoration in an attempt to 'retrospectively distance themselves from the war', arguing that this contributed to the war victims' self perception as symbols for defeat. See Sabine Kienitz, 'Der verwundete Körper als Emblem der Niederlage? Zur Symbolik der Figur des Kriegsinvaliden in der Weimarer Republik' in Horst Carl, Hans-Henning Kortüm, Dieter Langewiesche and Friedrich Lenger (eds.), *Kriegsniederlagen. Erfahrungen und Erinnerungen* (Berlin, 2004), p. 335.

[924] Sabine Kienitz illustrates that a changing image of heroism focused on the war dead which could be glorified, increasingly excluding war invalids. See *Beschädigte Helden 1914-1923*, pp. 81-84.

[925] 'Das Programm der Friedensregierung' *Vorwärts* 373 (24 July 1919). For biographical information on Müller see Appendix I, p. 333.

[926] Whalen, *Bitter Wounds*, pp. 174-177.

[927] 'Das neue Versorgungsgesetz und die Kriegsbeschädigten' *Vorwärts* 213 (26 April 1920).

[928] Ibid; 'Das Los der Zivil- und Kriegskrüppel' *Die Freiheit* 335 (16 July 1919); 'Notschrei unserer Invaliden' *Vorwärts* 429 (23 August 1919); Johannes Hagge, 'Die Erregung unter den Kriegsgeschädigten' *Die Freiheit* 197 (25 April 1919).

victimhood rather than their heroism as the characteristic feature of their suffering. The refusal to give meaning to their sacrifice, which the republic could not do without upholding Germany's wartime values ultimately alienated the war victims from the democratic state.

PRISONERS OF WAR

1. Obstructed Demobilisation

Although Germany's military demobilisation was regulated by the armistice terms, republican discourse largely dealt with the return of the soldiers and the social reintegration of war victims as domestic issues. The demobilisation of Germany's prisoners of war, on the other hand, had a distinctly international dimension because it depended on an Allied decision to release them. This perceived dependence on the Allies' mercy evoked massive resentment among the German population when the Entente powers refused to return Germany's prisoners of war reciprocally to Germany's release of Allied prisoners after the armistice.[929] In spite of subsequent Allied promises that the prisoners would be repatriated after the peace settlement, the prisoners' return was eventually postponed until at least three of the main Allied powers besides Germany had ratified the Treaty of Versailles.[930] As a result of the peace terms, German prisoners held in Britain did not return to Germany until September 1919 while France only followed suit from January 1920.[931] The Allied postponement of the repatriation of German prisoners of war posed severe difficulties for the new republic, both in terms of attempting to establish a political identity and to initiate the cultural demobilisation of Germany's political discourse.

Heather Jones's doctoral thesis offers a pioneering analysis of the impact which this postponement of the prisoners' return had on Germany's political climate throughout the Weimar Republic.[932] Her research focus on violence as a determining factor of the prisoners' portrayal in post-war memory, however, centres her analysis of the Weimar period on German perceptions of prisoners' mistreatment - both suffered by Germans in

---

[929] Heather Jones, *The Enemy Disarmed. Prisoners of war and the violence of wartime, Britain, France and Germany 1914-1920* (PhD Thesis, Department of History, Trinity College Dublin, 2006), pp. 359, 363f, 369.
[930] Ibid, p. 359.
[931] Ibid, p. 360f.
[932] Ibid, particularly pp. 306-380, 411-425. Dr. Jones only discusses the representation of prisoners of war in the post-war period in the last two of seven chapters of her thesis which compares prevalent attitudes towards returning prisoners in Britain, France and Germany. In spite of the fact that Germany's attempts to achieve a quick repatriation of its citizens are therefore not the central theme of her thesis, Heather Jones is the first historian to address this question at all.

Allied imprisonment and inflicted in German camps.[933] The following assessment of republican propaganda regarding German prisoners will thus refrain from assessing Germany's attempts to whitewash its record of prisoner abuse. Rather, it will evaluate how the republican discourse dealt with the Allied refusal to repatriate German prisoners of war.

The most striking aspect of the republican newspaper coverage dealing with the repatriation of German prisoners was the lack of credible information. On 3 November 1918, for example, the *Frankfurter Zeitung* expressed the hope that reports in the Allied press announcing the retention of German prisoners only represented chauvinist lies.[934] In a similar manner, the publication denounced rumours that the French intended to use German prisoners of war for reconstruction work in France and Belgium in November 1918 and again in February 1919.[935] More than one month later, *Vorwärts* reported that the government could still not establish whether or not these rumours were true.[936] Neither the German government nor the republican press were aware of the French decision to use German prisoners to reconstruct the destroyed regions in Northern France which had already taken shape in the last months of the war.[937] These confusing reports – which were complemented by a significant number of false announcements of the prisoners' imminent return throughout the republican press – reflected the dangerous mix of disbelief and hope which contributed to the disappointment and anger which characterised the public debate of the prisoner of war question in post-war Germany.[938] A *Vorwärts* article described the false hope evoked by empty promises of the prisoners' return as a cause of their families' increasing bitterness and sadness.[939]

In representing the new state to the international community, the republican press responded to this perceived violation of humanitarian principles by invoking the 'consciousness' and 'humanity' of the world.[940] In accordance with the revolutionary

---

933 Ibid, pp. 365-378. Within the parameters of this analysis, the terms 'prisoner/s' and 'imprisonment' exclusively refers to prisoners of war.

934 'Waffenstillstand und Kriegsgefangene' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 305 (3 November 1918).

935 'Die deutschen Kriegsgefangenen' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 325 (23 November 1918); Ernst Zahn, 'Unsere Kriegsgefangenen' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 110 (10 February 1919). In a similar article the renowned author Thomas Mann termed such rumours a 'hoax'. See Thomas Mann, 'Unsere Kriegsgefangenen' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 93 (4 February 1919).

936 'Das Los der deutschen Kriegsgefangenen' *Vorwärts* 357 (29 December 1918).

937 Heather Jones argues that the French government decided on 12 November 1918 to transport 100 000 POWs from central France to aid reconstruction in Northern France. She also points out, however, that large numbers of prisoners captured in the last months of the war had already been forced into the prisoners of war labour companies. See Jones, *The Enemy Disarmed*, p. 356.

938 For example 'Die deutschen Kriegsgefangenen' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 325 (23 November 1918); 'Die deutschen Kriegsgefangenen' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 8 (4 January 1919); 'Für Vorfrieden' *Vorwärts* 313 (13 November 1918); 'Die Heimkehr' *Die Freiheit* 334 (16 July 1919); M. Schlesinger, 'Kriegsgefangenenheimkehr' *Vorwärts* 341 (7 July 1919).

939 'Wann kommen sie?' *Vorwärts* 436 (27 August 1919). Jones quotes a number of letters which also testify to the desperate demands from prisoners' families to let their loved ones return to them. See Jones, *The Enemy Disarmed*, pp. 362-364.

940 'Sozialdemokratischer Antrag zugunsten der deutschen Kriegsgefangenen' *Vorwärts* 69 (7 February 1919).

principles of freedom, brotherhood, and reconciliation, Germany appealed to the Entente populations and the neutral countries to aid it in its quest to end the inhuman martyrdom of its prisoners.[941] On a national level, however, the *Frankfurter Zeitung* and *Vorwärts* mirrored the popular emotions of resentment by depicting the Allied decision to use German internees for reconstruction work as a reintroduction of slavery.[942] The *Frankfurter Zeitung*, for example, printed weekly instalments of prominent citizens' views on the matter, which unilaterally condemned the Allied treatment as cruel, inhumane, dishonourable, and obstructive to peace.[943]

Both publications reinforced this notion through numerous articles detailing the horrendous living conditions and the abuse which German prisoners of war had to endure.[944] Although it was one of the more extreme examples of such press narratives, a front-page article in *Vorwärts* particularly exemplified the continuation of the traditions of wartime propaganda. In response to a note from the Swiss Embassy in Berlin, alleging that commanders in French camps paid their guards more for returning dead escapees than living ones, *Vorwärts* detailed a similar case. It alleged that a French sergeant not only ordered his men to shoot at all prisoners outside of the camp's fence but also offered

---

941 'Der bayerische Soldatenrat an die Internationale' *Vorwärts* 74 (10 February 1919); 'Ein Appell an die Internationale' *Die Freiheit* 71 (9 February 1919); 'Heraus mit unseren Kriegsgefangenen! Hermann Müllers Appell an das Weltgewissen' *Vorwärts* 418 (17 August 1919); 'Selbsthilfeversuch der Kriegsgefangenen' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 912 (6 December 1919); 'Sozialdemokratischer Antrag zugunsten der deutschen Kriegsgefangenen' *Vorwärts* 69 (7 February 1919); Prof. H. von Arnim, 'Unsere Kriegsgefangenen' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 80 (30 January 1919).

942 For example 'Frankfurt, 27. Februar' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 157 (27 February 1919); 'Frondienst der Kriegsgefangenen' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 39 (15 January 1919); 'Für die deutschen Kriegsgefangenen' *Vorwärts* 58 (1 February 1919); 'Das Unrecht an den Gefangenen' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 577 (7 August 1919); Karl Bröger, 'Für unsere Kriegsgefangenen in Frankreich' *Vorwärts* 71 (8 February 1919). The working class writer and poet Karl Bröger (1886-1944) began working as an editor for the *Fränkische Tagespost* in 1912. He experienced combat and was severely wounded in 1914. Bröger was a member of the SPD, yet also pursued a nationalist pacifist sentiment in his work, which tended to take the war-experience and post-war suffering as its central themes. His strong focus on wartime comradeship and manly heroism appealed to the National Socialists, yet Bröger allegedly remained true to his social democratic ideals despite his concessions to the NS regime. See Wilpert, *Lexikon der Weltliteratur. Band I*, pp. 239f.

943 For example H. von Arnim, 'Unsere Kriegsgefangenen' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 80 (30 January 1919); Karl Bröger, 'Unsere Kriegsgefangenen' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 96 (5 February 1919); Thomas Mann, 'Unsere Kriegsgefangenen' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 93 (4 February 1919); Martin Rade, 'Unsere Kriegsgefangenen' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 83 (31 January 1919); Walter Rathenau, 'Unsere Kriegsgefangenen' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 86 (1 February 1919); Ernst Troeltsch, 'Unsere Kriegsgefangenen' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 144 (22 February 1919); Ernst Zahn, 'Unsere Kriegsgefangenen' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 110 (10 February 1919). Martin Rade was a pacifist liberal professor of Protestant theology and was married to Friedrich Naumann's sister. He was involved in liberal politics from the foundation of the *Nationalliberaler Verein* (National Liberal Association) and represented the DDP in the Prussian National Assembly. He was a co-founder of the journal *Christliche* Welt in 1886, editing until 1931. Rade was an early opponent of anti-semitism and was removed from his university position in 1933. See Karl Holl, 'Martin Rade' in Donat und Holl (eds.), *Die Friedensbewegung,* pp. 319f; Clemens Vollnhals, 'Rade, Martin' in Benz and Graml, *Biographisches Lexikon*, p. 262. Ernst Troeltsch was an eminent theologian, historian and philosopher in addition to being one of the co-founders of the DDP. Wolfgang Michalka, 'Troeltsch, Ernst' in Benz and Graml (eds.), *Biographisches* Lexikon, pp. 346f. For biographical information on Rathenau see Appendix I, p. 335.

944 'Frankfurt, 27. Februar' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 157 (27 February 1919); 'Die Kriegsgefangenen in Frankreich' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 206 (18 March 1919); 'Das Los unserer Gefangenen' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 276 (12 April 1919); 'Das Los unserer Kriegsgefangenen' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 131 (18 February 1919); 'Unsere Gefangenen in Not' *Vorwärts* 130 (12 March 1919).

them 50 Francs as a reward for each German corpse.[945] Such reports reinforced the prevalent anger against Entente conduct by upholding the wartime construct of a merciless enemy against whom the population's disillusionment could be directed.

A caricature in *Ulk* conveyed the essence of the republican perception of the Entente conduct. It depicted Wilson turning his back on German prisoners of war carrying out hard physical labour to reconstruct a cathedral in a landscape devastated by the war.[946] In response to Clemenceau's comment, identifying them as German prisoners of war, Wilson only responds with indifference and appeals to his companion to 'return to Paris in order to discuss international understanding'. Although this image mainly aimed at attacking Wilson for tolerating the French use of German prisoners for reconstruction work in Northern France, it also revealed two assumptions which were central to the republican perception of the Allied conduct towards German prisoners. On a purely visual level the image conveyed the suffering of the prisoners and the degrading nature of their captivity which was personified in a colonial soldier guarding the gaunt German prisoners with a whip. In consideration of the contemporary German disregard for the Allied colonial troops as base and immoral sexual predators, this depiction implied that the retention of German prisoners was only intended to humiliate the prisoners and the German nation.[947]

The juxtaposition of suffering soldiers and Wilson's commitment to 'international understanding' also suggested that the two could not be reconciled. The implicit warning to the Allies evident in this caricature was also explicitly voiced by a number of prominent republican politicians. Matthias Erzberger, for example, defined the Allied conduct as a 'slap in the face' of the German people, warning that it would 'destroy the spirit of reconciliation'.[948] In a similar manner, the SPD politicians Otto Wels and Hermann Molkebuhr proposed a resolution during the Socialist Conference in Berne which claimed that the enslavement of German prisoners of war would 'give rise to a lot of personal hatred' because it could 'not be justified by military necessity'.[949] In some respects, the political discourse regarding the German prisoners of war embodied a continuation of warfare amidst the international preparations for peace because it upheld wartime resentments.[950]

---

[945] '50 Frank für jeden toten Deutschen' *Vorwärts* 15 (9 January 1920). *Vorwärts* also accused the French of torturing German prisoners with thumbscrews. See 'Mittelalterliche Tortur an deutschen Kriegsgefangenen' *Vorwärts* 56 (31 January 1919).

[946] S. Krotowski, '14 Punkte und ein dunkler' *Ulk* 8 (21 February 1919). See Illustration XI, p. 205.

[947] For the racist German perception of Allied colonial troops in the post-war period see Christian Koller, *'Von Wilden aller Rassen niedergemetzelt' Die Diskussion um die Verwendung von Kolonialtruppen in Europa zwischen Rassismus, Kolonial- und Militärpolitik (1914-1930)* (Stuttgart, 2001), pp. 237-241.

[948] 'Die Ausführungen Erzbergers' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 125 (15 February 1919); 'Die Rede Erzbergers' *Vorwärts* 85 (15 February 1919).

[949] 'Für die deutschen Kriegsgefangenen' *Vorwärts* 58 (1 February 1919). For biographical information on Wels see Appendix I, p. 339.

[950] On 3 May the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, for example, warned that the refusal to release German prisoners of war would prevent a real and lasting peace. See 'Kein Vorfriede ohne Freigabe unserer

Although there was a consensus throughout the republican press that the Allied refusal to release German prisoners was a violation of humanitarian principles and an obstacle to reconciliation, both *Die Freiheit* and *Die Welt am Montag* suggested that a different ideological format to express these concerns might be beneficial.[951] In *Die Welt am Montag* Friedrich Wilhelm Foerster particularly criticised the German failure to understand the Entente's psychology. Although he acknowledged that the protests for the release of German internees were justified, he suggested that the tone of most public appeals only addressed a domestic audience and did not consider that recognition of Allied suffering would be necessary to appeal for Entente co-operation.[952] Foerster subsequently concluded his article by arguing – with reference to the lack of German protest at the Belgian deportations during the war – that Germany would serve its prisoners better if it adopted a less accusatory tone.[953]

Such critical self-reflection, however, was neither common nor welcomed in the political climate of the Weimar Republic. It is telling that Germany's only tangible success in finding international support for their demands to improve their prisoners' conditions evoked widespread disapproval. In February 1919, the Socialist Conference in Berne unilaterally accepted a resolution, drawn up by Kurt Eisner and the French delegate Pierre Renaudel, which expressed a common commitment for an immediate return of sick and wounded prisoners.[954] Additionally, the resolution called for immediate preparations to repatriate all prisoners of war as soon as the preliminary peace negotiations began and demanded that the conditions in their camps should be inspected by an International Red Cross delegation.[955] The great achievement of the USPD politician Eisner in introducing a consensual socialist action plan to improve the fate of German prisoners of war was completely misrepresented throughout a large proportion of the German press ranging from *Vorwärts* to the extreme right represented by the proto-fascist *Münchener Beobachter*.[956] The controversial part of Eisner's speech at Berne was his declaration that

---

Gefangenen' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 326 (3 May 1919). For similar evaluations see 'Frankfurt, 27. Februar' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 157 (27 February 1919); 'Für die deutschen Kriegsgefangenen' *Vorwärts* 58 (1 February 1919); 'Der Kampf um die Gefangenen' *Vorwärts* 437 (27 August 1919).

[951] 'Baldige Rückkehr der Kriegsgefangenen' *Die Freiheit* 416 (30 August 1919); 'Ein Appell an die Internationale' *Die Freiheit* 71 (9 February 1919); 'Eine Stimme der Versöhnung' *Die Freiheit* 611 (16 December 1919); 'Die Heimkehr der Kriegsgefangenen' *Die Freiheit* 556 (16 November 1919); Friedrich Wilhelm Foerster, 'Unsere Kriegsgefangenen' *Die Welt am Montag* 18 (5 May 1919).

[952] Friedrich Wilhelm Foerster, 'Unsere Kriegsgefangenen' *Die Welt am Montag* 18 (5 May 1919). For biographical information on Foerster see Appendix I, pp. 325f.

[953] Ibid.

[954] Pierre Renaudel and Kurt Eisner, 'Resolution zur Kriegsgefangenenfrage', 1919 in BA, Nachlaß Kurt Eisner, NY/4060-83 Internationale Arbeiter- und Sozialistenkonferenz in Bern, Blatt 18. For biographical information on Eisner see Appendix I, pp. 324f.

[955] Ibid. The resolution further demanded that a commission should be allowed to provide aid to German and Austrian prisoners in Siberia.

[956] The *Frankfurter Zeitung* summarised this antagonistic position in *Vorwärts* and the *Süddeutsche Demokratische Korrespondenz*. See 'Der Fall Eisner' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 116 (12 February 1919); 'Kurt Eisner gegen die deutschen Kriegsgefangenen' *Vorwärts* 78 (12 February 1919). For examples of anti-semitic rants against Eisner in the *Münchener Beobachter* see *Münchener Beobachter* 3/4 (18/25 January 1919). The

Germany had no right to protest about the Allied retention of German prisoners, because the deportations in Belgium and the conditions in German prisoner of war camps deprived Germany of the right to accuse the Allies.[957] Instead, Eisner asked the Entente countries to ease the suffering of German internees out of humanity and appealed for volunteers rather than forced labourers to aid reconstruction in Belgium and France.[958] As the predominant refusal to acknowledge German war guilt throughout the political spectrum right of the USPD also extended to addressing wartime deportations of Belgian workers and German mistreatment of Allied prisoners, Eisner's speech was met with a sense of moral outrage shared by social democrats and right-wing radicals alike.[959] *Vorwärts*, for example, attacked Eisner for failing to acknowledge SPD opposition to the deportations while suggesting that his speech had 'stabbed the victims of war in the back'.[960]

Die Freiheit and the *Frankfurter Zeitung* attempted to revise this perception of Eisner's role at Berne by pointing out that his achievements were worthy of gratitude rather than criticism, because his conduct had significantly contributed to the acceptance of the international resolution for prisoners of war.[961] The latter even described the resolution itself as 'a first step to peace'.[962] In spite of these attempts to calm the nationalist frenzy which was fuelled by allegations against the Allies and reports detailing the horrific conditions in Allied camps, nationalist discourse clearly dominated the social democratic and liberal press coverage.[963] This lack of recognition that the display of moral

---

publication was originally affiliated with the militantly anti-semitic Thule society, but renamed itself *Völkischer Beobachter* in 1920 and declared its allegiance with the NSDAP. See Asmuss, *Republik ohne Chance*, pp. 39ff.

957 Kurt Eisner, 'Kurt Eisner zur Frage der Kriegsgefangenen', 1919 in BA, Nachlaß Kurt Eisner, NY/4060-83 Internationale Arbeiter- und Sozialistenkonferenz in Bern, Blatt 24/25. The deportation of Belgian civilians to fill labour shortages in the German war economy and to carry out forced labour behind the front lines had severely damaged Germany's reputation during the war. See Alan Kramer, 'Deportationen' in Hirschfeld, Krumeich und Renz, *Enzyklopädie*, pp. 434f.

958 Ibid. Hellmut von Gerlach shared Eisner's view that those discredited by the war had no right to make demands regarding German prisoners of war, suggesting that only pacifists, humanitarian thinkers and supporters of the Socialist International had the right to appeal to the Allies. See Hellmut von Gerlach, 'Endloser Krieg - Endlose Gefangenschaft' *Die Welt am Montag* 48 (1 December 1919). For biographical information on Hellmut von Gerlach see Appendix I, p. 327.

959 Throughout the entire body of 3626 republican newspaper articles analysed, only three articles in *Die Freiheit* addressed the suffering of the Belgian deportees in detail. See 'Das große Hauptquartier' *Die Freiheit* 164 (7 May 1920); 'Die Sklavenbattallione' *Die Freiheit* 509 (21 October 1919); Maximilian Maulbecker, 'Deutsche Kulturbilder aus der Kriegszeit. In einem Gefangenenlager' *Die Freiheit* 387 (14 August 1919). For the republican failure to acknowledge prisoner abuse see Jones, *The Enemy Disarmed*, pp. 366-370.

960 'Haben wir uns um die deportierten Belgier gekümmert?' *Vorwärts* 93 (20 February 1919); 'Kurt Eisner gegen die deutschen Kriegsgefangenen' *Vorwärts* 78 (12 February 1919). The effects of such attacks on Eisner were evident in the fact that attempts to destroy his political career after the Socialist Conference in Berne resulted in his assassination only a month later. See Bernhard Grau, *Kurt Eisner 1867-1919. Eine Biographie* (Munich, 2001), pp. 400f.

961 'Eine Ohrfeige' *Die Freiheit* 86 (17 February 1919); 'Eisners Kampf für die Gefangenen' *Die Freiheit* 99 (24 February 1919); 'Die Kriegsgefangenen und der Friede' *Die Freiheit* 239 (19 May 1919). Although the *Frankfurter Zeitung* severely criticised Eisner's politics in general, it appealed for truth in the representation of one's enemies and lauded Eisner's achievements in Berne. See 'Herr Eisner auf der Berner Konferenz' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 119 (13 February 1919).

962 Carl Weichard, 'Erster Friede' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 142 (22 February 1919).

963 *Vorwärts*, for example only printed a single report that the condition in French camps had actually improved. 'Wohlbefinden unserer Kriegsgefangenen' *Vorwärts* 357 (15 July 1919).

outrage could be perceived as a provocation by the Entente indicated a decisive misconception which shaped the republican discourse with its former enemies.[964]

In appealing for humanity and fairness as the main principles of post-war international conduct, particularly with regard to the prisoner question and the coming peace treaty, Germany's leadership projected the republic as completely separate from the nation's wartime conduct. This republican self-perception manifested itself in somewhat arrogant demands that Germany should be treated as an equal rather than a defeated nation. Recognition that these expectations would not be met in turn shaped an increasingly antagonistic rhetoric towards the Allies and prevented the population from assessing Germany's international position realistically.

2. Domestic dimensions of the prisoner of war question

Focusing on Allied conduct with regard to the German prisoners of war also reflected a practical necessity which arose from the government's fragile position. A number of articles in the republican press stressed the government's impotence in influencing Allied decisions on the release of German prisoners.[965] Such declarations of innocence, dissociating the government from blame for the delayed repatriation of prisoners of war even after Germany had signed and ratified the peace settlement, were often linked to serious allegations against the Allies.[966] This interpretation of the government's role suggested that republican discourse recognised both the strong emotional reactions of bitterness and resentment which marked the assessment of Allied refusals to repatriate German internees and the danger that responsibility for this could be attributed to the government. Out of fear of becoming a target in the heated debate about the release of the prisoners, republican discourse promoted the continued vilification of the Allies and accepted the portrayal of government as weak and incompetent.

On a domestic level, the debate about the prisoners' delayed return was sharply polarised, thus demonstrating the government's precarious situation in this discourse. A number of articles in *Die Freiheit* and *Vorwärts* discussed right-wing attempts to annex the ideological guardianship of Germany's prisoners of war to promote their own party political agenda.[967] In order to undermine such propaganda, *Die Freiheit* defined the

---

[964] Hellmut von Gerlach, 'Endloser Krieg - Endlose Gefangenschaft' *Die Welt am Montag* 48 (1 December 1919).

[965] For example 'Die Kriegsgefangenen' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 603 (16 August 1919); 'Die Regierung an die Kriegsgefangenen' *Vorwärts* 658 (25 December 1919); 'Zur Frage der Kriegsgefangenenheimkehr' *Vorwärts* 367 (21 July 1919).

[966] 'Die Heimsendung unserer Kriegsgefangenen' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 549 (27 July 1919); 'Heraus mit unseren Kriegsgefangenen! Hermann Müllers Appell an das Weltgewissen' *Vorwärts* 418 (17 August 1919); 'Kriegsgefangene in England' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 517 (16 July 1919); 'Kundgebung für die Freigabe der Kriegsgefangenen' *Vorwärts* 419 (18 August 1919).

[967] 'Die Alldeutschen und die Kriegsgefangenen' *Die Freiheit* 86 (17 February 1919); 'Frankfurt, 21. August' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 617 (21 August 1919); 'Kundgebung für die Freigabe der

nationalist agitation as counter-productive for the release of German prisoners, because the Allies associated right-wing agitation with Germany's wartime crimes.[968] Another *Vorwärts* article explicitly stated that in spite of their agitation against the government, Germany's right-wing parties would not actually fare better in achieving the release of the prisoners of war.[969] In addition to right-wing attempts to annex their cause, the republican press also noted a multitude of right-wing attacks, trying to place the responsibility for the prisoners' continued suffering on the republican government, which illustrated that the political right had not just adopted the issue as a means of self-representation, but also as a rallying point against the republic.[970]

Heather Jones argues that the government's inability to influence the Allied decisions with regard to the German prisoners of war raised suspicions among prisoners and their families that the government had no interest in their repatriation.[971] While the newspapers on which this analysis is based are not a suitable source to allow speculation on the public acceptance of such anti-republican ideas, it is evident from the republican press that such suspicions were intentionally planted by right-wing propaganda. Reactionary allegations, which the republican press noted as being spread in Germany and within Allied prisoner of war camps, displayed varying degrees of imagination and paranoia, yet ultimately implied that the government's disregard for the prisoners was the reason for their continued imprisonment.[972] Accusations made in this respect ranged from suggestions that the prisoners were held back because Germany refused to pay the compensation demanded for the murder of a French sergeant to revelations that it had no interest in the prisoners' return because it received daily payments for each prisoner.[973] Considering that Gerhard Rose, whom Jones quotes as the source for the assumption that prisoners and their families believed such allegations, was a dominant figure in an organisation which spread them, suggests that his statements should at least be regarded with caution.[974] All of the newspapers analysed attacked the *Volksbund zum Schutz der*

Kriegsgefangenen' *Vorwärts* 419 (18 August 1919); 'Das Schicksal der Kriegsgefangenen' *Die Freiheit* 389 (15 August 1919); 'Der Waffenstillstandsvertrag' *Die Freiheit* 86 (17 February 1919).

968 'Wer sorgt für unsere Kriegsgefangenen' *Die Freiheit* 73 (10 February 1919).

969 'Gegenrevolutionäre Pläne' *Vorwärts* 395 (5 August 1919).

970 For example 'Böswilligkeiten' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 582 (8 August 1919); 'Entlarvter reaktionärer Schwindel' *Vorwärts* 160 (28 March 1919); 'Frankfurt, 21. August' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 617 (21 August 1919); 'Gegenrevolutionäre Pläne' *Vorwärts* 395 (5 August 1919); 'Kriegsgefangenen-Verhetzung' *Vorwärts* 404 (9 August 1919); 'Die Rückbeförderung der deutschen Kriegsgefangenen' *Vorwärts* 376 (25 July 1919).

971 Jones, *The Enemy Disarmed*, p. 360.

972 See for example 'Böswilligkeiten' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 582 (8 August 1919); 'Gegenrevolutionäre Pläne' *Vorwärts* 395 (5 August 1919); 'Heimkehr der Kriegsgefangenen' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 707 (23 September 1919); 'Kriegsgefangenen-Verhetzung' *Vorwärts* 404 (9 August 1919); 'Die Rückbeförderung der deutschen Kriegsgefangenen' *Vorwärts* 376 (25 July 1919); 'Um unsere Gefangenen' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 595 (13 August 1919).

973 'Gegenrevolutionäre Pläne' *Vorwärts* 395 (5 August 1919); 'Die Rückbeförderung der deutschen Kriegsgefangenen' *Vorwärts* 376 (25 July 1919).

974 Jones, *The Enemy Disarmed*, pp. 360, 364. Rose furthermore quoted the membership of the *Volksbund* at 5 million in October 1919 while the organisation's journal stated the membership as

Deutschen Kriegs- und Zivilgefangenen (People's League for the Protection of Military and Civilian Prisoners of War) - of which Rose was a former leader – as spreading vicious rumours against the government.[975]

In recognition of the moral and political threat such allegations posed to the stability of the government if they were believed by approximately 1.1 million German prisoners of war and their relatives, republican discourse emphasized the government's commitment to the prisoners' cause.[976] All of the analysed newspapers stressed, for example, that the decision to sign and ratify the Treaty of Versailles had been motivated by the desire to spare German prisoners continued suffering.[977] This depiction of the prisoners as a main political priority suggested that the right-wing forces who opposed signing the treaty had only pretended to care for the prisoners' welfare, exploiting their suffering for a political agenda.[978] *Vorwärts* and the *Frankfurter Zeitung* promoted a similar view, arguing that the government 'left no leaf unturned to apply moral pressure' for the prisoners' release.[979] In this respect, Rainer Pöppinghege's view that the German prisoners of war found no far-reaching public support for their concerns beyond their relatives and organisations should at least be qualified.[980] Even if the support voiced for the prisoners of war was merely lip service, the fact that 243 articles dealt with their concerns suggested that the republican press had a significant role in raising public awareness of their fate.[981]

In the months preceding the prisoners' return, the majority of the German population had immediate access to information about the prisoner question through the press and public rallies. The prisoners themselves, however, were largely cut off from such sources of information. Republican propaganda was thus particularly concerned with the impact of such right-wing allegations within Allied prisoner camps. Both *Vorwärts* and the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, for example, quoted from prisoners' letters detailing reactionary demagogy which had been spread in camps in order to prejudice the prisoners against the

---

350,000 in spring 1920 and 400,000 following year. For detailed membership numbers see Pöppinghege, '"Kriegsteilnehmer"' in *Militärgeschichtliche Zeitschrift*, p. 401.

975 'Die Alldeutschen und die Kriegsgefangenen' *Die Freiheit* 86 (17 February 1919); 'Frankfurt, 21. August' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 617 (21 August 1919); 'Gegenrevolutionäre Pläne' *Vorwärts* 395 (5 August 1919).

976 For the estimation of German prisoners of war at the end of the war see Pöppinghege, '"Kriegsteilnehmer"' in *Militärgeschichtliche Zeitschrift*, p. 401.

977 'Böswilligkeiten' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 582 (8 August 1919); 'Gegenrevolutionäre Pläne' *Vorwärts* 395 (5 August 1919); 'Die Heimkehr' *Die Freiheit* 334 (16 July 1919); 'Die Kriegsgefangenen und der Friede' *Die Freiheit* 239 (19 May 1919); 'Das Schicksal der Kriegsgefangenen' *Die Freiheit* 389 (15 August 1919).

978 'Die Kriegsgefangenen und der Friede' *Die Freiheit* 239 (19 May 1919); 'Das Schicksal der Kriegsgefangenen' *Die Freiheit* 389 (15 August 1919); 'Das Unrecht an den Gefangenen' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 577 (7 August 1919).

979 Quote from 'Heimkehr der Kriegsgefangenen' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 707 (23 September 1919). Also see 'Böswilligkeiten' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 582 (8 August 1919); 'Gegenrevolutionäre Pläne' *Vorwärts* 395 (5 August 1919); 'Die Rückbeförderung der deutschen Kriegsgefangenen' *Vorwärts* 376 (25 July 1919).

980 Pöppinghege, '"Kriegsteilnehmer"' in *Militargeschichtliche Zeitschrift*, pp. 399f.

981 Pöppinghege claims that '[i]t was left to the returned prisoners of war and their relatives to anchor the issue in public consciousness.' See Ibid, p. 400.

republican government. The letters particularly noted that allegations against the government for its lack of interest in the prisoners and misinformation about the Allied regulations on their repatriation were being spread.[982] Interestingly, the *Frankfurter Zeitung* also identifies Allied camp commanders as sources for such propaganda.[983] As it is not possible to substantiate such rumours within the framework of this analysis, these allegations are merely regarded as evidence of the republican fear that the prisoners would return as opponents to the new state. The prospect of hundreds of thousands of prisoners of war released by France, Britain, and America returning to Germany - believing that the republican government was responsible for prolonging their suffering – was considered a significant threat to the republican government.[984]

This problem was aggravated by the fact that the government had no means to reach the prisoners as long as they were still in Allied camps. One article in *Vorwärts* bitterly complained that the prisoners' reintegration into the German economy was severely obstructed by Allied refusals to let the government contact and prepare the internees for their return.[985] The socialist newspaper subsequently predicted that the prisoners would return 'broken and bitter' as a consequence of the prevalent right-wing agitation which the government was not allowed to dispel.[986] In accordance with accounts of the prisoners' desperation upon their continued imprisonment, republican discourse promoted rather bleak expectations with regard to their return.[987] In an article in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, which offered suggestions with regard to the treatment of returning prisoners of war, the journalist and military critic Arno Voigt envisaged the prisoners' mood as even more destructive.[988] With reference to mistakes made during the military demobilisation of ordinary war veterans, Voigt appealed for a consideration of the prisoners' psychological make-up in planning their economic reintegration:

---

[982] For example 'Feinde der Kriegsgefangenen' *Vorwärts* 413 (14 August 1919); 'Gegen Alldeutsche und Kommunisten' *Vorwärts* 501 (1 October 1919); 'Gegenrevolutionäre Pläne' *Vorwärts* 395 (5 August 1919); 'Kriegsgefangenen-Verhetzung' *Vorwärts* 404 (9 August 1919); 'Um unsere Gefangenen' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 595 (13 August 1919); 'Zwei Briefe' *Vorwärts* 430 (23 August 1919).
[983] 'Frankfurt, 21. August' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 617 (21 August 1919); 'Die Kriegsgefangenen' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 603 (16 August 1919); 'Um unsere Gefangenen' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 595 (13 August 1919).
[984] The numbers provided in the different publications ranged from 700,000 to 800,000 expected returnees. According to Rainer Pöppinghege the total number of prisoners held by Britain and France was 950,000. See Pöppinghege, '"Kriegsteilnehmer"', p 401; '800000 Deutsche in Kriegssklaverei' *Vorwärts* 24 (15 January 1919); 'Die deutschen Kriegsgefangenen' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 8 (4 January 1919); 'Opferwoche für die Kriegsgefangenen' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 329 (4 May 1919).
[985] 'Wenn sie kommen!' *Vorwärts* 452 (4 September 1919).
[986] Ibid.
[987] For example 'Die Heimkehr' *Die Freiheit* 334 (16 July 1919); 'Wenn sie kommen!' *Vorwärts* 452 (4 September 1919). For a summary of the fears that accompanied the prisoners' return also see Rainer Pöppinghege, *Im Lager unbesiegt. Deutsche, englische und französische Kriegsgefangenen-Zeitungen im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Essen, 2006), pp. 301f.
[988] Arno Voigt's articles were published in a number of democratic publications, among them *Der Drache*, *Die Weltbühne* and the *Frankfurter Zeitung*. He also published a book criticising German officers' conduct during the war and outlining necessary reform of the officer corps. See Arno Voigt, *Der deutsche Offizier der Zukunft. Gedanken eines 'Unmilitärischen'* (Stuttgart, 1919).

> [i]f one wants to understand the returnees' state of mind, one has to add the psychological condition of a soldier to that of a prisoner. The consequent result cannot be anything but depressing. Of course it is bitter to express this but one needs to face these facts ruthlessly in order to achieve healing and reconstruction. [...] [The front soldiers'] lack of enthusiasm for work was coupled with [...] an awareness to have earned a well-deserved claim for state support. Economically, this psychological affirmation had severely negative consequences: it turned economic subjects into [...] entities who increasingly and unstoppably drifted towards a state of becoming objects of [...] state and [...] private charity. [...] In the case of prisoners of war, depression should be added to all these conditions. Yet do not be deceived, all of this will be transformed into [...] demands for compensation as soon as they enter German soil.[989]

In conclusion, Voigt argued that instead of offering them compensation the returning prisoners of war should be told the truth: namely that the new state could not support them indefinitely, but needed their help to overcome its desperate economic situation.[990] Such expectations motivated the republican forces to identify the prisoners' manipulation through right-wing propaganda as an inherent danger upon their return.

Vorwärts consequently warned repeatedly that it would be necessary to win the former prisoners of war for the republic and to inform them who was really responsible for their fate.[991] Although these articles also expressed optimism that experiencing the 'bondage of militarism' would predispose them positively towards the political change and the 'real kind of republican patriotism' these hopes could not be entirely realised.[992] The limited number of welcome speeches for the prisoners of war which were quoted in *Vorwärts* and the *Frankfurter Zeitung* focused far less on the aspect of heroism than the welcome ceremonies for the soldiers, but rather highlighted suffering and the need for reconstruction. Such attempts to ideologically demobilise the prisoners, however, were not unchallenged.[993] The main obstruction to the ideological demobilisation of the prisoners lay in the practical organisation of their return. In order to co-ordinate the logistical aspects of their demobilisation, the returnees were channelled through temporary camps once they reached Germany.[994] The military nature of these camps gave the commanding officers a significant role in shaping the prisoners' view of the republic.

Two cases reported in *Vorwärts* particularly illustrated the army's reluctance to transmit government appeals to the returned prisoners of war. In late September, the newspaper noted that the Prussian Minister of War General Walther Reinhardt had attempted to ban a government brochure from being distributed in the camps, because it

---

[989] Arno Voigt, 'Die Rückkehr der Kriegsgefangenen' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 539 (24 July 1919).
[990] Ibid.
[991] Ibid; 'Die Heimkehr der Kriegsgefangenen' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 648 (1 September 1919); 'Heimtransport der Kriegsgefangenen' *Vorwärts* 449 (3 September 1919); 'Die historische Wahrheit über die Revolution' *Vorwärts* 499 (30 September 1919); 'Zwei Briefe' *Vorwärts* 430 (23 August 1919).
[992] 'Frankfurt, 12. Januar' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 30 (12 January 1920); 'Heimkehr der Kriegsgefangenen' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 707 (23 September 1919); 'Heimtransport der Kriegsgefangenen' *Vorwärts* 449 (3 September 1919).
[993] 'Begrüßung der heimgekehrten Kriegsgefangenen' *Vorwärts* 549 (27 October 1919); 'Die Heimkehr der Kriegsgefangenen' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 648 (1 September 1919); 'Die Heimkehr der Kriegsgefangenen' *Vorwärts* 470 (14 September 1919).
[994] M. Schlesinger, 'Kriegsgefangenenheimkehr' *Vorwärts* 341 (7 July 1919).

depicted the revolution as a consequence rather than a cause of defeat.[995] While noting that, at the same time, nationalist brochures were distributed widely among the returned prisoners; *Vorwärts* commented that such behaviour was unacceptable.[996] While the newspaper pointed out in a subsequent article that the Ministry ultimately rejected the ban, this republican victory was merely symbolic.[997] Two more articles in *Vorwärts* detailed how commanding officers in a camp in Wesel not only distributed reactionary literature and promoted the 'stab in the back' myth, but also simply refused to allow a government representative to address the returnees.[998] It is a striking example for the type of propaganda which the army spread in these camps that Adolf Hitler gained his first experiences as a propagandist as a representative of the *Wehrkreiskommando VII* instructing the returning prisoners of war politically.[999] It can thus be suggested that the state's failure to control the conduct of the army prevented a thorough demobilisation of the German prisoners of war and public discourse.[1000]

The analysis presented here has defined the military demobilisation as a prime example of the antagonistic political considerations which shaped and ultimately obstructed republican approaches towards Germany's return to civilian society. Although the practical demobilisation was largely successful, it was not complemented by a constructive cultural demobilisation, because the government was more concerned with averting perceived threats to its stability than constructing a lasting ideological legitimacy of the new state. Soldiers, war invalids, and prisoners of war - as three groups going through distinctly separate demobilisation processes – have been analysed as models for divergent political misconceptions which undermined revolutionary attempts to construct a republican identity dissociated from Germany's wartime ideology.

In the case of the return of the soldiers, republican discourse clearly chose a stopgap solution of flattery over exploiting the symbolic significance of the welcome ceremonies to legitimise the republican state in the long term. Adopting traditional and thus military means of expression to welcome the soldiers - both on an ideological and on a symbolic level - ultimately contributed to the infiltration of republican discourse with

---

995 'Die Angst vor der Wahrheit' *Vorwärts* 496 (28 September 1919).
996 Ibid.
997 'Die historische Wahrheit über die Revolution' *Vorwärts* 499 (30 September 1919).
998 'Das Durchgangslager Wesel. Lagerkommandant oder Regierung?' *Vorwärts* 511 (6 October 1919); 'Immer noch Durchgangslager Wesel!' *Vorwärts* 519 (10 October 1919). Also see a similar allegations in different contexts: 'Heimtransport der Kriegsgefangenen' *Vorwärts* 449 (3 September 1919); 'Kriegsgefangenenverhetzung' *Vorwärts* 420 (18 August 1919); Max Dortu, 'Ein Knabenmord' *Die Weltbühne* 11 (11 March 1920), p. 346. Max Dortu was the alias of the writer Max Neumann (1878-1935) who also contributed to the journal *Der Lichtwart* from 1921-1923. See 'Dortu, Max' in Bergmann (ed.), *Die Schaubühne. Die Weltbühne 1905-1933*, p. 31.
999 Paul, *Aufstand der Bilder*, p. 34.
1000 Neither the extent nor the practical impact of such propaganda in the temporary camps which the prisoners of war had to pass through as part of their demobilisation can be assessed in the context of this analysis, yet the issue clearly merits further scholarly attention.

cultural wartime concepts. Such continuation of wartime ideology undermined the new state's legitimation, because it clashed with the republic's expressed opposition to wartime values. Yet in the light of the predominant need for mourning, it is unclear whether the republican antagonism towards the war could have satisfied the popular desire to validate Germany's losses on the battlefield.

In defining its identity in opposition to the political values for which the war was fought, the republic deprived itself of the possibility of providing a meaningful alternative narrative legitimising its human cost. In spite of intermittent republican attempts to justify Germany's wartime sacrifice with the revolution, the more straightforward explanation that the fallen had died for the conservative values they went to war for remained more generally accessible. To some extent, the traumatic experience of war and defeat prohibited a thorough republican deconstruction of wartime myths, because they provided the only straightforward legitimation for the soldiers' deaths at the front. In both choosing and accepting such traditional means of commemoration during the welcome ceremonies of the soldiers, the republican discourse failed to reinforce a code of commemoration which represented the values of the new state.

In the financially more complex attempt to demobilise Germany's war victims, the republic chose to define itself through adopting an ultimately unrealistic guardianship for the victims of war in order to gain moral legitimacy. In spite of its expressed commitment to the war victims' concerns and its willingness to consult with war victims' organisations, the government's financial limitations meant that it could never fully fulfil the war victims' expectations of what the 'fatherland's gratitude' entailed. An uncritical republican adoption of the imperial regime's promises, which republican discourse never explicitly defined as the responsibility of the former elite, turned the republic into a scapegoat for the war victims' continuing grievances. Although the almost exclusive focus on post-war provision for Germany's war victims largely refrained from employing wartime ideology, it nevertheless failed as a means of cultural demobilisation. By highlighting their victimhood rather than their heroic wartime sacrifices, the republic ultimately alienated war victims as a social group whose economic disaffection required alternative means of compensation for their suffering.

The comparative reading of the republican discourse with regard to the returning soldiers' and the German war victims illustrates that neither the evocation of wartime values nor the refusal to address them succeeded in legitimising the republican state in the long term. One could conclude from this evidence that, irrespective of its approach, the legacy of the war did not give the republic a chance to establish a lasting legitimising narrative. Yet with the benefit of hindsight, it can be suggested that republican discourse merely approached the matter the wrong way round. As the majority of returning soldiers had a keen interest in reintegrating into civilian life, it might have been more constructive - or at least more consistent within the republican foundation narrative - to highlight their

return as a republican achievement, focusing on their future role rather than their wartime experience. Germany's war invalids, on the other hand, whose reintegration into their former lives was often impossible, could have been mollified, at least to some extent, by a more ceremonial acknowledgement of their sacrifice.[1001] Yet the understandable republican concern with defusing the immediate threat that these groups posed to the new state rather than the long-term creation of a republican legitimating narrative shaped the nature and the effects of republican propaganda during Germany's military demobilisation.

The demobilisation of prisoners of war raised a different set of ideological problems, because the Allied refusal to release the German prisoners of war after the armistice shifted the focus of their demobilisation to an international level. Through their employment of German prisoners of war in reconstruction work, the Allied nations fuelled a continued wartime belligerence in Germany which their physical absence in Germany reinforced. In order to avoid blame for its own inability to influence the prisoners' return, which the reactionary forces actively tried to promote, the government fuelled the prevalent popular resentment against its former enemies. By focusing on Allied atrocities against German prisoners the republican discourse left very little room for international reconciliation on the matter.

This accusatory approach towards the Allies was largely targeted at a domestic audience, ignoring the impact of such a belligerent discourse on Allied attitudes towards Germany. Protests against Allied cruelty, which dominated the republican approach to the prisoner question, also led to Germany's self-portrayal as the only nation committed to the values of reconciliation. This aggressive interpretation of the matter did not just arouse Allied disdain, but also resulted in a lack of toleration of internal admissions of German wartime misconduct which would have undermined the conception of German innocence. Domestically, the issue also had a significant destabilising impact on the republican government because in spite of prevalent recognition that the returning prisoners of war needed to be introduced to the nature and the values of the republic, such initiation procedures failed because the government did not have the power to implement its instruction against the will of the army. It can therefore be concluded that although the practical demobilisation of the German army was established without significant

---

[1001] Deborah Cohen has illustrated that although war invalids in Britain received lower pensions and significantly less state support for their economic reintegration they were less hostile towards the state because they regarded the philantropists support they were forced to rely on as a sign that the population valued their sacrifice. On the basis of this evidence she concludes that popular co-operation was essential in ensuring 'social reconstruction'. See 'The War's Returns. Disabled Veterans in Britain and Germany, 1914-1939' in Roger Chickering and Stig Förster, *The Shadows of Total War: Europe, East Asia, and the United States 1919-1939* (Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, 2003), pp. 114f, 122, 124-127. Yet additionally to fostering voluntary charities to support war victims, a more ceremonial acknowledgement of the war victims sacrifice could also have raised public support for their concerns and prevent their alienation from the new state.

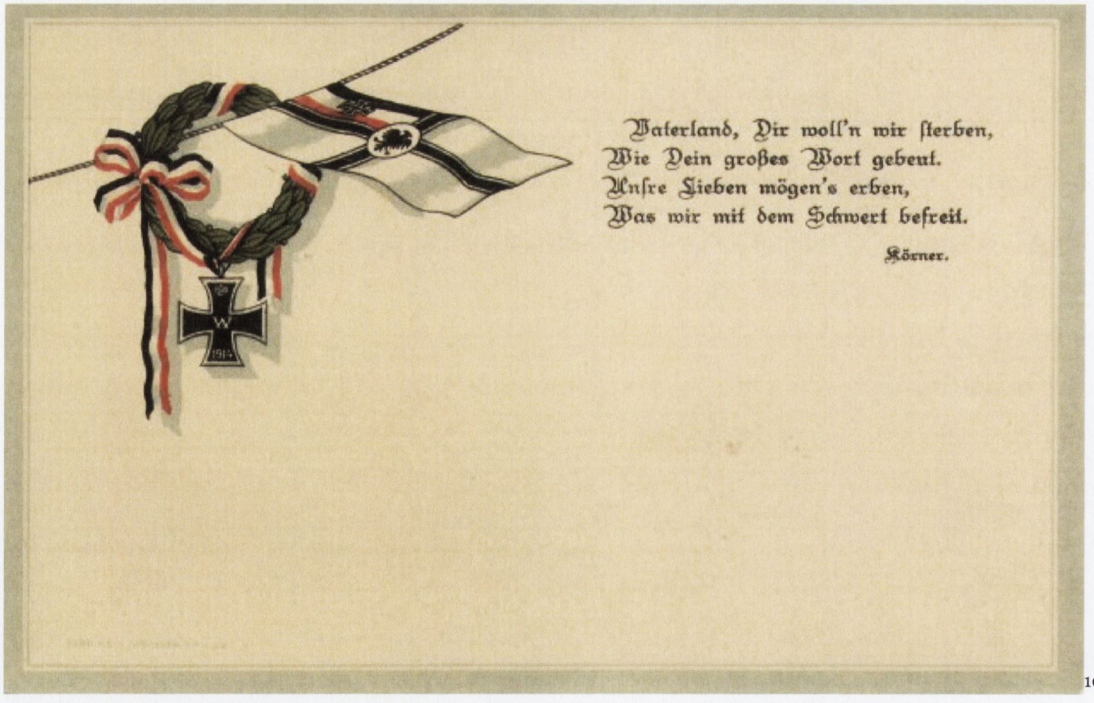
difficulties, the military demobilisation failed at inducing a cultural equivalent which could have established a strong republican identity.

Illustration IX: Wartime Postcards



[1002]

[Forward with God for Kaiser and Empire]



[1003]

[Fatherland, we want to die for you, like your great word commands.
Our loved ones may inherit, what we have freed with the sword]

[1002] Postcard 'Vorwärts mit Gott für Kaiser and Reich' in Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin (ed), *Digitale Bibliothek: Der Erste Weltkrieg in Deutschen Bildpostkarten* 66 (Berlin, 2002) p. 1089.
[1003] Postcard 'Vaterland Dir woll'n wir sterben' in Ibid, p. 1077.

Illustration X: Images of war invalids

George Grosz:

Des Volkes Dank ist Euch gewiß.[1004]
[The Gratitude of the Fatherland is assured you]



[1004] Reproduced in Beth Irwin Lewis, *George Grosz. Art and Politics in the Weimar Republic* (Princeton, Oxford, 1991), p. 138.

Otto Dix:
Die Kriegskrüppel, 1920[1005]
[War cripples]



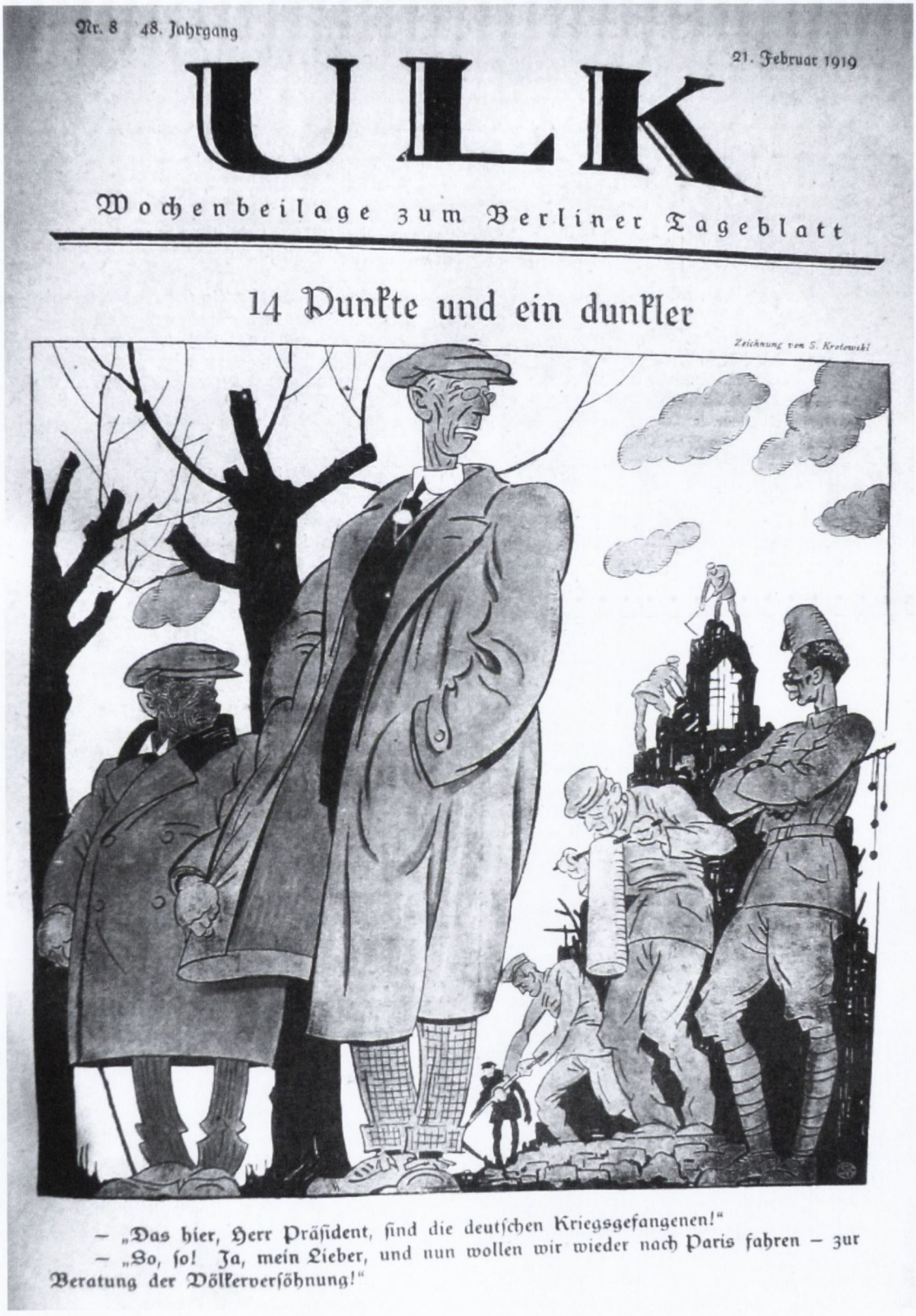
Otto Dix, Der Streichholzhändler I, 1920[1006]
[The matchbox-seller]



[1005] Reproduced in Löffler, *Otto Dix*, Illustration 28.
[1006] Ibid, Illustration 29.

Illustration XI:14 Punkte und ein dunkler[1007]

[14 Points and one dark one]



'These, Mr. President, are the German prisoners of war!' "Oh, I see! Indeed, my dear fellow – shall we now return to Paris in order to discuss international reconciliation?"

[1007] S. Krotowski, '14 Punkte und ein dunkler' *Ulk* 8 (21 February 1919).

CHAPTER 5: ENVISAGING PEACE

The previous chapters already illustrated that republican discourse frequently associated the republic's foundation with Germany's transition from war to peace. While portraying Germany's belligerent imperial regime as responsible for wartime deprivation and suffering, revolutionary propaganda clearly detached the republic from these experiences by defining it as a reconciliatory peacemaker.[1008] In accordance with such revolutionary promises, the future peace was conceptualised as the dawn of a new political era. Its ideological links to Germany's revolutionary values defined the two main characteristics of the envisaged peace: on the one hand, the promise of a new beginning, inherent in the revolution and the end of hostilities alike, aroused a strong sense of hope for a better future.[1009] On the other hand the initial lack of a clearly defined republican agenda meant that these hopes invested in the new state were not confined to limited, realistic goals.[1010] As a consequence of this political climate, republican discourse did not perceive the future peace as a specific set of terms, but as a vague idealistic vision.

As a leading symbol differentiating Germany's revolutionary from its imperial politics, republican commitment to peace played a crucial role in shaping the foundation narrative of the Weimar Republic. While revolutionary forces elevated 'peace, freedom and bread' to represent the main concerns of the new state, republican parties reinforced their claim to power by arguing that only a democratic government could negotiate bearable peace terms.[1011] In this manner, peace was defined as both an achievement and a main objective of the new state. The revolutionary adoption of peace as a rallying cause for the republic inseparably linked the revolution to the peace settlement and vice versa. By legitimising the republic as a peacemaker, however, republican propaganda staked the new state's credibility on a process that was largely out of Germany's control and did not at all develop according to plan.

[1008] See chapter 1, pp. 65f.

[1009] Detlev Peukert has only defined the period until the revolution as a 'period of hope', yet the translation of Germany's revolutionary values into a vision of a just Wilsonian peace demonstrated that the idealistic element of the movement survived beyond the domestic disappointment with the revolution. See *Weimar Republic*, pp. 23-28.

[1010] In the first months of the republic, a number of mutually exclusive blueprints for the new state coexisted. While some political forces, for example, envisaged a council republic, others pursued elections for a National Assembly. Kolb, *Weimar,* pp. 14f. Similarly, the revolution raised hopes for socialisation which the SPD was neither able nor willing to fulfil. Winkler, *Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung*, pp. 25, 79-84. The parallel pursuit of such antagonistic revolutionary visions contributed to a political climate in which ideals had more political value than assessments of what was realistically achievable.

[1011] Quote from 'Regierung der vereinigten Sozialdemokraten' *Vorwärts* 311 (11 November 1918). Also see 'Der Waffenstillstand' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 313 (11 November 1919); 'Das Programm der Reichsregierung' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 121 (14 February 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DDP, Berlin, 1918: DDP, *Soldaten!* (Berlin, 1918); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DDP, Berlin, 1919: DDP, *Brief an einen deutschnationalen Wähler* (Berlin, 1919); FES, 6/FLBL005070: DDP, *Wie wähle ich?* (Potsdam, Berlin, 1919); FES, 6/FLBL005876: SPD, *Deutsch-nationale Lügenmanöver!* (n.p., 1919).

Germany's optimistic expectation that the Allies would soon replace the harsh armistice conditions with more bearable peace terms did not reflect the real course of events. The vast implications of ending a war on such scale and the diverging interests of individual victorious nations made a quick and simple peace settlement practically impossible.[1012] Yet Germany's stubborn belief that Wilson's Fourteen Points were sufficient to delineate the peace terms did not take into account that it took significant debate to reach the fragile Allied compromise reflected in the final treaty presented on 16 May.[1013] The Allied refusal to bridge the period between armistice and peace treaty with a preliminary peace settlement thus evoked significant disappointment.[1014] As Germany had few direct means to influence the Allied demands in the long waiting period, republican propaganda independently embarked on delineating the framework of the peace which Germany envisaged.[1015]

Although the armistice terms were perceived as unduly harsh, republican discourse continued to envisage generous peace terms which would largely allow Germany to restore its pre-war status.[1016] In order to reconcile the disappointing severity of the armistice terms with such optimistic visions of the future peace, republican propaganda questioned the ideological continuity between the two. In portraying the armistice as an Allied means to break the military power of Germany's imperial regime, it was exclusively associated with its wartime past; now allegedly overcome by the revolution.[1017] A perception of the revolution as the beginning of a genuinely new era, in addition to a particularly optimistic interpretation of Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points, led republican propaganda to assume that Germany would be allowed to resume its role as a decisive power in world politics.[1018] The illusionary nature of such expectations, however, already became evident when a continuation of the armistice was only granted after Germany conceded extended Allied demands.[1019]

[1012] For the complexity of the peace negotiations see Kolb, *Der Frieden*, pp. 43-47.

[1013] Peter Grupp suggests that Germany made a significant mistake in neglecting the French and English role in the peace negotiations in their insufficiently factual interpretation of Wilson's Fourteen Points. 'Vom Waffenstillstand zum Versailler Vertrag. Die außen- und friedenspolitische Zielvorstellungen der deutschen Reichsführung' in Karl Dietrich Bracher, Manfred Funke and Hans-Adolf Jacobson (eds.), *Weimarer Republik 1918-1933* (Düsseldorf, 1987), pp. 292f. For a similar assessment see Thomas Lorenz, *"Die Weltgeschichte ist das Weltgericht!" Der Versailler Vertrag in Diskurs und Zeitgeist der Weimarer Republik* (Frankfurt, 2008), p. 51.

[1014] Peter Krüger,*Versailles. Deutsche Außenpolitik zwischen Revisionismus und Friedenssicherung* (Munich, 1986), pp. 18f.

[1015] Kramer, *Dynamic of Destruction*, p. 313; Kolb, *Der Frieden*, p. 72.

[1016] Ibid.

[1017] 'Gegen die unmenschlichen Waffenstillstandsbedingungen' *Vorwärts* 348a (19 December 1918); 'Der Waffenstillstand?' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 313 (11 November 1918); 'Der Sinn des Waffenstillstandes' *Die Welt am Montag* (13 November 1918).

[1018] Jost Dülffer, 'Frieden schließen nach einem Weltkrieg?' in Dülffer and Krumeich (eds.), *Der verlorene Frieden*, pp. 22f.

[1019] Kolb, *Der Frieden*, p. 38. Leo Haupts discusses the protest against the third renewal of the armistice which resulted in demands from Brockdorff-Rantzau and the economic experts of the armistice commission for a rejection of the Allied demands. See Leo Haupts, *Deutsche*

The preliminary Allied peace draft of 7 May 1919 and the subsequent exchange of notes ultimately illustrated that Germany was not regarded as an equal negotiating partner.[1020] Additionally, these documents established that the republic would be forced into making significant territorial and economic sacrifices.[1021] Although republican discourse deemed the provisional peace draft irreconcilable with Wilson's Fourteen Points, a curious mixture of hope and defiance defined the republican response to the draft. On the one hand, republican discourse revealed a stubborn belief that moral pressure would eventually force the Allies to adhere to Wilson's principles.[1022] On the other hand republican sources openly threatened to defy their former enemies' demands if the Allies denied Germany a just peace settlement.[1023] Similar reasoning also defined the ensuing debate whether Germany should sign or reject the Treaty of Versailles.

As a key influence on Germany's post-war politics, the Treaty of Versailles has aroused extensive interest among historians. A dense historiography assesses the treaty's practical and ideological consequences for Germany, focusing particularly on its role in reviving German nationalism.[1024] Although the extent to which the republican government's conduct influenced the terms of the treaty is still debated, academic discourse seems to have reached a well-substantiated consensus regarding Germany's reaction to the peace terms.[1025] With very few exceptions calling for a more nuanced evaluation of the peace draft, the reaction of the republican press confirms the historical agreement that the German public's moral rejection of the Allied peace terms was non-partisan and unanimous. Both the comprehensive available literature and the lack of evidence contradicting its general assumptions indicate that neither another survey narrative nor attempts to challenge the established historiography on minor details would be of great academic merit.

Friedenspolitik 1918-19. Eine Alternative zur Machtpolitik des Ersten Weltkrieges (Düsseldorf, 1976), p. 298.

[1020] Kolb, *Der Frieden*, pp. 73f; Lorenz, *'Die Weltgeschichte ist das Weltgericht'*, pp. 543f. For the press reception of the peace emphasizing this inequality see 'Frankfurt, 8. Mai' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 338 (8 May 1919); 'Friede der Vernichtung' *Vorwärts* 233 (8 May 1919).

[1021] For a short summary of the most important articles of the treaty see 'Der Versailler Friedensvertrag, 28 June 1919' in Longerich (ed.), *Die Erste Republik*, pp. 137-142.

[1022] 'Unannehmbare Forderungen' *Frankfurter* Zeitung 337 (8 May 1919); Vorstand der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands, 'An die Sozialisten aller Länder' *Vorwärts* 237 (10 May 1919); 'Um den Frieden' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 253 (14 May 1919).

[1023] 'Frankfurt, 7. Mai' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 335 (7 May 1919). 'Nationalversammlung zu Weimar' *Vorwärts* 97 (22 February 1919). 'Aufruf der Reichsregierung' *Vorwärts* 235 (9 May 1919).

[1024] For example Krüger, *Versailles*; Kolb, *Der Frieden*; Klaus Schwabe, *Deutsche Revolution und Wilson-Frieden. Die amerikanische und deutsche Friedensstrategie zwischen Ideologie und Machtpolitik 1918/19* (Düsseldorf, 1971); Peter Grupp, *Deutsche Außenpolitik im Schatten vorn Versailles 1918-1920* (Paderborn, 1988); Manfred F. Boemeke, Gerald D. Feldman and Elisabeth Glaser (eds.); *The Treaty of Versailles. A reassessment after 75 years* (Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, 1998); Krumeich and Dülffer (eds.), *Der verlorene Frieden* (Essen, 2002); Krumeich (ed.) *Versailles 1919.*

[1025] Judith Voelker, '"Unerträglich, unerfüllbar und deshalb unannehmbar" - Kollektiver Protest gegen Versailles im Rheinland in den Monaten Mai und Juni 1919' in Krumeich and Dülffer (eds.), *Der verlorene Frieden*, p. 229.

Yet in spite of its comprehensive scope, current historiography leaves some margin for new research, as its predominant focus on the government's policy leads to a rather superficial assessment of republican propaganda with regard to the peace. Beyond asserting that Germany rejected the peace terms in general and the war guilt question in particular, it provides very little information about the peace negotiations' impact on republican identity. A systematic analysis of the republican press coverage from the armistice to Germany's decision to sign the Treaty of Versailles, however, provides a more nuanced insight into the ideological foundations of republican peace propaganda and their influence in shaping republican ideology.[1026] Newspapers are particularly useful for such research because different articles reflected views commonly held by parties or the government, as well as expressing individual dissent from official doctrine. The republican press thus offers a valuable source to assess the reasons why the Treaty of Versailles undermined Germany's democratic foundation to such a great extent.

The election results following Germany's acceptance of the peace terms and historiography dealing with the Treaty of Versailles provide ample evidence that the peace terms dealt a severe blow to Germany's republican parties.[1027] This chapter proposes that the reasons for the devastating impact of the peace settlement on Germany's political culture should not be sought solely in the terms of the treaty.[1028] It cannot be ignored that the peace terms severely limited the republic's freedom of action and provided ammunition for anti-democratic agitation against the democratic government. This study, however, prioritises the republican response to the peace as a significant factor in obstructing a constructive integration of the envisaged peace into the republican legitimation narrative.

To determine the position of the peace in Germany's post-war political discourse, this chapter will initially evaluate its role in the revolutionary foundation narrative. In assessing the press reaction to the increasing levels of knowledge gradually defining the nature of the treaty, it will analyse the ideological strategies devised by the republic to define the envisaged peace and the nation's potential responses to it. In this context, this chapter will focus on Germany's national self-perception with regard to the peace which was fundamental both to Germany's understanding of the peace terms and its antagonistic stance towards its former enemies. Finally, it will assess republican confusion regarding the intended audience for their propaganda as one of the main factors shaping Germany's

---

[1026] Dreyer and Lembke have already undertaken a similar study regarding the war guilt question, which has received significant attention in chapter 3. The following chapter will thus refrain from discussing the issue again.

[1027] Kolb, *Der Frieden*, p. 91; Klaus Schwabe, '"Gerechtigkeit für die Großmacht Deutschland"' – Die deutsche Friedensstrategie in Versailles' in Krumeich, *Versailles 1919*, p. 86.

[1028] Although Klaus Schwabe proposes a similar hypothesis in a recent article, his focus lies on assessing potential alternatives to the German peace strategy. This chapter, however, merely aims to assess the impact of republican peace propaganda on the identity of the Weimar Republic rather than pursuing hypothetical speculations. See Klaus Schwabe, '"Gerechtigkeit für die Großmacht Deutschland"' in Krumeich (ed.) *Versailles 1919*, pp. 71-86, particularly pp. 71f, 85f.

unconstructively confrontational response to the peace terms. Hence, this study aims to elaborate on Wolfgang Mommsen's argument that post-war nationalism significantly contributed to the destructive impact of the Treaty of Versailles by illustrating in detail how the republican peace strategy eradicated Germany's revolutionary values.[1029] This study will follow the chronological development of the peace process from the revolution to Germany's decision to sign the treaty. Its focus on significant themes in political discourse rather than on a chronological narrative, however, will occasionally stretch chronological boundaries.

REVOLUTION AND PEACE

In the aftermath of the armistice request, the desire for peace became the main driving force behind Germany's political development. War weariness not only motivated workers and soldiers to unite against Germany's wartime regime, but also encouraged a majority of Germans to at least tolerate political change. The sailors' rebellion which sparked off the revolution found great popular support, because, as an act of active opposition against the continuation of war, it reflected the German population's war weariness.[1030] Since it accorded with the general mood in Germany, the sailors' declared desire for peace allowed the initially apolitical movement to develop revolutionary momentum. Republicans' association of the German monarchy with Germany's wartime politics furthermore turned the concept of peace into a rallying cause for a new order. Revolutionary propaganda consequently channelled this popular momentum for peace into a political framework by integrating it into the republican foundation narrative. In an appeal to returning troops one SPD leaflet, for example, emphasized that 'the revolution ended the most horrific of all wars'.[1031] Appealing to the perceived war weariness of the soldiers, such claims suggested that the revolutionary forces had taken an active role in ending the war.

This manner of forging a strong ideological link between revolution and peace proved to be of questionable benefit in legitimising the republic. A republican declaration of responsibility for bringing peace only aided the new state as long as the concept of peace remained abstract and could be associated with positive connotations such as the end of slaughter on the battlefield, the abolition of repressive wartime measures, or the long desired soldiers' return. Once peace was given a concrete form which did not accord

---

[1029] Wolfgang Mommsen, 'Der Vertrag von Versailles. Eine Bilanz' in Krumeich (ed.), *Versailles 1919*, p. 359.

[1030] Winkler, *Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung*, pp. 29-32; Kolb, *Weimar*, p.7; Bernstein, *Die deutsche Revolution*, pp. 43-45.

[1031] FES, 6/FLBL006199: SPD, *Die Sozialdemokratie und die Nationalversammlung* (Hannover, 1918/1919). For similar claims see FES, NUR 1918 Undatiert III: *Den Heimgekehrten!* (n.p., 1918); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, SPD, 1918, Berlin: SPD, *Soldaten! Brüder im grauen Rock!* (Berlin, 1918).

with such positive expectations, however, claims that it had been a revolutionary achievement left the republic more open to attack. Right-wing propaganda often exploited disappointed hopes regarding the peace to direct popular resentment against the republic.[1032] A DVP leaflet, for example, blamed the SPD for both the harsh armistice terms and the Allied postponement of the peace.[1033] Similarly, a DNVP election flyer alleged that while promising a 'peace of understanding and international reconciliation' the revolution had brought the prospect of a 'peace of unparalleled oppression and violence' because it had disarmed Germany and thus rendered it incapable of opposing the Allied demands.[1034] In seemingly proving republican responsibility for the peace and Germany's post-war misery, republican discourse unintentionally aided the former elite's strategy of denying their own responsibility. A failure to dissociate republican commitment to achieving peace from the democratic government's responsibility for its terms, therefore, has to be regarded as a central miscalculation within the revolutionary foundation narrative.

Related claims that only Germany's republican parties would be able to negotiate bearable peace terms were similarly problematic.[1035] On an international level, these claims simply appealed for political recognition of the republic aimed particularly at America. By implicitly referring to Wilson's suggestions that the nature of the future peace would depend on Germany's democratisation and Colonel House's insistence that the Allies would refuse to make peace with a German dictatorship, such assertions were intended to pave the way for better peace terms by emphasizing German compliance with Allied demands.[1036] The main intention of these claims, however, was to influence the domestic struggle for political legitimacy in the new state. In asserting that the Allies would refuse peace negotiations with either radical right or left-wing forces, the republican parties aimed at discrediting their political opponents by defining themselves as the only guarantor for peace. Such political promises had significant potential to rebound. Voters who only supported the republic out of pragmatic hope for better peace terms were likely to revoke their support if the peace settlement did not fulfil their expectations. The government's decision to stake its credibility on negotiating acceptable peace terms

---

[1032] Klaus Schwabe, '"Gerechtigkeit für die Großmacht Deutschland"' – Die deutsche Friedensstrategie in Versailles' in Krumeich (ed.) *Versailles 1919*, p. 71.

[1033] BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DVP, Berlin, 1919: DVP, *Worte und Taten!* (Berlin, 1919).

[1034] BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DNVP, 1918, o.O.: DNVP, *Wahlaufruf der Deutschnationalen Volkspartei* (n.p., 1918).

[1035] BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DDP, Berlin, 1919: DDP, *Brief an einen deutschnationalen Wähler* (Berlin, 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DDP, Berlin, 1918: DDP, *Soldaten!* (Berlin, 1918); FES, 6/FLBL005070: DDP, *Wie wähle ich?* (Potsdam, Berlin, 1919); FES, 6/FLBL005876: SPD, *Deutsch-nationale Lügenmanöver!* (n.p., 1919). 'Das Programm der Reichsregierung' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 121 (14 February 1919); 'Das Programm der neuen Regierung - Rede Scheidemanns' *Vorwärts* 82 (14 February 1919).

[1036] For Wilson's demands regarding Germany's democratisation see Schwabe, *Deutsche Revolution und Wilson-Frieden*, pp. 133-35, 144f; For Colonel House's statement in the course of an interview see 'Die Entente und die deutsche Revolution' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 321 (19 November 1918).

ultimately turned its failure to do so into ammunition for those political forces interested in weakening the republic. The elevated position of the envisaged peace in the revolutionary foundation narrative limited republican flexibility in dealing with the peace. Having defined the republic's claim to power through its role as a peacemaker made it more difficult for the government to admit either its own limited influence on shaping the peace terms or a realistic assessment of its consequences for Germany. Achieving an acceptable peace settlement was therefore a matter of utmost importance, not only for the economic but even more so for the political stability of the Weimar Republic.

Germany's revolutionary self-perception as a peacemaker furthermore fuelled a fundamental misconception of its role in the peacemaking process. As a logical consequence of adopting the peace as a revolutionary aim, republican discourse anticipated that the revolution would be a major consideration in shaping the peace settlement. Concluding a summary of the Allied armistice terms the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, for example, argued that

> [what] we see here are the most horrific armistice terms which our enemies – according to Wilson – have imposed on Wilhelm II. The peace, however, is going to be concluded with Germany's future democracy. Let us hope for more bearable conditions in the future. [1037]

Such expectations, which assumed that the revolutionary government deserved more moderate peace terms, were a central element of republican propaganda. Their basic premise was that the German population had been innocent victims rather than perpetrators of Germany's wartime conduct.[1038] This line of argument allowed republican propaganda to claim that only fear and misinformation had prevented people from expressing their continuous desire for peace.[1039] The popular momentum behind the revolution was thus defined as proof that Germany's new regime pursued peace out of conviction rather than necessity. In this manner republican discourse defined Germany's position in the peacemaking process as a morally righteous one. According to this assumption, a number of articles explicitly condemned harsh peace terms as an unfair punishment which would not hurt those responsible, but rather the innocent German people and the republic representing them.[1040] In response to the armistice both socialist factions, supported by the *Frankfurter Zeitung* which printed their appeals, emphasized that the Allies would not have to fear German aggression, because the revolution had transformed German values and embodied a renunciation of the wartime adherence to the

---

[1037] '*Frankfurter Zeitung* 313 (11 November 1918). For a similar view see 'Der Sinn des Waffenstillstandes' *Die Welt am Montag* (13 November 1918).
[1038] See chapter 3, pp. 118-120.
[1039] Ibid.
[1040] 'Die Antwort' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 309 (7 November 1919); Kurt Eisner, 'Eine Kundgebung Bayerns and die Entente' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 316 (12 November 1919); Hermann Molkebuhr, Richard Müller, 'Appell an die Ententevölker' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 317 (15 November 1918). For biographical information on Eisner and Molkebuhr see Appendix I, pp. 323f, 333.

politics of violence.[1041] In claiming that the revolution had abolished all traces of the old mindset, socialist propaganda implied that it would be unfair to judge the republic according to its predecessor's sins.[1042] In order to justify granting Germany moderate peace terms, republican discourse attempted to focus the debate regarding the peace on idealistic future aims, rather than retrospection onto Germany's wartime conduct.

In short, Germany's revolutionary self-perception as a peacemaker was used as a shield against potential allegations regarding its wartime conduct and a means to consolidate the unity of the new state. In rallying the German population behind the peace as a common republican goal the peace settlement became an integral part of the republican identity, fundamentally shaping both Germany's self-perception and its vision of the future peace. Indications that the Allies would refuse to recognise this elementary basis of the German peace strategy consequently aroused significant protest. The *Frankfurter Zeitung*, for example, argued that only those who were insufficiently informed about the German revolution could claim that Germany did not genuinely want peace.[1043] To dispel evident Allied doubts, republican discourse focused on Germany's ideological change and its commitment to peace as the main pillars of the new state's peace strategy.[1044]

In line with this approach, republican discourse emphasized Germany's vehement rejection of violence as an instrument of foreign policy.[1045] Realistically, Germany's insistence that both armistice and peace terms could only be fought with ideological weapons was based on pragmatic rather than moral considerations. One day before the revolution, the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, for example, had still suggested that in response to harsh armistice terms the feasibility of a last ditch defence should be investigated.[1046] Such demands illustrated that not all republicans necessarily rejected military force as a viable means to strengthen Germany's position.[1047] Later articles in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*

[1041] 'An die Entente' *Vorwärts* 315 (15 November 1919); Hermann Molkebuhr, Richard Müller, 'Appell an die Ententevölker' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 317 (15 November 1918)

[1042] This argument is particularly expressed in Erwin Barth, 'Neue auswärtige Politik' *Vorwärts* 175 (5 April 1919). Also see 'An die Entente' *Vorwärts* 315 (15 November 1918); 'An die Völker Frankreichs, Italiens, Englands und Amerikas' *Die Freiheit* 1 (15 November 1918).

[1043] 'Frankfurt, 16. Dezember' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 348 (16 December 1918).

[1044] 'Die deutsche Revolution' *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 313 (11 November 1918'; 'Deutschlands auswärtige Politik' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 319 (17 November 1918); Ferdinand Hansen, 'An Präsident Wilson' *Vorwärts* 357 (29 December 1918); Karl Kautsky, 'Richtlinien für ein sozialistisches Aktions-Programm. Die auswärtige Politik' *Die Freiheit* 48 (28 January 1919). For biographical information on Kautsky see Appendix I, pp. 328f.

[1045] 'An die Entente' *Die Freiheit* 315 (15 November 1918); 'Frankfurt, 25. November' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 327 (25 November 1918); 'Deutschland und Frankreich' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 343 (11 December 1918); 'Eine Rede des Grafen Brockdorff-Rantzaus' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 66 (25 January 1919); 'Das Programm der neuen Regierung - Rede Scheidemanns' *Vorwärts* 82 (14 February 1919).

[1046] 'Vor den Verhandlungen' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 310 (8 November 1918).

[1047] Germany's failure to establish a rejection of violence as a general republican principle was particularly evident on a national level. Wolfram Wette has shown that the socialist Defence Minister Gustav Noske repeatedly used excessive violence against left wing unrest and only cautioned agaist violence when mutineeing German troops in the Baltic States disobeyed government orders. See Wette, *Noske*, pp. 399-446, 576. The readiness to rely on violence also determined Germany's relationship with Poland in the aftermath of the revolution. Prussian Undersecretary of State Hellmut von Gerlach had warned, upon return from a

argued, however, that the suggested *levée en masse* against the Allies was futile and therefore pointless.[1048] The fact that, while advocating it anyway, even the *OHL* ultimately judged a last-ditch defence as militarily hopeless suggests that Germany's commitment to non-violent politics was not entirely voluntary.[1049] Despite acknowledging that Germany had been forced to sign the armistice for lack of alternatives, republican discourse nevertheless reinterpreted this necessity as a moral virtue. By promoting Germany's inability to reject the Allied armistice demands by military force as proof of its genuine commitment to peace, republican discourse implied that by overcoming its former militarism through the revolution, Germany had earned the moral credibility to influence the peace.

The extent to which such propaganda clouded a realistic German self-perception was particularly evident in a speech of the DDP chairman Friedrich Naumann in the National Assembly. In an appeal for more moderate armistice terms, Naumann referred to Germany's request for peace as an act of reconciliation based on Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points, thus promoting a spectacularly erroneous interpretation of Germany's position in October 1918.[1050] Ignoring the fact that the armistice had been requested to prevent the collapse of the German army, this speech revealed to what extent the republican perception of German innocence obscured the reality that Germany had pursued peace out of dire military necessity. The republican peace strategy as a result paved the way for the right-wing myth that Germany could have continued fighting.

WILSON AND THE SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL

In emphasizing Germany's commitment to peace and its inability to resume warfare, republican discourse particularly identified the American president and the Socialist International as Germany's most likely allies in pursuit of a just peace. Consequently, German suggestions how Wilson's principles could be interpreted best and attempts to emphasize common interests among the international working class featured prominently in republican propaganda. In order to assess to what extent these propaganda efforts affected Germany's domestic political discourse it is necessary to outline and assess each line of argument individually.

---

visit to Poland, that the presence of the German border defence forces was regarded as a provocation. In spite of repeated violent clashes, however, the government only removed their troops from Posen in late December 1918 and stationed 200000 volunteers at Germany's Eastern borders. See: Roland Baier, *Der deutsche Osten als soziale Frage. Eine Studie zur preußischen und deutschen Siedlungs- und Polenpolitik in den Ostprovinzen während des Kaiserreichs und der Weimarer Republik* (Cologne, Vienna, 1980), pp. 191-200. For biographical information on von Gerlach and Noske see Appendix I, pp. 327, 333f.

[1048] 'Vom Volke' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 312 (10 November 1918); 'Der Waffenstillstand' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 312 (12 November 1919).

[1049] Erdmann, *Der Erste Weltkrieg*, p. 231.

[1050] 'Das Programm der Reichsregierung' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 121 (14 February 1919).

Historians generally agree that Germany's strategy in approaching the peace negotiations was based on a wilfully unrealistic interpretation of Wilson's Fourteen Points.[1051] Although Max von Baden's cabinet was originally critical of Wilson's principles, it agreed to adopt them in requesting the armistice because they offered the best available option in Germany's hopeless military situation.[1052] In the course of Germany's exchange of notes with Wilson, the foreign office additionally began to doubt whether the American president would really be willing to defend his ideals against his Allies' chauvinist interests.[1053] Germany nevertheless decided to accept Wilson's demands in order to prevent a failure of the peace negotiations which would have revealed Germany's military weakness.[1054] Although Germany's Foreign Ministry at large never internalised Wilson's Fourteen Points or genuinely translated them into foreign policy aims, it turned them into the main basis of Germany's peace strategy.[1055]

In spite of the fact that Germany largely approached the American President out of political pragmatism, the entire republican discourse uncritically followed the Foreign Ministry's lead in promoting Wilson as Germany's saviour.[1056] Both *Vorwärts* and the *Frankfurter Zeitung* praised him as a calm, authoritative mediator and a 'coming liberator who will bring order to an unhappy Europe'.[1057] Although *Vorwärts* and *Die Freiheit* also criticised the American President as a supporter of capitalism, neither publication questioned his genuine commitment to achieving a just peace for Germany.[1058] Such expectations reflected neither a realistic evaluation of Wilson's intentions, nor a reasonable assessment of his influence on the other Allied forces. The punitive undercurrent in the peace envisaged by Wilson, which Manfred Boemeke has identified as a significant characteristic of the treaty, proved that Wilson did not see his role in helping Germany to evade harsh peace terms.[1059] German demands that the government would only accept an unadulterated implementation of the Fourteen Points furthermore failed to take into account that Germany had not been defeated by America alone. To gain English

---

[1051] See for example Krüger, *Versailles*, p. 20; Grupp, *Deutsche Außenpolitik*, p. 52; Dülffer, 'Frieden schließen nach einem Weltkrieg in Dülffer and Krumeich (eds.), *Der verlorene Frieden*, p. 383.

[1052] Grupp, *Deutsche Außenpolitik*, pp. 56f; Krüger, *Versailles*, p. 51; Fritz Klein, 'Between Compiègne and Versailles: The Germans on the Way from a Misunderstood Defeat to an Unwanted Peace' in Boemeke, Feldman and Glaser (eds.), *Versailles. A reassessment*, p. 217. For biographical information on Max von Baden see Appendix I, p. 322.

[1053] Schwabe, *Wilson-Frieden*, p. 135.

[1054] Ibid.

[1055] Grupp, *Deutsche Außenpolitik*, pp. 58f; also see Klaus Schwabe, 'German Peace Aims' in Boemeke, Feldman and Glaser (eds.), *Versailles. A reassessment*, p. 44.

[1056] Schwabe, *Wilson-Frieden*, pp. 236f.

[1057] 'Frankfurt, 16. Dezember' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 348 (16 December 1918); quote from Ferdinand Hansen, 'An Präsident Wilson' *Vorwärts* 357 (29 December 1919). For a survey of 'Wilson-euphoria' also see Schwabe, *Wilson-Frieden*, pp. 236f.

[1058] 'Wilson' *Die Freiheit* 71 (23 December 1918); Ferdinand Hansen, 'An Präsident Wilson' *Vorwärts* 357 (29 December 1919)

[1059] Manfred F. Boemeke, 'Woodrow Wilson's Image of Germany, the War-Guilt Question, and the Treaty of Versailles', in Boemeke, Feldman and Glaser (eds.), *Versailles. A reassessment*, pp. 604, 613f.

and French approval for adopting his programme as the basis of the peace settlement, Wilson was forced to compromise his ideals significantly.[1060]

Once Germany's peace strategy had been aligned with Wilson's Fourteen Points, the republican interpretation of these principles ceased to consider their practical implications realistically. Until, and to some extent even beyond the publication of the Allied peace draft on 7 May 1919, republican propaganda annexed rather than adopted Wilson's ideals to adapt them into a German interpretation of a just peace.[1061] Expressions of support for Wilson did not merely emphasize the republic's commitment to his Fourteen Points, but rather portrayed Germany as representing a moral force equal to Wilson's. The *Frankfurter Zeitung*, for example, emphasized the united efforts of Germany and Wilson in pursuing a just peace in order to prevent a new war.[1062] Accordingly, the article portrayed Germany as a strong pillar of Wilsonian ideals as well as demanding that the republic insist on the rights allegedly granted to it on the basis of the Fourteen Points.[1063] In suggesting that Germany's co-operation was instrumental in shaping Wilson's new world order, republican propaganda evoked a sense of Germany's international importance not in accord with its position as a defeated power.[1064] The assumption that Germany's role in defending Wilsonian ideals was a crucial one furthermore deceived the German population into believing that they were in a position to issue demands. As a logical consequence of this approach, Germany stubbornly insisted that the republic would only accept a peace settlement based on Wilson's principles, which eventually proved entirely counter-productive. Internationally, Germany's attempts to 'out-Wilson' the American president by contrasting the peace draft with his Fourteen Points severely annoyed Wilson and prevented him from considering any concessions for Germany.[1065]

In assessing whether Germany's adoption of Wilson's ideals was, at least partly, sincere or purely opportunistic, Klaus Schwabe and Peter Grupp offer divergent

---

[1060] Thomas J. Knock, 'Wilsonian Concepts and International Realities at the End of the War' in Boemeke, Feldman and Glaser (eds.), *Versailles. A reassessment*, pp. 123-127.

[1061] The first two republican governments, for example, both claimed that Wilson's ideal of self-determination should naturally permit an Austro-German unification. Philipp Scheideman, 'Friedenswahlen' *Vorwärts* 33-34 (19 January 1919); 'Das Programm der Friedensregierung' *Vorwärts* 373 (24 July 1919). In a similar manner, Germany devised its own constitution for the League of Nations because it considered the Allied draft to be a contradiction of Wilson's ideals. See 'Die Deutschen und der Friede' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 49 (19 January 1919); 'Der Völkerbundentwurf' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 130 (18 February 1919); Friedrich Stampfer, 'Völkerbund der Sieger' *Vorwärts* 87 (17 February 1919); 'Kundgebung für den wirklichen Völkerbund' *Vorwärts* 139 (17 March 1919). For biographical information on Stampfer see Appendix I, p. 337.

[1062] 'Deutschlands auswärtige Politik' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 319 (17 November 1918).

[1063] Ibid. Also see 'Unser Recht auf Leben' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 324 (22 November 1918); 'Frankfurt, 4. Februar' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 93 (4 February 1919).

[1064] Dülffer, 'Frieden schließen nach einem Weltkrieg?' in Dülffer and Krumeich (eds.) *Der verlorene Frieden*, p. 30.

[1065] Schwabe, 'German Peace Aims' in Boemeke, Feldman and Glaser (eds.), *Versailles. A reassessment*, p. 61; Ibid, *Wilson-Frieden*, pp. 581, 587.

interpretations.[1066] Once Germany had adopted Wilson's Fourteen Points as the foundation of its peace strategy, its sincerity in supporting Wilson became irrelevant in terms of the impact of such propaganda on Germany's political discourse. No matter whether or not Germany was really committed to creating a new world order, Wilson's failure to implement his ideals according to German expectations was inevitably perceived as a republican failure to represent Germany's interests. The Treaty of Versailles, however, could only develop into a successful propaganda tool for Germany's reactionary forces, because republican propaganda failed to counteract its destabilising effects. One reason for this failure has to be sought in the republican inability to provide a realistic evaluation of the peace terms which the German people would have to expect. False expectations and hopes associated with a Wilsonian peace severely magnified the shock at the harsh terms of the treaty.[1067] Policy makers and the republican press significantly overestimated Germany's means to enforce a significant moderation of the peace terms; this rendered useless pre-emptive threats that Germany would refuse a harsh peace from an early stage of the negotiations and later rebounded on them.

A number of eminent historians have criticised Germany's government and its Foreign Minister Ulrich von Brockdorff-Rantzau for continuing to demand that no other considerations than the Fourteen Points should determine the peace terms, although Germany's policy makers recognised such demands to be illusionary.[1068] Leo Haupts offered a less judgemental view of Germany's peace strategy by arguing that Germany had no choice other than to orientate its policy towards America, as neither an alliance with Russia, nor an offensive against Russia were viable foreign policy options.[1069] Germany's continued focus on Wilson, however, merits analytical interest beyond the assessment of its limited success in achieving moderate peace terms. As a central component of republican discourse with regard to the peace, it also provides a compelling example of republican propaganda methods. Klaus Schwabe has argued that the Weimar Republic's foreign policy cannot merely be regarded as a continuation of the imperial regime's policies.[1070] With regard to the content of republican propaganda, Schwabe's observation that in spite of attempts to establish Germany as a world power, the republic had distanced itself from aims of world domination offers a positively nuanced assessment of republican foreign policy. The structure of republican foreign policy discourse, however, was less removed from Germany's wartime propaganda. The government's decision to adopt Brockdorff-Rantzau's insistence on a verbatim implementation of Wilson's Fourteen

---

[1066] Grupp, *Deutsche Außenpolitik*, pp. 58f; Klaus Schwabe, 'German Peace Aims and the Domestic and International Constraints' in Boemeke, Feldman and Glaser (eds.), *Versailles. A reassessment*, pp. 58-61.
[1067] Kolb, *Der Frieden*, p. 69.
[1068] Grupp, *Deutsche Außenpolitik*, pp. 54f, 61; Schwabe, 'German Peace Aims' in Boemeke, Feldman and Glaser (eds.), *Versailles. A reassessment*, p. 51; Ibid, *Wilson-Frieden*, p. 528; Krüger, *Versailles*, pp. 38f, 57.
[1069] Haupts, *Deutsche Friedenspolitik*, pp. 390f.
[1070] Schwabe, 'German Peace Aims' in Boemeke, Feldman and Glaser (eds.), *Versailles. A reassessment*, p. 58.

Points in spite of evidence suggesting that this approach was destined to fail reflected a direct continuation of Germany's wartime conduct. Promoting entirely unjustified optimism in response to contradictory factual evidence had been a key technique in official wartime propaganda.

Although it promoted entirely antagonistic values to Germany's former militaristic demagogy, republican propaganda envisaging a just Wilsonian peace appealed to the same sense of desperate hope as wartime predictions of a final victory had done. Assessing the effects of Germany's wartime propaganda, Rudolf Kircher in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* argued that

> [b]elief in a German miracle is our fate: when reason demanded resignation, the soul called for hope and miracles. Censorship killed common sense and enticed the heart to believe the boldest expectations. [...] Belief in miracles was the state of mind in which the whole of Germany should be immersed because military self-confidence and overestimation [of Germany's strength], as well as the stupendous demand for 'morale', simply commanded it. ' I am hoping for a miracle...'. Yes, we did, year in, year out from the first day of the war. We will defeat France in four weeks, followed by victory in Russia; England does not count. A world war between autumn and winter! Would that not be a miracle? A world of enemies. In tables and illustrations we lauded our small numbers in the face of such superior strength. [...] We estimated the effects of the blockade, the self-destruction of our economy, and the limits of our strength. In spite of all of this ... [...] it rather seems as if the others worked miracles. American steamers carried three times as many people as our experts had estimated [...] and this happened everywhere; miracles upon miracles. In the fourth year of the war when the people had been sucked dry, our reserves had melted, public morale had been dangerously undermined by countless disappointments and straight deception, and the strength of our Allies was in grave danger – Ludendorff, supported by the Kaiser, entirely played Germany's last cards in spite of severe warnings. [He played them] so entirely that when they lay on the table without any effect, he had nothing else to say but: immediate armistice, everything is hopelessly lost.[1071]

By continuing to promote ideas in conflict with reality, republican propaganda upheld the wartime culture of misinformation, which prevented people from analysing the Allied peace terms rationally rather than emotionally. German peace propaganda, furthermore, shared the destabilising effect of wartime propaganda once it was evident that these hopes could not be fulfilled.

The pervasive and uncritical acceptance of the government's one-sided interpretation of a Wilsonian peace in *Vorwärts* and the *Frankfurter Zeitung* is a striking phenomenon.[1072] Although the republican press had clearly identified and denounced the deceptive nature of war propaganda, its almost unchanged adaptation into republican Wilsonianism remained unnoticed throughout republican press and propaganda. The republican refusal to acknowledge that neither the war itself nor Germany's defeat could

---

[1071] Rudolf Kircher, 'Das Wunder' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 431 (14 June 1919). For biographical information on Kircher see Appendix I, p. 329.

[1072] See for example 'Auf Gnade und Ungnade?' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 212 (20 March 1919); 'Brockdorff-Rantzau über den Völkerbund' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 149 (25 February 1919); 'Ebert für den Wilsonfrieden' *Vorwärts* 204 (22 April 1919); 'Frankfurt, 4. Februar' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 93 (4 February 1919); 'Frankfurt, 7. Mai' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 335 (7 May 1919).

be disregarded as decisive influences in the peace settlement illustrated that people were as prepared to believe in unfounded hopes as they had been during the war. The conclusion of the article quoted above, which argued that 'German thought had to be freed from the burden of illusions and their unbound impulses through a new, cleansed ideology' to contain the pollution of the democratic spirit with nationalism, was consequently not adopted by republican discourse.[1073] As Fritz Klein has suggested, continued republican references to Wilson's Fourteen Points illustrated that that Ernst Troeltsch's much quoted 'dreamland' was not a distinctive mindset of the armistice period, but was merely a remnant of Germany's wartime culture.[1074]

It should be taken into account that in spite of its profound impact on Germany's domestic political climate, the continued republican references to Wilson were not predominantly aimed at a domestic audience. The stubborn claim that Germany would reject any peace terms violating Wilson's principles was rather consciously continued as Germany's only means to threaten the Allies into granting Germany more moderate peace terms. Due to its army's collapse and the thorough demobilisation enforced by the armistice terms, Germany was unable to oppose any Allied demands by military force. In adopting Wilson's ideals and thereby establishing Germany's moral authority, Brockdorff-Rantzau sought to exploit Germany's assumed moral credit as the only available means to factor Germany into the decision-making process with regard to the peace.

To reinforce Germany's alleged moral claim to moderate peace terms, republican propaganda also adopted the values of the Socialist International in the same way it had annexed Wilson's Fourteen Points. Although critical voices such as the SPD journalist Victor Schiff questioned both the ability and the willingness of French socialists to help Germany, *Vorwärts* and the *Frankfurter Zeitung* expressed hope that the Allied people would oppose their governments' decisions.[1075] The continuity of this conviction was evident in the fact that the same argument appeared in two different publications in response to both armistice and peace terms. *Die Welt am Montag*, for example, argued on 13 November 1918 that 'England, America and France had a vital interest in preventing the peace terms from suffocating Germany', predicting that their workers would oppose their

---

[1073] Rudolf Kircher, 'Das Wunder' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 431 (14 June 1919).

[1074] See Fritz Klein, 'Between Compiègne and Versailles' in Boemeke, Feldman and Glaser (eds.), *Versailles. A reassessment*, p. 219. Ernst Troeltsch was an eminent theologian, historian and philosopher as well as one of the co-founders of the DDP. Wolfgang Michalka, 'Troeltsch, Ernst' in Benz and Graml (eds.), *Biographisches* Lexikon, pp. 346f. His phrase 'dreamland of the armistice period' is quoted throughout the historiography of the Treaty of Versailles. See for example Kolb, *Der Frieden*, p. 69; Hagen Schulze, 'Vom Scheitern einer Republik' in Bracher, Funke, Jacobsen (eds.), *Die Weimarer Republik*, p. 617; Klaus Schwabe, 'Germany's Peace Aims' in Boemeke, Feldman and Glaser, *Versailles. A reassessment*, p. 42.

[1075] Expressions of trust in the international proletariat were expressed in 'An die Entente' *Vorwärts* 315 (15 November 1918); 'Das verschleierte Bild' *Vorwärts* 199 (18 April 1919); Friedrich Stampfer, 'Die beiden Frankreich' *Vorwärts* 232 (7 May 1919); 'Frankfurt, 22, Januar' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 58 (22 January 1919). For critical views of the Socialist International see 'Bern!' *Vorwärts* 47 (26 January 1919); Victor Schiff, 'Versteht ihr es jetzt?' *Vorwärts* 250 (17 May 1919). For biographical information on Schiff see Appendix I, p. 336.

government's chauvinists with significant force.[1076] More than six months later, *Vorwärts* still announced in response to the Allied peace draft that the international community would not tolerate a dictated peace, claiming that English and French apathy in reaction to the peace terms was solely due to their governments' failure to inform them sufficiently.[1077] This failure to recognise that the international hatred bred by the war affected the Allied people as well as their governments and had a significant influence on the peace terms in turn led the republican government to overestimate international sympathies for the German cause.

Although Germany's focus on international working class co-operation had a prominent position in republican peace propaganda, only very few articles suggested that world revolution would provide a feasible solution to avert harsh peace terms. Even *Die Freiheit*, which was generally inclined to predict that world revolution, would eventually bring reconciliation and international understanding, explicitly warned that it could not be induced by rejecting the peace.[1078] SPD propaganda, as well as *Vorwärts* and the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, on the other hand, emphasized that post-revolutionary hopes of an immediate world revolution bringing a conciliatory peace were illusionary.[1079] The republican appeal for moral support from the Allied people, which replaced the traditional socialist demand for world revolution, was motivated by a mix of domestic and foreign policy considerations. On a domestic level, *Vorwärts* and *Frankfurter Zeitung* denounced world revolution as an immediate political goal to deflate communist propaganda promoting it as the only means to achieve a just peace.[1080] Fearing that a focus on world revolution would benefit the radical revolutionary elements within Germany, republican propaganda adapted its approach to the peace to suit the moderate parties' domestic political interests. On an international level, republican propaganda used a potential communist world revolution as a spectre to scare the Allies into granting concessions to Germany. Newspaper articles frequently warned the Allies that a deterioration of provisions would bring Bolshevism, chaos and anarchy, which would spread 'like the plague not stopping at national borders'.[1081] Ebert also depicted Germany as a dam against Russian Bolshevism, 'which would not only drown Germany but Europe and the entire world in the Bolshevik flood if it broke'.[1082]

[1076] 'Der Sinn des Waffenstillstandes' *Die Welt am Montag* (13 November 1918).
[1077] 'Der einzige Weg' *Vorwärts* 267 (26 May 1919).
[1078] 'Friede und Nationalversammlung' *Die Freiheit* 227 (13 May 1919); 'Unsere Friedensparole' *Die Freiheit* 221 (9 May 1919); 'Vor der Katastrophe' *Die Freiheit* 228 (13 May 1919).
[1079] BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, SPD, 1918-19, o.O.: SPD, *Gegen "Spartakus"!* (n.p., 1918/1919).
[1080] BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, KPD, 1919, Berlin: KPD, *Der Berner Schwindel* (Berlin, 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, KPD, 1918, o.O.: Spartakusbund, *An die Proletarier aller Länder!* (n.p., 1918); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, KPD, 1918, Berlin: Spartakusbund, *Was will der Spartakusbund?* (Berlin, 1918); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, SPD, 1918-19, o.O.: SPD, *Arbeiter mit und ohne Waffenrock hör mich an!* (n.p., 1918/1919).
[1081] Quote from 'Baldiger Vorfrieden' *Vorwärts* 88 (17 February 1919). Also see 'An der Schwelle der Friedenskonferenz' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 50 (19 January 1919); 'Frankfurt, 3. März' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 167 (3 March 1919); 'Gegen die Vergewaltigung Deutschlands' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 185 (10 March 1919).
[1082] 'Ebert für den Wilsonfrieden' *Vorwärts* 204 (22 April 1919). For biographical information on Ebert see Appendix I, p. 324.

As a means of foreign policy this approach was only partly successful. Peter Grupp argues convincingly that such republican propaganda raised French suspicions that the German government was not inclined to prevent the spread of Bolshevism.[1083] Such suspicions were additionally fuelled by anti-democratic demagogy calling for the creation of a nationalist Bolshevik alliance to prevent the peace, which Erwin Barth in *Vorwärts* and Hellmut von Gerlach vehemently denounced as dangerous and counter-productive.[1084] Eberhard Kolb has furthermore established that the French also suspected the German fear of Bolshevism to be a tactical ploy to achieve better peace terms.[1085] In spite of initial successes in motivating America and Great Britain to moderate the Allied demands with regard to food provisions, Germany's evocation of a Bolshevik threat thus irritated rather than soothed international relations.[1086] The decreasing political impact such threats had on Allied policies towards Germany was evident in the fact that within months of the revolution, the Allies grew more concerned about Germany's radical right-wing rather than left-wing fringe.[1087] While not substantially affecting the Allied approach to the peace, Germany's constant evocation of the Bolshevik threat aggravated the government's conflicts with radicalised workers in Germany.[1088] Focusing significant attention on the radical left as a mortal threat to Germany's survival obstructed the realisation that the genuine threat to the republic came from Germany's right. Additionally, it encouraged excessive use of violence against political unrest which destabilised the post-war state.

Misconceptions associated with Germany's utopian Wilsonianism and exaggerated hopes in the Socialist International also shaped popular expectations of the peace draft. A number of republican sources argued, for example, that the revolution had fulfilled the main Allied war aim of deposing Germany's wartime regime, implying that the Allies would break their promises by imposing harsh peace terms.[1089] Suggesting that any demands exceeding the deposition of the German monarchy would undermine their enemies' moral credibility, republican propaganda revealed two of its major

---

[1083] Peter Grupp, *Deutsche Außenpolitik*, pp. 77f. Also see Henning Köhler, *Novemberrevolution und Frankreich. Die französische Deutschland-Politik 1918-1919* (Düsseldorf, 1980), p. 326.

[1084] 'Hellmut von Gerlach, 'Wenn ich Friedensdelegierter wäre' *Die Welt am Montag* (12 May 1919); Erwin Barth, 'Besonnenheit!' *Vorwärts* 236 (9 May 1919). For biographical information on Erwin Barth see Appendix I, p. 322.

[1085] Eberhard Kolb, 'Internationale Rahmenbedingungen einer demokratischen Neuordung in Deutschland 1918/1919' in Bracher, *Weimarer Republik*, p. 270. For a similar analysis see Köhler, *Novemberrevolution und Frankreich*, pp. 126, 326.

[1086] Kolb, ibid; Krüger, *Versailles*, p. 65.

[1087] Kolb, 'Internationale Rahmenbedingungen' in Bracher, *Weimarer Republik*, pp. 272f. For a concise summary of the issue of Bolshevism in Germany's post-war international relations see Ulrich Kluge, *Die deutsche Revolution 1918/1919* (Frankfurt, 1985), p. 182f.

[1088] Alan Kramer summarises how a consciously exaggerated threat of Bolshevism, which tied into Brockdorff Rantzau's peace strategy led to an escalation of violence. See Kramer, *Dynamic of Destruction*, pp. 310-312.

[1089] For example 'Frankfurt, 25. November' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 327 (25 November 1918); 'An die Staatsmänner in Versailles' *Die Weltbühne* 15 (3 April 1919), pp. 376f; Vorstand der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands, 'An die Sozialisten aller Länder' *Vorwärts* 237 (10 May 1919).

misconceptions. Firstly, such demands illustrated that republican propaganda overestimated the international effect of its own moral voice. Particularly in France, disbelief that Germany's ideological change had been genuine was common from spring 1919.[1090] Based on Germany's aggressive propaganda, it was assumed that the republic was merely a front to hide the continuation of Germany's former ideology.[1091] Secondly, the perception that the revolutionary government did not deserve to be punished evoked entirely unrealistic expectations with regard to armistice and peace terms. By defining the republic as a blameless guardian of humanitarian values republican discourse precluded German assessment of Allied demands regarding both armistice and peace terms from being based on a realistic evaluation of Germany's wartime conduct.

VICTIMHOOD

Such considerations provided the basis for the republican assessment of both Germany's and the Allies' role in the peace negotiations. While republican discourse promoted Germany's adherence to moral rather than military means as an exemplary implementation of Wilson's ideals, German propaganda stressed throughout the armistice period that the Allies were both still at war and blinded by victory.[1092] A fictionalised commentary by Hugo Ganz in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* alleged, furthermore, that the Allies

> intended to destroy [Germany], not only politically and militarily, but also economically and morally, because they are no better than we were, but as greedy and brutal and also controlled by fear that the defeated could take horrific revenge unless neutralised for all eternity.[1093]

Such evaluations of the Allied motivations in pursuing peace contributed significantly to a continuation of a war mentality in Germany.[1094] The concept of an innocent German population being punished wantonly cultivated an overwhelming sense of victimhood and upheld a stereotyped wartime enemy image of Allied cruelty, ensuring that the German population remained ideologically mobilised. These emotions were most strongly evoked in cartoons. A caricature in *Der wahre Jacob*, for example, suggested that the peace of

---

[1090] Krüger, *Versailles*, p. 71.
[1091] Ibid.
[1092] For example 'Reise nach Spaa' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 332 (30 November 1918); Vorstand der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands, 'An die Sozialisten aller Länder!' *Vorwärts* 237 (10 May 1919), 'Um den Frieden' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 352 (14 May 1919).
[1093] Hugo Ganz, 'Befreiung' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 68 (26 January 1919). The journalist, playwright and political analyst Hugo Ganz (1862-1922) was the *Frankfurter Zeitung's* correspondent in Budapest from 1888 and also contributed to the *Neue Freie Presse* and the *Zeit* in Vienna. See: R. M., 'Ganz, Hugo' in Heinz Rupp and Carl Ludwig Lang, *Deutsches Literatur-Lexikon. Biographisch-Bibliographisches Handbuch, vol. 6* (Berne and Munich, 1978), p. 61.
[1094] In *Dynamics of Destruction* Alan Kramer links this phenomenon to the sense of humiliation which the unrealistic hopes invested in the peace had fuelled. See Ibid, pp. 313, 316.

'justice and reconciliation' really looked like an Allied steamroller on the verge of flattening German mothers and children.[1095] A month later, another image in the same publication depicted Michel, who embodied the German nation, being literally disembowelled in an Allied torture chamber.[1096] In this way the Allies, and Clemenceau in particular, were depicted as conscious murderers of the German nation.[1097] Allied cruelty was often solely attributed to greed and thus depicted as entirely unjustified. Like Germany's innocent suffering, such images characterised republican stereotypes of the post-war world order.

The republican perception that any harsh Allied demands were an unfair punishment for a purified Germany was also disastrous for the republican foundation narrative because it was used as an explanatory framework for Germany's wartime experience. This was particularly evident in republican discourse dealing with the Allied sea blockade against Germany. The blockade, which was upheld until 12 July 1919, albeit with concessions regarding food provisions, significantly worsened wartime shortages of food, animal fodder, clothing and raw materials in Germany.[1098] Insufficient food provisions, particularly in the last years of the war, in turn contributed to high civilian mortality rates and fuelled increasing war-weariness among Germany's civilian population.[1099] While contemporary estimates claimed that between 763 000 and 800 000 German civilians died as a consequence of malnutrition Jay Winter more realistically estimated the number at 478 500 'war-related' civilian casualties.[1100] Considering the level of individual deprivation and suffering which such numbers entailed, it is plausible to assume that the memories of civilian misery held significant political potential. The Allied decision to uphold the blockade as part of the armistice conditions ensured that the effects

---

[1095] 'Die Dampfwalze des Westens', *Der wahre Jacob* 847 (3 January 1919).See Illustration XII, p. 246.

[1096] 'Michels Martyrium. Vor den Friedensverhandlungen' *Der wahre Jacob* 850 (14 February 1919). See Illustration XIII, p. 247.

[1097] See Illustrations XII and XIII, pp. 246f. It is interesting that while the first cartoon depicted Wilson on the steamroller, the second excluded him from the perception of Germany's cruel enemies, which suggests that the publication was not quite sure how far to extend the enemy image of the Allies.

[1098] Bessel, *Germany*, pp. 95f; C. Paul Vincent, *The Politics of Hunger. The Allied Blockade of Germany, 1915-1919* (Athens, Ohio, London, 1985), pp. 44-46, 126-140. Although Vincent's study generally lacks a critical analysis of his sources and largely fails to elaborate on the political dimension of the blockade, he provides a basic summary of the blockade's economic effects in an underresearched field which would greatly benefit from historical attention.

[1099] Vincent, *Politics of Hunger*, pp. 145; Anne Roerkohl, *Hungerblockade und Heimatfront. Die kommunale Lebensmittelversorgung in Westfalen während des Ersten Weltkrieges* (Stuttgart, 1991), pp. 312, 323; Wolfgang Kruse, 'Sozialismus, Antikriegsbewegungen, Revolutionen' in Idem (ed.), *Eine Welt von Feinden*, p. 219.

[1100] Jay Winter, 'Surviving the war: life expectation, illness, and mortality rates in Paris, London, and Berlin, 1914-1919' in idem and Jean-Louis Robert (eds.) *Capital Cities at War. Paris, London, and Berlin 1914-1919* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 517 footnote 34. Alan Kramer cites this number as 'more realistic' than comporary suggestions other historians accepted uncritically. He argues that war-related changes in agricultural production and being at war with former suppliers of food rather than the Allied sea-blockade were the main causes of starvation in Germany. See Kramer, *Dynamic of Destruction*, pp. 153f. For contemporary views on the effects of starvation which see 'Der Aufbau der deutschen Volkskraft' *Vorwärts* 73 (9 February 1919); 'Frankfurt, 10. Januar' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 26 (10 January 1919); R. H. Francé, 'Die Gesetze des Hungerns' *Vorwärts* 87 (17 February 1919).

of civilian wartime deprivation remained a prominent theme in republican discourse.[1101] Unlike suffering on the battlefield, which republican propaganda often evoked to discredit Germany's imperial regime and to promote republican values, however, suffering at the home front was rarely used to legitimise the republic.

During the war, starvation in Germany was largely a class phenomenon.[1102] Workers often lived at subsistence level because they could not afford staple foods at black market prices which were readily available for those with higher incomes.[1103] This material inequality created a significant social rift between those whose lives were adversely affected by their sacrifice for the fatherland and those who profited from the war. The first chapter of this thesis has illustrated that republican discourse frequently evoked military inequality at the front as a means to discredit Germany's wartime politics.[1104] In comparison surprisingly few articles dealing with the war experience at the home front either emphasized the apparent inequality to the same extent or blamed civilian suffering on the imperial regime. Only one election appeal in *Vorwärts*, warning voters against supporting the DVP or the DNVP in the June elections of 1920, explicitly politicised civilian starvation as a central issue in Germany's domestic political debate. In response to a right-wing appeal that mothers should hold the republican government responsible for their children's gauntness and weakness, the article argued that respective DVP and DNVP chairmen Stresemann and Hergt did not stop at any lie or deception to discredit the revolution. Emphasizing that they 'relied on the trust and forgetfulness' of the German population when claiming that it was responsible for the misery of the German population, the article reminded their readers that Germany's right-wing rather than the revolutionary forces were responsible for the nation's wartime politics.[1105] Quoting from wartime statistics about malnourishment and disease during the war, *Vorwärts* concluded that

> [i]n consideration of these facts and numbers, which stem exclusively from the years 1914 to 1918, these murderers of our children, who are sitting in the DNVP and the German People's Party, dare to pin the blame on the coalition government. Truly, they [...] have good reason to hide their crimes. However, they will not succeed in erasing their guilt from the book of history. The German people will not forget that the Pan Germans promoted the war as 'the only remedy for an ailing nation' [...].[1106]

[1101] Approximately 5% of the analysed newspaper articles and political leaflets referred to the Allied blockade or civilian starvation.
[1102] This opinion was also expressed in 'Das Massensterben der Kinder' *Die Freiheit* 135 (21 April 1920).
[1103] Vincent argues that the food shortage affected the German population irrespective of their income and social standing. He only bases this observation on two rather unrepresentative memoirs. *The politics of hunger*, pp. 45f, 127. Anne Roerkohl's study assessing the impact of the blockade in Westfalia, however, notes that even in 1917 wealthy and influential citizens had access to food provisions unattainable to the average population because of highly inflated prices on the black markets. See *Hungerblockade und Heimatfront*, pp. 261, 265.
[1104] See chapters 1 and 3, pp. 57f, 151f.
[1105] 'Die Mörder unserer Kinder' *Vorwärts* 285 (5 June 1920).
[1106] Ibid.

This article suggested that, like republican narratives of the war experience, the issue of civilian starvation was a highly emotive means to emphasize the adverse consequences of the former regime's wartime policies. The very limited number of articles which explicitly identified social inequality as the reason for civilian suffering were generally confined to the newspapers' literary sections. In this manner, the few exemplary individual tales contrasting severe deprivations with abundant luxury largely expressed social rather than explicitly political criticism.

Instead, republican discourse portrayed the Allied blockade as the almost exclusive cause for German civilians' economic hardship during and after the war. Descriptions of the blockade's consequences for the German population particularly emphasized the high mortality rates among women, children and the elderly as those social groups who were least implicated in Germany's warfare.[1107] Quoting from a number of post-war publications detailing the physical effects of the blockade, *Vorwärts* stressed the continuous and irreversible damage which the prolonged malnourishment had inflicted on the German nation.[1108] Some articles even held the blockade responsible for all manner of social ills, including the corruption during the war, the population's general apathy, their unwillingness to work and even the popular inclination to believe in radical political demagogy.[1109] In line with the republican perception of the German people as victims of their former government's politics they were also portrayed as victims of the Allied will for destruction. The *Frankfurter Zeitung* summarised this conviction thus:

> [...] the war has been a catastrophe for all of Europe; all of Europe has suffered immeasurably and all European nations have to ask themselves what will remain of their wealth and their culture after such devastation of property and lives once the full costs of the war can be assessed. All have suffered. But there is no nation which has suffered as much as the German population, whose vitality has not just been worn down by the war but by a five-year hunger-blockade and which has to carry the horrific burden of the peace in addition to the horrific burden of the war.[1110]

Rather than encouraging reconciliation, such propaganda intentionally fuelled popular antagonism towards Germany's wartime enemies. It also failed to awaken any understanding of the hunger and hardship suffered by millions of civilians in German-occupied Europe.[1111] Such emotions in turn gave rise to a more aggressive rhetoric towards

---

[1107] See for example 'Frauenprotest gegen die Hungerblockade' *Vorwärts* 88 (17 February 1919); 'Der Hungerblockadetod der Kinder' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 444 (19 June 1919); 'Der Hungertod' *Vorwärts* 151 (23 March 1919); 'Der Krieg gegen Kinder und Greise' *Vorwärts* 58 (1 February 1919); 'Kriegsopfer hinter der Front' *Vorwärts* 51 (28 January 1919); 'Die Wirkung der Hungerblockade auf die deutschen Kinder' *Vorwärts* 365 (19 July 1919).

[1108] 'Das neugeborene Kriegskind' *Vorwärts* 398 (6 August 1919); 'Die Folgen der Hungerblockade' *Vorwärts* 572 (8 November 1919); 'An das Gewissen der Welt' *Vorwärts* 108 (28 February 1919).

[1109] 'Die Fortwirkung der Blockade' *Vorwärts* 186 (11 April 1919); R. H. Francé, 'Die Gesetze des Hungerns' *Vorwärts* 87 (17 February 1919).

[1110] 'Die Deutsche Not' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 27 (11 January 1920).

[1111] For a summary of civilian suffering and deprivation under German occupation see Kramer, *Dynamics of Destruction*, pp. 41-50; Alan Kramer, 'Besatzung (Westen)' and 'Deportationen' in

the Allied forces. This development was particularly evident in the severe accusations which republican discourse targeted at the Allies to apportion blame for the large numbers of civilian deaths. Socialist and liberal journalists and politicians alike unanimously portrayed the blockade as the most brutal crime committed during the war.[1112] The attempts to justify this claim clearly revealed the extent of ignorance republican discourse was prepared to uphold with regard to the destruction which German warfare had inflicted on its former enemies. A cartoon in *Der wahre Jacob*, for example, implied that Germany was worse off than France, because the devastated areas could be reconstructed while the victims of the blockade could not be revived.[1113] In a similar manner, *Vorwärts* suggested 'that all war crimes of which German officers and soldiers were often wrongly accused were nothing in comparison with the suffering and the irreparable damage which the cruel warfare of our enemies has imposed on an entire nation'.[1114] In response to the Allied demands for reparations, the *Frankfurter Zeitung* repeatedly took up Scheidemann's claim that Germany, in fact, deserved to be compensated for financial and human losses she endured because of the blockade.[1115] As a logical consequence of such propaganda, an article in *Vorwärts* accused the respective French and British Prime Ministers Georges Clemenceau and Lloyd George of having consciously murdered hundreds of thousands German children by upholding the blockade in full knowledge of its effects.[1116]

Only a single article throughout the analysed republican discourse identified the adverse ideological consequences of the blockade's evaluation in Germany's peace propaganda. In *Die Freiheit*, the prominent pacifist Friedrich Wilhelm Foerster established that Germany had no moral right to criticise the English blockade, because Germany had previously employed it as a means of warfare and rejected its abolition in the past.[1117] He continued to argue that

> [i]n assessing the German starvation it is forgotten again and again that it would have occurred naturally even without any blockade or conscious lockout, because the German military leadership managed to bring all major suppliers of German imports into the war against the German people. The bill for the German starvation should therefore be presented to the *OHL* and Germany's heavy industry. If their continued craving for conquests in the West had not prevented any clear statement with regard

---

Hirschfeld, Krumeich and Renz (eds.), *Enzyklopädie*, pp. 382f; 434f; Horne and Kramer, *German Atrocities*, pp. 14-18, 24-40, 46ff.

[1112] 'Scheidemann über die amerikanische Hilfe' *Vorwärts* 316 (16 November 1918); 'Frankfurt, 10 Januar' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 26 (10 January 1919).

[1113] 'Deutschland und Frankreich' *Der wahre Jacob* 872 (2 January 1920). See Illustration XIV, p. 248.

[1114] 'Die Wirkung der Hungerblockade. Ein medizinisches Gutachten' *Vorwärts* 112 (1 March 1920). Although *Vorwärts* quoted this passage from a medical journal, the journalist's decision to quote it uncommented and unquestioned suggests that *Vorwärts* considered it necessary to spread this particular interpretation of the blockade.

[1115] 'Frankfurt, 10. Januar' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 26 (10 January 1919); 'Frankfurt, 23. April' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 301 (23 April 1919). For biographical information on Scheidemann see Appendix I, p. 336.

[1116] 'Die Wirkung der Hungerblockade auf die deutschen Kinder' *Vorwärts* 365 (19 July 1919). For a similar allegation see 'Die Entente in Europa' *Der wahre Jacob* 853 (29 March 1919).

[1117] Friedrich Wilhelm Foerster, 'Zur Aufklärung des hungernden Deutschen Volkes' *Die Freiheit* 69 (5 March 1920). For biographical information on Foerster see Appendix I, pp. 325f.

> to Belgium, we could have had peace before starvation had accomplished its worst manifestations. This, however, is the massive offence against the German people which these circles have heaped upon themselves and which they would love to unload on the enemy: that those who always had enough to eat during the war unscrupulously forced the starving German people further into catastrophic deprivation in order to pursue their war aims. [...] [n]o takeovers of newspapers, no continuation of propaganda lies will prevent the true culprits of the mass murder from being revealed and marked accordingly.[1118]

On the basis of this assessment, Foerster emphasized that the continuation of the blockade should not be regarded as evidence of Allied cruelty, but merely reflected their desire to safeguard food provisions for their own populations.[1119] This reconciliatory appeal, aimed at containing the nationalist outrage evoked by the blockade's portrayal in republican propaganda, however, remained unheeded.[1120] Even *Die Freiheit* refrained from printing more than one other review article which noted that wartime civilian mortality rates could not solely be blamed on the English, because German warmongers who had prolonged the war also carried significant responsibility.[1121] In anticipation of the peace treaty the majority of republican discourse considered it to be more advantageous to focus on Allied rather than German misconduct. The extent of destruction inflicted by German warfare which republican discourse attempted to play down by referring to the horrific nature of the blockade illustrated that Germany's self-perception as a victim was consciously aimed at diverting attention from Germany's wartime conduct. In suggesting that victors and defeated alike had committed comparable crimes during the war, Germany mainly sought international support against harsh peace terms. By arguing that Germany was no worse than the Allied belligerents, republican discourse hoped to arouse sufficient levels of sympathy to pressurise the Allies into adhering to Wilsonian principles. In emphasizing Allied cruelty as a response to German goodwill, republican propaganda furthermore intended to identify a scapegoat for its own impotence in influencing the peace. Such propaganda backfired on all counts. Partly because the German vilification of the Allies - as the flipside of its assumed victimhood - was seen as a sign of Germany's continued belligerence, Germany's peace strategy remained largely unsuccessful.[1122] Its international self-representation neither evoked sufficient opposition to the peace draft to enforce its amendment, nor succeeded in convincing the Allies of Germany's innocence.

[1118] Ibid.

[1119] Ibid.

[1120] The lacking impact of Foerster's rational assessment of wartime starvation in Germany is evident in the fact that even Emil Julius Gumbel, a renowned pacifist and outspoken anti-militarist, also attributed starvation in Germany exclusively to the blockade. See 'Das Stahlbad im Lichte der Statistik (1924)' in Jansen, *Emil Julius Gumbel*, p. 164. For biographical information on Gumbel see Appendix I, pp. 327f.

[1121] 'Das Massensterben der Kinder' *Die Freiheit* 135 (21 April 1920); Friedrich Wilhelm Foerster, 'Zur Aufklärung des hungernden Deutschen Volkes' *Die Freiheit* 69 (5 March 1920).

[1122] Klaus Schwabe argues that, in the long run, Brockdorff-Rantzau achieved his goal of discrediting the Treaty of Versailles sufficiently in order to attain its revision. Considering that he did so at the cost of the political survival of the republic, however, this achievement hardly classifies as a success. See Schwabe, 'German Peace Aims' in Boemeke, Feldman and Glaser (eds.), *Versailles. A reassessment*, pp. 63f.

In view of civilian wartime suffering in the German-occupied areas in Belgium and Northern France, it is plausible that such German appeals for sympathy for their suffering did not motivate the Allies into granting more moderate peace terms. As part of Germany's domestic political discourse, the government's vilification of the Allies also developed a damaging political dynamism. On a very basic level such propaganda appealed to a pre-existing war mentality towards Germany's former enemies. Its adoption into republican discourse consequently resulted in a continuation of the wartime *Burgfrieden*, which suggested that Germany's former enemies rather than internal anti-democratic forces posed the most severe threat to the new state's survival. In accepting this assumption, republican discourse elevated national self-defence to Germany's main political priority again. *Vorwärts*, for example, defended the SPD peace strategy by emphasizing that it did not fuel nationalism unless one subscribed to the USPD stance of branding everybody a nationalist 'who did not allow his country to be kicked down entirely'.[1123] In spite of a common recognition throughout republican discourse that nationalist propaganda damaged Germany's position in the peace negotiations, *Vorwärts* thus sanctioned a continuation of the wartime creed that a perceived enemy threat justified drastic means of opposition.[1124] In this manner, Germany's peace propaganda created a new sense of nationalism, which it had no means to contain.

In the course of the peace negotiations, the antagonistic republican stance towards the Allies developed its own political dynamism, which played into the hands of anti-democratic propaganda. This development took place irrespective of whether or not republican policy succeeded in gaining individual Allied concessions. Naturally, the Allied refusal to amend either armistice or peace terms significantly while forcing Germany to sign terms it regarded as unbearably harsh aggravated the level of antipathy towards the Allies. Due to its military defencelessness, however, the republic could not offer an outlet for such emotions. The peace strategy's refusal to acknowledge wartime misconduct of the imperial regime furthermore prevented republican discourse from directing this popular resentment against Germany's former elite as those responsible for the severity of the peace terms. In this manner, republican peace propaganda fuelled passionate emotions which it could not steer, thus allowing right wing propaganda to direct them against the republic, which it portrayed as unable to achieve its aspired goals.[1125]

Even the few republican foreign policy successes in moderating the Allied demands neither improved Germany's view of the Allies nor served to stabilise the republic. Although Scheidemann, for example, initially lauded the Allied decision to provide food to

---

[1123] 'Ebert für den Wilsonfrieden' *Vorwärts* 204 (22 April 1919). The article also extended this allegation to include Hellmut von Gerlach, who had criticised the SPD delegate Otto Landsberg as a 'pronounced nationalist'. For biographical information on Landsberg see Appendix I, p. 331.

[1124] For opposition to nationalist peace propaganda see 'Fortgang und Aussichten' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 358 (16 May 1919); Stunde der Übergabe' *Vorwärts* 232 (7 May 1919); Hellmut von Gerlach, 'Wenn ich Friedensdelegierter wäre' *Die Welt am Montag* (12 May 1919).

[1125] Lorenz, *'Die Weltgeschichte ist das Weltgericht'*, pp. 354-357.

Germany as 'a first act of peace', republican discourse soon interpreted the conditions linked to this armistice concession as excessive and therefore exploitive.[1126] The profound impact of such propaganda was evident in the fact that even the renowned bourgeois pacifist Ludwig Quidde shared the view that the armistice terms were deceptive because 'the Allies and Wilson promised deliveries of food four months ago and none of these promises have been fulfilled yet'.[1127] The slow process from the initial negotiations to the first arrival of food provisions, which Germany's right wing interpreted as a failure to fulfil the republic's revolutionary promises, restricted the credit which the republic could claim for this foreign policy success.[1128] Germany's eventual triumph in averting Allied war crimes trials on 17 February 1920 was met with a similar response. Fundamentally, the nationalist right perceived the Allied concession, allowing the republic to try German war criminals, as a victory of their defiant resistance against the Allied extradition demands rather than an achievement of republican foreign policy.[1129] At the same time they continued to attack the government for failing to force the Allies to abolish the trials altogether.[1130]

The republican decision to define Germany's role in the peace negotiations as that of a persecuted victim furthermore aimed at consolidating the identity of the new state against an outside threat. This function of republican peace propaganda was particularly evident in a government appeal which defined the draft of the peace treaty as an attempt 'to impose boundless violence on the German people' by destroying and fragmenting the nation while enslaving its workers for foreign capitalist interests'.[1131] In consequently calling on people to unite to safeguard German traditions and their newly accomplished freedom, Ebert consciously used the peace as a rallying call for the republic.[1132] In appealing for unity against an allegedly merciless enemy, in Dülffer's words, the republic

---

[1126] See for example 'Scheidemann über die amerikanische Hilfe' *Vorwärts* 316 (16 November 1919); Frankfurt, 6. März' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 176 (6 March 1919); 'Foch und Erzberger' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 113 (11 February 1919).

[1127] 'Gegen die Vergewaltigung Deutschlands' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 185 (10 March 1919). Ludwig Quidde, who was awarded the Peace Nobel Prize in 1927, was chairman of the *Deutsche Friedensgesellschaft* (German Peace League) during the war and represented the DDP in the Weimar Republic. In spite of his continued commitment to demobilisation and reconciliation, he vehemently criticised the Treaty of Versailles and demanded its rejection. See Helmut Donat, 'Ludwig Quidde' in Wolfgang Benz and Hermann Graml (eds.), *Biographisches Lexikon zur Weimarer Republik* (Munich, 1988), p. 260; Ludwig Quidde, 'Bitter ernst!' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 412 (5 June 1919). For biographical information on Quidde see Appendix I, pp. 334f.

[1128] The *Kreuzzeitung*, for example, argued that the government failed to represent Germany's interests appropriately, because its decision to beg for food provisions rather than demanding them had no impact on the Allies. Another article one month later blamed the government for Germany's difficulties in receiving Allied food provisions because it proved unable to enforce the production of the necessary payments. 'Soll Deutschland verhungern?' *Neue Preußische Zeitung* 19 (16 January 1919); 'Die Opfer der Blockade' *Neue Preußische Zeitung* 16 (14 January 1919).

[1129] Horne and Kramer, *German Atrocities*, pp. 344f.

[1130] Ibid, p. 345.

[1131] 'Der Gewaltfriede - Aufrufe und Kundgebungen' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 341 (9 May 1919).

[1132] Ibid.

thus 'constituted itself as a continuation of the war experience'.[1133] In defining Germany's protest against the peace as a means to overcome the humiliation of the war, Peter Krüger offered a similar argument to characterise the republican peace strategy.[1134] In allowing the nationalist *Burgfrieden* to determine Germany's foreign policy, republican discourse surrendered a significant portion of governing legitimacy to Germany's right-wing forces. Not concerned with the government's aim to prevent a resumption of warfare, right-wing propaganda promoted resistance and armed opposition as viable means to overcome Versailles.[1135] This political atmosphere proved to be one of the most destabilising influences for the Weimar Republic. It provided the breeding ground for resentment and desire for revenge, which was later harvested by Germany's radical right-wing parties, which promised to revise the Treaty of Versailles by force.[1136] The perceived victimisation of Germany furthermore planted the seed for renewed military aggression by allowing Hitler to justify rearmament in defiance of the treaty, the remilitarisation of the Rhineland in 1936 and subsequent acts of belligerence by claiming to redress a historical injustice.[1137]

ENVISAGING PEACE

One of the most unconstructive features of the republican peace strategy was its inconsistency. While demanding that the peace should be defined by political reason, reconciliation and justice, republican peace propaganda largely appealed to nationalist passions rather than rationality and relied on obfuscation and provocation in their negotiations with the Allies. One example for this claim can be found in the assessment of Germany's response to Allied reparation demands. In accordance with Wilson's Fourteen Points republican peace propaganda frequently emphasized Germany's commitment to aid the reconstruction of destroyed areas in Belgium and Northern France.[1138] Generally evoked as irrefutable proof of Germany's goodwill, such declarations of intent aimed at drawing attention to its commitment to make amends for wartime destruction. At the same time, however, republican discourse severely qualified the 'extensive sacrifices' which Germany claimed it was willing to make.[1139] In order to criticise the extent of Allied

---

[1133] Dülffer, 'Frieden schließen nach einem Weltkrieg?' in Dülffer and Krumeich (eds.), *Der verlorene Frieden*, p. 33.
[1134] Krüger, *Versailles*, p. 10.
[1135] See for example 'Der Worte sind genug gewechselt' *Deutsche Zeitung* 263 (6 June 1919); 'Rache!' *Deutsche Zeitung* 293 (28 June 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, Versailles: H. E. von Lindeiner-Wildau, *Wie der Gewaltfriede aus sieht* (Berlin, n.d.); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DVP, Berlin, 1920: DVP, *"Vergessen"* (Berlin, 1920).
[1136] Lorenz, *'Die Weltgeschichte ist das Weltgericht'*, pp. 419f.
[1137] Ibid; Johannes Steinhoff, Peter Pechel, Dennis Showalter (eds.), *Deutsche im Zweiten Weltkrieg. Zeitzeugen sprechen* (Munich, 1989), p. 43.
[1138] See for example 'Die Auswärtige Politik der Regierung' *Die Freiheit* 347 (24 July 1919); 'An die Sozialisten aller Länder' *Vorwärts* 237 (10 May 1919); 'Das Programm der Friedensregierung' *Vorwärts* 373 (24 July 1919).
[1139] 'Deutschlands auswärtige Politik' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 319 (17 November 1918); 'Die französische Antwortnote' *Vorwärts* 205 (23 April 1919).

reparation demands, a satire in *Der wahre Jacob* claimed that the Allied forces demanded compensation for the production of English dumdum bullets, the income of Parisian whores and the pension of an admiral who refused to rescue German sailors in distress.[1140] By ridiculing the Allied reparation demands as entirely unreasonable, such propaganda contributed to increasing international antagonism. These views were, although in a less exaggerated manner, repeatedly expressed in political commentary too. The *Frankfurter Zeitung*, for example, readily admitted that Belgium deserved compensation, yet repeatedly questioned German liability for destroyed French territory.[1141]

Initial assurance of goodwill soon turned into hardly veiled provocations suggesting that 'those demanding high reparations should see where they could find them' and demands that Germany should 'produce a counter-bill for the consequences of the blockade'.[1142] By commingling genuinely reconciliatory appeals to the effect that Germany was economically unable to meet the Allied demands with such belligerent peace propaganda, republican discourse devalued reasonable political voices.[1143] The divergence between the pacifist values which republican discourse associated with the peace and excessively demanding peace propaganda undermined the political credibility of the republic significantly. Internationally, Germany's aggressive rhetoric towards the Allied forces simply fuelled pre-existing suspicions (particularly among the French) that Germany's commitment to reconciliation was insincere.[1144] There is some debate whether a less aggressive republican approach would have motivated the Allies to grant Germany more acceptable peace terms. Klaus Schwabe, for example, questions Peter Grupp's and Hans Mommsen's hypothesis that a reconciliatory peace strategy could have improved Germany's position in the peace negotiations.[1145] With reference to Austria, which was as unsuccessful in achieving oral negotiations as Germany in spite of its more reconciliatory approach, Schwabe argues that the international political climate made a significant

---

[1140] 'Deutschlands Schuldkonto' *Der wahre Jacob* 858 (19 June 1919).

[1141] 'Die Antwort' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 309 (7 November 1918); 'Gegen die Vergewaltigung Deutschlands' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 185 (10 March 1919).

[1142] 'Das verschleierte Bild' *Vorwärts* 199 (18 April 1919); 'Frankfurt, 23. April' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 301 (20 April 1919); 'Frankfurt, 2. Juni' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 403 (2 June 1919).

[1143] For reconciliatory reactions to the reparations see Karl Kautsky, 'Die Friedensbedingungen' *Die Freiheit* 224 (11 May 1919); Hellmut von Gerlach, 'Wenn ich Friedensdelegierter wäre' *Die Welt am Montag* (12 May 1919); Engelbert Graf, 'Deutschland nach dem Frieden' *Die Freiheit* 237 (17 May 1919). The integration of rational economic arguments into more aggressive rhetoric is evident in 'Frankfurt, 23. April' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 301 (23 April 1919); 'Das Friedensultimatum' *Vorwärts* 201 (19 April 1919). The private tutor Georg Engelbert Graf (1881-1952) initially became a member of the SPD in 1908. He joined the USPD in 1917, returning to the SPD after its dissolution in 1922 and representing it in the Reichstag from 1928 to 1933. In addition to contributing to *Die Freiheit*, Graf worked as an editor for the USPD youth publications *Freie Jugend* and *Proletarier-Jugend*. Graf was actively involved in worker's education throughout the Weimar Republic, while publishing and editing two more socialist youth publications from 1925 until 1933. See Schröder, *Sozialdemokratische Parlamentarier*, p. 470.

[1144] Hermann Hagspiel, *Verständigung zwischen Deutschland und Frankreich. Die deutsch-französische Außenpolitik der zwanziger Jahre im innenpolitischen Kräftefeld beider* Länder (Bonn, 1987), p. 33; Köhler, *Novemberrevolution und Frankreich*, pp. 331f.

[1145] Schwabe, 'German Peace Aims' in Boemeke, Feldman and Glaser (eds.), *Versailles. A reassessment*, p. 65.

amendment of the peace unlikely.[1146] In this world of counterfactual assumptions, however, it can safely be established that Germany's questionable commitment to reconciliation reinforced rather than revised negative Allied preconceptions of Germany.

The impact of such peace propaganda on a domestic level was far more fundamental. Considering that the new state had promoted its revolutionary values as a guarantee for a just peace according to Wilson's Fourteen Points, the republican failure to be acknowledged as an equal negotiating partner suggested that commitment to peace and reconciliation was not sufficient to safeguard Germany's international position. The republican assumption of traditionally nationalist rhetoric implied an admission of failure which fundamentally weakened the republican legitimacy to govern. The devastating impact of the Allied peace draft on Germany's political discourse was partly due to entirely unrealistic expectations of the treaty which the government's peace strategy had fostered. The nature and location of the Allied armistice and peace preparations also contributed to the fact that Germany's version of the peace diverged from reality to such a degree. Its absence from these negotiations and the secrecy maintained to cover up the disunity among the Allied forces meant that – beyond official communications and reports from neutral countries – Germany largely remained cut off from the Allied decision-making process.[1147] The lack of reliable information in a political climate of revolutionary euphoria paved the way for the illusory conviction that Germany would not be held accountable for its wartime conduct.

This lack of factual evidence to enforce a realistic evaluation of the future peace, in turn, allowed the government to develop a set of goals which were entirely dissociated from political reality. Political discourse in Germany between the declaration of the armistice and the handing over of the peace terms to the German delegation expressed and consequently shaped a multitude of expectations regarding the future peace. In spite of their expressed mistrust towards Wilson and the government's ability to represent Germany's interests, right-wing propaganda offered a long list of demands outlining their interpretation of a just peace.[1148] While the DVP and the DNVP, for example, demanded the formation of a Greater Germany to ensure the unity of all German people, German rule over formerly German areas in Poland and the German colonies as well as rearmament, the pan-German League even reasserted Germany's right to Alsace Lorraine.[1149] The

---

[1146] Ibid, pp 65, 67.

[1147] Kolb, *Der Frieden*, p. 69; Kramer, *Dynamics of Destruction*, p. 313.

[1148] For apocalyptic views of the 'republican peace' and right-wing antagonism towards Wilson see BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DVP, Berlin, 1918: DVP, *Unser Anspruch auf einen Rechtsfrieden!* (Berlin, 1918); FES, 6/FLBL005116: Sonderabdruck aus Nr. 350 der Deutschen Zeitung, *Ist kein Yorck da?* (Berlin, 1918).

[1149] BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DNVP, 1918, o.O.: DNVP, *Wahlaufruf der Deutschnationalen Volkspartei* (n.p., 1918); FES, 6/FLBL005036: DVP, *Die 14 Punkte. Was will die Deutsche Volkspartei?* (Berlin, 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DVP, Berlin, 1918: DVP, *Unser Anspruch auf einen Rechtsfrieden!* (Berlin, 1918); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DVP, Berlin, 1919: DVP, *Was wir wollen!* (Berlin, 1919).

opposition right-wing parties thus envisaged peace terms which did not merely establish an almost unchanged return to the status quo ante, but also aimed to increase both German territory and armament.[1150]

Such utopian expectations with regard to the peace were not confined to propaganda of the right-wing opposition parties who did not have to implement their exaggerated demands. Rather, republican propaganda was no less confused in terms of what expectations were realistically achievable with regard to the envisaged peace settlement. Following the example of Count Brockdorff-Rantzau, DDP leaflets, for example, also defined a rejection of territorial losses, the creation of a Greater Germany, and a continuation of its colonial activity as part of the parameters for a just peace.[1151] One DDP leaflet even demanded that 'all German territory in the West [...] for which our fathers bled in 1870 and 71 [...] should remain part of the nation', seemingly referring to Alsace-Lorraine.[1152] In a similar manner, Chancellor Philipp Scheidemann called for unification with Austria and demanded that Germany should be the fatherland of all Germans, insinuating that Germany would not accept territorial losses.[1153] The differences between the misapprehensions in right-wing and republican interpretations defining the conditions for a just peace settlement were thus merely a matter of degree. These observations reinforce Peter Grupp's assessment that the main danger in Germany's peace strategy lay in the choice of 'rhetoric over ratio' because it rendered the political leadership incapable of establishing a realistic perception of the future peace.[1154]

The government's peace strategy, which was mirrored in the rhetoric of republican discourse, however, was not universally accepted. *Die Freiheit* as well as the analysed pacifist publications, repeatedly called for a moderation of the republican approach. In February 1919 *Die Freiheit*, for example, warned the government that attempting to threaten the Allies into amending the armistice would not achieve the desired goals, but significantly worsen Germany's position.[1155] Heinrich Ströbel, a left-wing socialist who hovered on the boundary between USPD and SPD, proposed in *Die Weltbühne* that the

---

[1150] Ibid.

[1151] For Brockdorff-Rantzau's speech see 'Deutsche Nationalversammlung' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 124 (15 February 1919). DDP leaflets outlining the party's expectations regarding the peace: BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DDP, Berlin, 1919: DDP, *An die deutsche Jugend!* (Berlin, 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DDP, A-D, Braunschweig, 1918: DDP, *Handwerker, Gewerbetreibende, Kaufleute!* (Braunschweig, 1918).

[1152] BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DDP, A-D, Braunschweig, 1918: DDP, *Handwerker, Gewerbetreibende, Kaufleute!* (Braunschweig, 1918).

[1153] 'Programmrede Scheidemanns in Weimar' *Vorwärts* 81 (13 February 1919). For other expressions of support for a Greater Germany see 'Frankfurt, 11. Februar' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 113 (11 February 1919); 'Für Groß-Deutschland' *Vorwärts* 309 (9 November 1918). Although initially more cautious, Friedrich Ebert also pursued Austria's unification with Germany. See Mühlhausen, *Friedrich Ebert*, pp. 252f.

[1154] Grupp, 'Vom Waffenstillstand zum Versailler Vertrag' in Bracher, Funke and Jacobson (eds.), *Weimarer Republik*, p. 302.

[1155] 'Unverantwortliches Treiben' *Die Freiheit* 83 (15 February 1919).

only way to turn Germany's fate was a thorough revision of its peace strategy.[1156] Ströbel argued that

> [t]he treatment of the peace question in the German press still proves hopeless blindness as they fail to understand both our own situation and that of our opponents. They are surprised that the Entente has not already provided Germany with food or even offered it peace terms with a generous gesture of forgiving and forgetting. [...] When will it be understood that it was very easy to unleash a world war and transform Europe into chaos under the reign of an arbitrary, unbridled and uncontrolled regime of a militarised dynasty, but immensely difficult to regain the balance of a world which has been turned upside down?[1157]

Warning that 'aggressive protests, accusations and the old means of wartime demagogy would merely undermine the idea of justice and would fuel the victor's desire for power', he suggested that, instead, Germany should aim at understanding the motivations behind the Allies' conduct.[1158] Ströbel consequently argued that the Allied attempt to secure the peace by force and to weaken Germany as much as possible had to be seen as a consequence of justified French fears of German revenge.[1159] Suggesting that Germany was in no position to preach the necessity of a just Wilsonian peace, Ströbel defined a constructive foreign policy thus:

> In order to convince France, England and America of Germany's genuine desire for peace and reconciliation, Germany can and must turn away from such nationalist presumptuousness and self-righteousness which only registers and bemoans one's own misfortune while being blind to the immense misery which Germany's delusions of grandeur have caused. German politicians will only be able to enter into fruitful peace negotiations if they can sympathise with the Entente's indescribable outrage against German imperialism.[1160]

In obstructing a rational assessment of Germany's wartime conduct as part of Germany's peace strategy, the government's peace propaganda actively prevented such reasoned approaches from being adopted by republican discourse. In choosing aggressive denial as a means to defend the new state against Allied and left-wing attacks, republican discourse precluded a moderation of Germany's peace strategy.

ASSESSING THE DRAFT

[1156] The historian Rüdiger Graf describes Ströbel as a man of strong convictions, who changed his political allegiance a number of times, because he felt unable to tolerate certain party-political decisions. Until he was expelled in late 1919 and joined the SPD, however, he was a member of the USPD. See Rüdiger Graf, 'Die Politik der reinen Vernunft – das Scheitern des linken Sozialdemokraten Heinrich Ströbel zwischen Utopie und Realpolitik' in Wirsching and Eder (eds.), *Vernunftrepublikanismus*, pp. 132f. For biographical information on Ströbel see Appendix I, pp. 337f.

[1157] Heinrich Ströbel, 'Keine Rettung?' *Die Weltbühne* 13 (28 March 1919), pp. 303.

[1158] Ibid.

[1159] Ibid, pp. 304f.

[1160] Ibid, p. 305.

On 7 May 1919 the German peace delegation in Versailles consequently received a peace draft, which in no way accorded with republican visions of a just Wilsonian peace and neither acknowledged Germany's moral status nor preserved its territorial integrity. Instead, the Allied peace terms imposed territorial losses benefiting Belgium, Poland, Czechoslovakia and France, deprived Germany of its colonies, forced it to demilitarise the area left of the Rhine and to surrender the Saar area to the control of the League of Nations.[1161] Additionally, the document prohibited Germany's unification with Austria, justified the Allied reparation demands by holding Germany and its Allies responsible for the outbreak and therefore the damages of war, and demanded the extradition of war criminals.[1162] During the presentation ceremony for the Allied peace draft, Clemenceau furthermore announced that the Allies were not prepared to allow the Germans to state their case in oral negotiations.[1163] In this manner, the peace draft challenged both the political and the moral basis of the republic by disregarding Germany's revolutionary change while disproving the validity of Germany's peace strategy which had been fundamental to the republican foundation narrative.

Accordingly, the draft aroused severe disappointment and dismay among the German peace delegation, the government and the German population alike.[1164] This profound setback for the republican peace strategy, however, did not motivate the republican forces to amend their approach to the peace. Led by Brockdorff-Rantzau's provocative speech during the reception ceremony, which categorically denied German war guilt, accused the Allies of premeditated murder of German civilians through the blockade and stressed Germany's legal claim to a just peace, republican discourse simply continued to pursue its previous propaganda in a more drastic manner.[1165] The most striking aspect of republican propaganda in this period was the indistinguishable rhetoric describing the nature of the peace draft. DNVP and SPD propaganda alike assessed the terms as 'dictated', 'unjust' or 'violent', suggesting that they constituted a 'rape of Germany'.[1166]

[1161] 'Der Versailler Friedensvertrag, 28 June 1919' in Longerich (ed.), *Die Erste Republik*, pp. 137-142.
[1162] Ibid. In order to complete the picture of the most influential terms of the treaty it needs to be noted that the peace draft also demanded a reduction of Germany's army to 100 000 men. This provision, however, was not as controversially debated in the republican discourse in the aftermath of the draft's publication.
[1163] Kolb, *Der Frieden*, pp. 73f.
[1164] Ibid, p. 75.
[1165] Apart from Gerd Krumeich, who rather uncritically judged Brockdorff-Rantzau's speech as 'relatively self-critical and obliging' in the face of 'hostility and hatred' at the ceremony, recent historiography tends to agree that the Foreign Minister's speech was defiant, provocative and aroused outrage among the Allies. See Gerd Krumeich, 'Vergleichende Aspekte der 'Kriegsschulddebatte' nach dem ersten Weltkrieg' in Michalka (ed.), *Weltkrieg*, p. 917; Kolb, *Der Frieden*, pp. 74f; Krüger, *Versailles*, p. 21; Schwabe, *Wilson-Frieden*, p. 581.
[1166] FES, 6/FLBL005079: *Was Nun?* (Berlin, 1919); FES, 6/FLBL005081: *Wir sind noch nicht verloren* (Berlin, 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DNVP, 1920: DNVP, *Kundgebung der Nichtwähler!* (n.p., 1920); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DVP, Berlin, 1920: DVP, *Der Tag der Abrechnung* (Berlin, 1920); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DVP, Berlin, 1918: DVP, *Unser Anspruch auf einen Rechtsfrieden!* (Berlin, 1918); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, KPD, 1919, o.O.: KPD, *Wir Kommunisten und der Friede* (n.p., 1919); FES, 6/FLBL005046: Reichsverband Ostschutz, *Männer und Frauen von Groß-Berlin!* (Berlin, 1919); FES, 6/FLBL005116: Sonderabdruck aus Nr.

Concurring with the initial republican propaganda campaign, republican discourse particularly focused on the malicious intent of the Allied peace terms and portrayed its consequences for Germany and Europe in the bleakest of terms. In an appeal against the 'dictated peace' Friedrich Ebert, for example, predicted that the unfulfillable treaty, which intended to destroy and fragment Germany while enslaving its workers for capitalist interests, would inevitably cause renewed bloodshed and murder.[1167] With even more sense for drama, *Vorwärts* described Scheidemann's speech against the peace draft in the National Assembly by suggesting that while 'Scheidemann is speaking [...] the faces of those who were killed for Germany are standing next to the man who is uttering the outcry of a sinking nation'.[1168] The article furthermore evaluated the draft as 'worse than enslavement, it is a cold and conscious strangulation of millions who, after countless sacrifices, have to atone the guilt of not having been the stronger force'.[1169] A caricature in *Ulk* captured the majority impression of the peace draft when it depicted Germany as a lion wounded by numerous arrows, on whose carcass Entente vultures intended to feast.[1170] Such political speeches and their dramatisation in the press revealed the extent to which Germany was prepared to promote passion rather than a rational assessment of Germany's options as the basis on which the peace terms were evaluated.[1171]

This rhetoric, consciously aimed at fuelling a united popular outrage against the peace, was indicative of Germany's political climate in May 1919, because it emphasised a significant inconsistency in the republican peace strategy. It illustrated that in spite of appeals for moderate, rational debate of the peace which were expressed in most republican newspapers, neither *Vorwärts* nor the *Frankfurter Zeitung* actively contributed to a moderation of public discourse.[1172] This contrast is particularly evident in an article in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*. It appealed for a rational evaluation of the peace terms while portraying the Allied demands as evidence for the 'enemies' imperialism and their will for destruction', which threatened the existence of the German nation.[1173] In a

---

350 der Deutschen Zeitung, *Ist kein Yorck da?* (Berlin, 1918); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, SPD, 1918, Berlin: SPD, *Gegen die Phrase - Für Vernunft u. Wahrheit!* (Berlin, 1920); FES, 6/FLBL005875: SPD, *Die Grundzüge des neuen Friedensentwurfs der Entente* (Berlin, 1919); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, Versailles, Bremen (?), 1919: USPD, *Krieg oder Frieden?* (Wuppertal, 1919); FES, NUR 1919 März-Dezember USPD, *An das Proletariat!* (Berlin, 1919).

[1167] 'Der Gewaltfriede - Aufrufe und Kundgebungen' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 341 (9 May 1919).

[1168] 'Der Schrei des deutschen Volkes' *Vorwärts* 243 (13 May 1919).

[1169] Ibid.

[1170] Fritz Kaltwasser, 'Sie warten' *Ulk* (6 June 1919). See Illustration XV, p. 249.

[1171] Walter Mühlhausen has argued, in line with Gerd Krumeich's view that a rational assessment of the peace terms was impossible, that Friedrich Ebert was far too influenced by public outrage to call for a rational, realistic assessment of the peace. The recognition that the majority of German politicians and journalists shared this emotional opposition to the peace does not mean, however, that this was the only possible reaction to the peace terms or a politically far-sighted one. Mühlhausen, *Friedrich Ebert*, p. 258; Krumeich, 'Versailles 1919' in Idem (ed.), *Versailles 1919*, p. 59.

[1172] 'Unsere Friedensparole' *Die Freiheit* 221 (9 May 1919); 'Frankfurt, 12. Mai' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 348 (12 May 1919); Erich Kuttner, 'Ablehnende Haltung des Kabinetts. Noch keine entgültige Entscheidung' *Vorwärts* 309 (19 June 1919). For biographical information on Kuttner see Appendix I, p. 330.

[1173] 'Frankfurt, 20. Mai' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 370 (20 May 1919).

similar manner, Erwin Barth in *Vorwärts* called for a calm and rational approach to the peace while justifying the passionate outrage in response to the peace terms.[1174] In failing to identify their own condemnation of the peace as an impetus for an irrational evaluation of its terms, *Vorwärts* and the *Frankfurter Zeitung* indicated that the republican peace strategy had rendered state-approved nationalism an acceptable means to forge national unity. Such rhetoric suggests that the revival of the nationalist spirit of 1914 with regard to the peace was no inadvertent by-product of the peace propaganda, but was consciously fuelled to signify, at home and abroad, that the government had the popular support for its decisions.

The strength of these convictions and the desperate adherence to such a *Burgfrieden*-mentality even among majority socialists was particularly evident during the SPD convention on 13 June 1919, where the designated speaker on foreign policy, Eduard Bernstein, severely criticised Germany's peace strategy.[1175] Although he assessed the peace terms as 'very severe and partly impossible', Bernstein acknowledged that Germany would have to regard nine-tenths of them as a necessity.[1176] In spite of the fact that he qualified his statement by decreasing the fraction of the draft that he considered indisputable and noted that his assessment accorded with Germany's counter-proposals, he was viciously attacked by a number of his party comrades. Remaining on unpopular topics, Bernstein subsequently appealed to his party to free itself 'from the code of honour of the bourgeoisie which believes that past mistakes could not be admitted' by honestly addressing the war guilt question to defuse hatred and mistrust against Germany.[1177] Among his party colleagues Bernstein promoted a reconciliatory peace strategy which took Germany's wartime conduct and its consequences in the Allied countries into account.[1178] With one exception, all responses to Bernstein's speech were deeply critical, ranging from allegations that he was unpatriotic to suggestions that his evaluation of the Allied peace draft would impede the peace delegation's task.[1179]

The vehemence with which SPD members reacted to Bernstein's speech demonstrated that at least the biggest government party did not merely follow the Foreign Ministry's lead, but actively promoted its aggressive strategy, as Bessel has argued, at cost of obscuring the truth of the war.[1180] Rational assessments of the peace draft in *Die Freiheit*, which mirrored Bernstein's arguments, remained similarly ineffective in

---

[1174] Erwin Barth, 'Besonnenheit!' *Vorwärts* 236 (9 May 1919). For a similar argument also see 'Frankfurt, 9. May' in *Frankfurter Zeitung* 341 (9 May 1919).
[1175] 'Auswärtige Politik auf dem Parteitag' *Vorwärts* 297 (13 June 1919). For biographical information on Eduard Bernstein see Appendix I, p. 323.
[1176] Ibid.
[1177] Ibid.
[1178] Although it was by all means a minority view in Germany, Bernstein's approach to the peace challenges Thomas Lorenz assumption that there were no voices in Germany who regarded the Treaty of Versailles as a justified response to Germany's wartime conduct. Lorenz, *'Die Weltgeschichte ist deas Weltgericht!'*, p. 412.
[1179] 'Auswärtige Politik auf dem Parteitag' *Vorwärts* 297 (13 June 1919).
[1180] Bessel, 'Why did the Weimar Republic collapse?' in Kershaw (ed.), *Weimar*, pp. 126f.

moderating the German approach to the Allies. In spite of the fact that the left-wing socialist newspaper also criticised that the peace terms severely contradicted Wilsonian principles, a number of articles explained that the harsh peace terms had to be understood as a causal consequence of Germany's wartime conduct.[1181] Rather than acknowledging the relation between German warfare and the Allied peace terms, SPD propaganda attempted to use the severity of the Allied demands to defend their own wartime conduct which both USPD and the Socialist International had criticised.[1182] In justifying their support for the German war effort as an attempt to spare the German population such terms, SPD propaganda suggested that the party could not pursue a peace strategy based on an admission of German misconduct without allowing a critical investigation of their own wartime record.[1183]

Recognising that national unity alone would not suffice to improve Germany's chances to amend the peace terms, the Foreign Ministry also directly appealed to the Allies to moderate their demands. In addition to a continuous string of notes, which attempted to prove that the Allied peace draft was irreconcilable with Wilson's Fourteen Points and served to strengthen the Allied unity through mere annoyance with Germany's defiance, the republic also prepared an alternative peace offer.[1184] Acknowledging that Germany needed to agree to some of the harsh terms to stand a chance of amending the peace treaty at all, the financial advisors to the peace delegation Carl Melchior and Max Warburg drew up a pragmatic counterproposal seeking Allied concessions.[1185] These German counter suggestions originally envisaged offering generous financial reparations and a more thorough disarmament than the Allies had demanded in return for territorial concessions.[1186] In the light of its previous propaganda, the government could not tolerate granting concessions on such a scale without losing face within Germany. The government consequently amended the counterproposals, which were intended as a generous gesture, into a mournful accusation.[1187] Ultimately, neither the mass of indignant notes nor the German counterproposal had the desired effect, as the Allies still refused to concede negotiations or decisively amend their demands. Republican assessments of the German counterproposal largely lauded it as proof of Germany's willingness to endure immense sacrifice for the sake of peace and predicted that only greed, vanity or the desire for chaos

---

[1181] 'Der Friedensvertrag' *Die Freiheit* 218 (8 May 1919); 'Wir müssen unterschreiben' *Die Freiheit* 219 (8 May 1919); 'Sollen wir unterzeichnen?' *Die Freiheit* 233 (16 May 1919).
[1182] See chapter 3, pp. 122f.
[1183] 'Bern!' *Vorwärts* 47 (26 January 1919); Vorstand der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands, 'An die Sozialisten aller Länder' *Vorwärts* 237 (10 May 1919); Victor Schiff, 'Versteht ihr es jetzt?' *Vorwärts* 250 (17 May 1919).
[1184] Kolb, *Der Frieden*, pp. 76f; Krumeich, 'Versailles 1919' in Ibid, *Versailles 1919*, p. 61.
[1185] The notion that Germany would have to make significant sacrifices is stressed in 'Frankfurt, 9. Mai' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 341 (9 May 1919).
[1186] Schwabe, 'Germany's Peace Aims' in Boemeke, Feldman and Glaser (eds.), *Versailles. A Reassessment*, pp. 53-55; Krüger, *Versailles*, p. 35.
[1187] Krüger, *Versailles*, p. 39; Schwabe, *Wilson-Frieden*, p. 609.

could prevent the Allies from welcoming such a generous offer.[1188] In this manner, even Germany's watered-down attempt at offering co-operation was subordinated to the wartime stereotypes which republican peace propaganda had preserved.

TO SIGN OR TO REJECT

Evaluations of Germany's options in attempting to amend the peace terms played a comparatively minor role in the public debate following the publication of the Allied peace draft. While a number of articles still discussed whether Germany could achieve negotiations and whether these negotiations would be likely to improve its position, Germany's acceptance or rejection of the peace settlement was the most important issue in republican discourse.[1189] In spite of warnings to await the final peace terms before deciding upon Germany's ultimate strategy, the preliminary peace draft already provoked a heated debate whether or not Germany should sign the peace.[1190] In accordance with the passionate republican response to the peace draft, the matter of accepting or rejecting it was perceived as a decision affecting the survival the German nation.[1191]

The presentation of Germany's ultimate response to the peace terms in such apocalyptic terms - which represented the corollary of excessive previous expectations - did not moderate the ensuing debate. This is particularly evident in a *Vorwärts* article, which compared Germany's choices to the options of burning to death in a blazing high-rise or jumping into certain death from its 30th floor.[1192] Although the same article appealed for a calm and rational debate of the matter when all information was available, it precluded the selfsame appeal by outlining very bleak preconceptions of Germany's options. Such desolate, yet rather vague and speculative estimations did not only characterise one particular side of the debate, but defined the general tone of the entire dispute. All political parties, including the otherwise uncooperative USPD, were critical of

---

[1188] 'Nicht neuen Krieg! Ehrlichen Frieden!' *Vorwärts* 260 (22 May 1919); 'Frankfurt, 26. Mai' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 386 (26 May 1919); 'Die deutschen Gegenvorschläge' *Vorwärts* 270 (28 May 1919); 'Das deutsche Opfer' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 393 (29 May 1919); Hellmut von Gerlach, 'Götzendämmerung' *Die Welt am Montag* (2 June 1919).

[1189] For articles discussing the possibility of negotiations see, for example Erich Kuttner, 'Was sollen wir tun?' *Vorwärts* 234 (8 May 1919); 'Fortgang und Aussichten' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 358 (16 May 1919); 'Der einzige Weg' *Vorwärts* 267 (26 May 1919).

[1190] See for example 'Frankfurt, 8. Mai' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 338 (8 May 1919); 'Frankfurt, 20. Mai' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 370 (20 May 1919); 'Sollen wir unterzeichnen' *Die Freiheit* 233 (16 May 1919); 'Unterzeichnen oder nicht unterzeichnen' *Die Freiheit* 240 (20 May 1919); Erwin Barth, 'Besonnenheit' *Vorwärts* 236 (9 May 1919); 'Verbrennen oder aus dem Fenster springen?' *Vorwärts* 237 (10 May 1919). Hellmuth von Gerlach already raised this question before the provisional draft had been published. See 'Annehmen oder Ablehnen?' *Die Welt am Montag* 17 (28 April 1919).

[1191] Also see 'Friede der Vernichtung' *Vorwärts* 233 (8 May 1919); 'Frankfurt, 10. May' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 344 (10 May 1919).

[1192] Friedrich Stampfer, 'Verbrennen oder aus dem Fenster springen' *Vorwärts* 237 (10 May 1919). Langhans also quotes this article without, however, contextualising it in the relevant political debate beyond the fact that it conveyed the perception that Germany's situation was hopeless. Langhans, 'Die Haltung der SPD zum Militär', p. 78.

the Allied peace draft and Germany's ability to fulfil its terms.[1193] The question whether or not it should be signed was therefore decided for purely tactical considerations and did not imply that Germany intended to regard them as set in stone. Even those publications which advocated that the treaty would have to be signed claimed to do so because they saw its acceptance as the only means to revise its terms.[1194]

Until the Allied ultimatum eventually forced Germany into making rather than discussing the decision whether or not to sign the treaty, SPD and liberal discourse constructed a number of arguments justifying a rejection of the peace terms. In line with previous peace propaganda, these considerations swayed between political reason and defiance. On the one hand, both *Vorwärts* and the *Frankfurter Zeitung* argued that the treaty could not be signed, because Germany's inability to fulfil its terms would be dishonest and would harm Germany's reputation.[1195] In continuing to portray the rejection of the draft as proof of Germany's dedication to justice and the Wilsonian vision, the two publications characterised Germany's defiant stance as a morally righteous one. In accepting Brockdorff-Rantzau's reasoning for rejecting the treaty, who argued that he would not sign a 'scrap of paper' which was not honoured by all signatories, *Vorwärts* chose a very unfortunate historical analogy.[1196] This phrase referred to a wartime statement which former Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg made to the British ambassador Sir Edward Goschen discussing Great Britain's entry into the war. In response to the English ultimatum demanding that Belgian neutrality would be honoured, Bethmann expressed his anger that Britain would go to war for a 'scrap of paper'.[1197] Although Brockdorff-Rantzau's revival of this phrase in the peace negotiations intended to suggest that Germany would not act so dishonourably again, his statement conveyed a clear threat that Germany would refuse to recognise the Treaty of Versailles. Reminiscent of the worst manifestation of Germany's wartime disregard for international law, such propaganda

---

[1193] Kolb, *Der Frieden*, p. 91; Mommsen, 'Der Vertrag von Versailles' in Krumeich (ed.), *Versailles 1919*, p. 351.

[1194] See for example 'Klarheit!' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 452 (21 June 1919); 'Die deutsche Schicksalsfrage' *Die Freiheit* 282 (18 June 1919).

[1195] 'Kundgebungen im Reich' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 346 (11 May 1919); 'Nationalversammlung zu Weimar' *Vorwärts* 186 (11 April 1919); Friedrich Stampfer, 'Die Suche nach dem Frieden' *Vorwärts* 214 (28 April 1919).

[1196] 'Brockdorff-Rantzau zur Frage der Unterzeichnung' *Vorwärts* 266 (26 May 1919); 'Das sollen wir ehrlich halten?' *Vorwärts* 320 (25 June 1919); Werner Peiser, 'Friedensgedanken am Tage des Protestes' *Vorwärts* 367 (21 July 1919); Friedrich Stampfer, 'Frieden von Volk zu Volk' *Vorwärts* 273 (30 May 1919). For biographical information on Peiser see Appendix I, p. 334.

[1197] Luigi Albertini, *The Origins of the War of 1914. Volume III: The Epilogue of the Crisis of July 1914 the Declarations of War and of Neutrality* (Oxford, 1967), pp. 495-497. Bethmann later justified this statement in a public interview. See 'By Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg. A Published Interview Explaining the "Scrap of Paper" Phrase' in Charles F. Horne, *Source Records of the Great War Volume I* (n.p., 1923), pp. 407-409. This phrase was later adopted as a common feature of anti-German propaganda and is closely linked to the perception that the war against Germany had been justified. See Erdmann, *Der Erste Weltkrieg,* p. 89. For a British recruitment poster which used Bethmann's phrase to call men to arms in defence of Belgian 'liberty' and British 'honour' see http://www.warmuseum.ca/cwm/exhibitions/guerre/photo-e.aspx?PageId=2.A.1.a&photo=3.D.4.a&f=%2Fcwm%2Fexhibitions%2Fguerre%2Feurope-before-e.aspx

reinforced the prevalent Allied view that Germany's ideological change was, in fact, only skin-deep.

On a domestic level this stance was motivated by a common recognition that signing such an unpopular peace settlement would bring severely negative political repercussions.[1198] Some republican publications warned that any government prepared to sign would inevitably have to suffer the consequences of this unpopular decision while the *Frankfurter Zeitung* noted right-wing threats to depose any government prepared to accept the Treaty of Versailles.[1199] Although this warning was particularly drastic for the Allies' sake, the SPD and the DDP were clearly concerned at being held responsible for having signed the peace. Having linked their legitimacy to govern on achieving a Wilsonian peace, they also had no other option than to promote a rejection of the harsh peace terms to prevent losing political credibility in Germany. The allegedly brave defiance against superior Allied forces implied to its domestic audience that the government remained true to its promises made in the course of the peace negotiations. The main intended recipient of such propaganda, however, was not supposed to be the German people but the Allied forces. This strategy's main intention lay in putting pressure on the Allies, which was evident in the fact that republican propaganda immediately amended its *rather death than dishonour* approach in response to the Allied ultimatum.[1200] The republican forces thus proved that it was not prepared to sacrifice the nation for an abstract ideal. In threatening to reject the treaty unless it was amended, republican discourse merely continued the strategy of trying to force the Allies into moderating their demands with the only means available to Germany. This desperate approach, which followed Ludendorff's example in promoting defiance until it was too late for a more conciliatory strategy, sent all the wrong signals to all the wrong places. Ultimately, its consequences confirmed contemporary criticism like that of Hellmut von Gerlach, who alleged that demands for rejecting the peace were a dangerous 'bluff', explaining that they poisoned the political atmosphere in Germany while failing to fool the Entente.[1201]

Within Germany, this stubborn republican defiance created unrealistic perceptions of Germany's options, thus preventing a popular recognition that Germany had no choice but to sign the treaty. This process, in turn, almost gave the government's final decision to

---

[1198] See 'Das Kabinett der Unterzeichnung' *Vorwärts* 314 (22 June 1919).

[1199] 'Frankfurt, 21. Mai' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 373 (21 May 1919); 'Der Ruf nach Gegenrevolution' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 424 (11 June 1919); Erwin Barth, 'Das Volk soll entscheiden! Die Vollmachten der deutschen Delegierten' *Vorwärts* 244 (14 May 1919); Erich Kuttner, 'Aussprechen, was ist!' *Vorwärts* 246 (15 May 1919); 'Der Schrei nach den Rächern' *Die Freiheit* 227 (13 May 1919).

[1200] The *Frankfurter Zeitung*, for example, had announced that Germany would reject a dishonourable peace in March 1919 and still toyed with rejection on 16 May. On 18 June, however, it expressed hope that the government would find the courage to sign. See 'Frankfurt, 3. März' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 167 (3 March 1919); 'Fortgang und Aussichten' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 358 (16 May 1919); 'Frankfurt, 18 Juni' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 443 (18 June 1919).

[1201] Hellmut von Gerlach, 'Sündenerbschaft und sündige Erben' *Die Welt am Montag* (24 March 1919); Idem, 'Fieberthermometer - 41 Grad!' *Die Welt am Montag* (19 May 1919).

sign the appearance of an 'unconditional surrender'.[1202] In giving way at the last minute, the republican peace strategy conveyed weakness rather than steadfast leadership and inconstancy rather than pragmatism. These impressions allowed Germany's right-wing parties, which were not forced to either implement their demands or bear the responsibility for their consequences, to portray their continued rejection of the peace as proof of their political reliability.[1203] While they had enthusiastically subscribed to the republican vilification of the Allies, identifying the Entente's conduct as 'rape', 'blackmail', 'enslavement' and 'destruction', right-wing propaganda was by no means prepared to uphold the alleged *Burgfrieden* beyond the aspects that suited them.[1204] In order to facilitate the signing the peace all opposition parties, including DVP and DNVP, made a solemn declaration acknowledging that the parties signing the peace were acting in Germany's best interest, which the government requested out of fear of political repercussions.[1205] In spite of this promise the DNVP made it part of their unofficial policy to exploit the devastating impact of the Treaty of Versailles.[1206] Internationally republican threats that Germany would reject the treaty had relatively little impact, because the Allies were determined to force Germany to sign.[1207] Rather than fearing a German rejection, the Allied leaders envisaged a march into Berlin as a response to Germany's rejection, while the French government planned to separate Germany's southern provinces from the nation.[1208]

These appeals for a rejection of the treaty remained rather vague on viable explanations why it would improve Germany's situation beyond the hope that the war-weariness of their soldiers would prevent the Allied forces from resuming warfare against Germany. Most extreme manifestations of this view even suggested that the Allies should be forced to take over Germany's government to enforce the peace, because the degradation of Germany to a colony would arouse more international opposition that Germany's implicit enslavement through the peace.[1209] Similarly, Friedrich Stampfer

---

[1202] Grupp, 'Vom Waffenstillstand zum Versailler Vertrag' in Bracher, Feldman and Glaser (eds.), *Die Weimarer Republik*, p. 301.

[1203] For example 'Deutschnationale Schimpforgie. Sie machen es mit dem Maul' *Vorwärts* 314 (22 June 1919).

[1204] BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, Reichsbund ehemaliger Kriegsgefangener: Reichsvereinigung ehemaliger Kriegsgefangener, *'Das Friedensdiktat' Was jeder Deutsche wissen muß* (Magdeburg, n.d.); BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933, DVP, Berlin, 1920: DVP, *'Vergessen'* (Berlin, 1920).

[1205] Krüger, *Versailles*, p. 46; Lorenz, *'Die Weltgeschichte ist das Weltgericht'*, p. 98.

[1206] '"Das Vaterland über die Partei". Alldeutsche Aasgeier' *Vorwärts* 263 (24 May 1919); 'Unlautere Agitation' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 385 (26 May 1919). Discussing the 'peace guilt question' as a parallel discussion of the war guilt question, Thomas Lorenz showed numerous poetic right-wing attempts to blame the republican government for the consequences of the treaty. Lorenz does not, however, include the relevant republican counter-arguments in his analysis. Lorenz, *"Die Weltgeschichte ist das Weltgericht"*, pp. 352-357.

[1207] Kolb, *Der Frieden*, p. 85.

[1208] Ibid; Jean-Jaques Becker, 'Frankreich und der gescheiterte Versuch das deutsche Reich zu zerstören' in Krumeich (ed.), *Versailles 1919*, pp. 66f.

[1209] 'Nicht neuen Krieg! Ehrlichen Frieden!' *Vorwärts* 260 (22 May 1919); Friedrich Stampfer, 'Fest bleiben!' *Vorwärts* 251 (17 May 1919).

argued that Germany needed to provoke a complete Allied occupation of Germany in order to resist it until the Allies recoiled from their own violence and the world admired Germany's steadfastness. Such views illustrated to what extent republican discourse still subscribed to the wartime habit of believing that the ends justified the means without consideration of the consequences.[1210] It was precisely the envisaged consequences of a rejection, however, which motivated both *Die Freiheit* and pacifist publications to advocate signing the peace. In the light of Germany's inability to resume warfare, it was suggested that the Allies could easily force Germany into submission by upholding the blockade and occupying essential industrial regions.[1211] *Die Freiheit* furthermore stressed Germany's desperate need for peace, suggesting that even a harsh peace settlement would at least provide a fresh start which Germany desperately needed.[1212]

It is striking that throughout the peace negotiations the main political conflict involved the main government parties and the USPD rather than the republic's right-wing opposition. In spite of the fact that *Vorwärts* and the *Frankfurter Zeitung* commented on a DNVP memorandum appealing to the DNVP leadership to exploit the peace politically to weaken the republican government, USPD propaganda remained the main target of the SPD and the liberal press.[1213] Friedrich Stampfer, for example, alleged that by advocating the view that the treaty needed to be signed the USPD was crawling before Entente capitalism, which he defined as counter-productive because Germany's inability to fulfil the terms would eventually weaken Allied opposition to the treaty.[1214] In a similar manner, another *Vorwärts* article accused *Die Freiheit* of continuing wartime propaganda by promoting an acceptance of the peace, while failing to inform its readers about the fatal consequences of this decision.[1215] Even after *Vorwärts* and the *Frankfurter Zeitung* had realised that their demanded rejection of the treaty was not a viable political option, they still criticised USPD and pacifist journalists for admitting that Germany had no other option than to sign. In need of a scapegoat for the republican failure to achieve a just peace, the first speech of the new Reich Chancellor Gustav Bauer after the acceptance of the treaty, for example, alleged that in giving away Germany's inability to oppose the treaty, the USPD had destroyed Germany's chances for better peace terms.[1216] In the same manner, Victor Schiff alleged that USPD propaganda during the peace negotiations had

---

[1210] Friedrich Stampfer, 'Die Stunde ist gekommen...' *Vorwärts* 238 (10 May 1919).
[1211] Hellmut von Gerlach, 'Annehmen oder Ablehnen?' *Die Welt am Montag* (28 April 1919); Ibid, 'Wenn ich Friedensdelegierter wäre' *Die Welt am Montag* (12 May 1919); Das Zentralkommittee der USPD, 'Die U.S.P.D. und der Friede' *Die Freiheit* 225 (12 May 1919).
[1212] 'Vor der Katastrophe' *Die Freiheit* 228 (13 May 1919).
[1213] '"Das Vaterland über die Partei". Alldeutsche Aasgeier' *Vorwärts* 263 (24 May 1919); 'Unlautere Agitation' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 385 (26 May 1919).
[1214] Friedrich Stampfer, 'Fest bleiben!' *Vorwärts* 251 (17 May 1919).
[1215] 'Gefährliche Illusionen. Professor Ballods Phantasien' *Vorwärts* 238 (10 May 1919).
[1216] 'Deutsche Nationalversammlung' *Vorwärts* 243 (23 June 1919). For biographical information on Gustav Bauer see Appendix I, pp. 322f.

weakened the efforts of the working class to amend the peace through united protest and thus 'stabbed [the German government] in the back'.[1217]

In retaliation for such attacks, *Die Freiheit* sarcastically commented on the desperate SPD attempts to backtrack from their demands for rejection, suggesting that their change of mind was an implicit admission that their aggressive peace strategy had failed. Like Germany's right, but for entirely different reasons, the USPD newspaper claimed that the peace had demonstrated the government's inability to govern. This dispute was additionally fuelled by the fact that the USPD had refused to join the government about to sign the treaty.[1218] While the SPD thus alleged that the USPD had been inconsistent and cowardly because it advocated signing while refusing to act upon their own appeals, the *Frankfurter Zeitung* suggested that the attempt to withdraw from the decision-making process 'in Germany's darkest hour' was unacceptable.[1219] In spite of the fact that the entire republican discourse had warned the Entente that harsh peace terms would only strengthen Germany's nationalist forces, this recognition was, yet again, lost in Germany's internal political power struggle.

In defining the international political climate as detrimental for genuine reconciliation, Klaus Schwabe has claimed that even a different German approach to the peace would not have improved the Allied peace terms significantly.[1220] This study's exclusive focus on German sources does not allow substantiated speculations whether or not Germany would have been granted more moderate conditions through a less aggressive stance towards its former enemies. It can be established with certainty, however, that irrespective of its influence on the peace negotiations, the republican peace strategy strongly undermined the political credibility of the new state within Germany. Although consistent in its illusionary nature – evident as much in revolutionary visions of instant reconciliation as in the widespread belief that Germany was in a position to reject the Allied treaty – republican peace propaganda conveyed an entirely contradictory set of values. In merging revolutionary ideals with remnants and methods of Germany's wartime ideology, republican propaganda obstructed any political discourse distinguishing and legitimising a particular republican identity. In prohibiting any constructive examination of Germany's wartime politics out of fear of Allied repercussions, mainstream republican discourse furthermore precluded the new state from neutralising its internal political enemies. In rejecting acknowledgement of the war as the cause for the Treaty of Versailles, the republican peace strategy thus has to be seen as a discontinuation of the revolutionary

---

[1217] Victor Schiff, 'Der Geist von Versailles' *Vorwärts* 279 (2 June 1919).
[1218] 'Friede und Nationalversammlung' *Die Freiheit* 227 (13 May 1919); 'Der Schrei nach den Rächern' *Die Freiheit* 227 (13 May 1919).
[1219] 'Frankfurt, 13. May' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 351 (13 May 1919).
[1220] Schwabe, German Peace Aims' in Boemeke, Feldman and Glaser (eds.) *Versailles. A reassessment*, pp. 66f.

legitimation narrative, which defined the republic in opposition to wartime values and experiences.

The main failure of the official discourse with regard to the peace lay in its unquestioned acceptance of unsubstantiated assumptions. By preventing the German population from assessing either the nature of the future peace or Germany's scope of action realistically, republican misconceptions of the future peace aroused unwarranted hopes and subsequently severe disappointment. These emotions, in turn, dramatised the peace negotiations as a matter of life or death for Germany, fuelling a national fatalism which inhibited rational debate about its most constructive response to the peace. As the new state had closely linked its political legitimation to a more positive interpretation of the peace, republican discourse was forced to identify a target for the popular resentment which followed the publication of the Allied peace draft. The corresponding efforts to revive the wartime stereotype of an innocent German nation being threatened by an external enemy did not serve its intended purpose of consolidating the unity of the German nation, because it did not offer a positive identification with the new state. Rather, the mix of exaggerated expectations and a new form of atrocity propaganda aroused emotions for which the republic could not offer an outlet and which were ultimately turned against it. Although the content of republican peace propaganda cannot be regarded as a continuation of imperial policy, its illusionary nature has to be seen as a continuation of wartime propaganda.

The devastating political impact of the republican peace strategy on Germany's political culture was partly due to the fact that a large fraction of republican propaganda did not reach its intended audience. Particularly those articles threatening that Germany would reject any peace settlement not fully in accord with Wilson's Fourteen Points could only improve Germany's position if they scared the Allies into granting concessions. While not making a great impression on the terms of the treaty, this dogma became so synonymous with the popular vision of the peace in Germany that the government was forced to uphold it to pacify public opinion in Germany. In promoting an aggressive foreign policy which it was ultimately unable to maintain, republican discourse obstructed recognition that the allegedly renegade decision to sign the treaty had, in fact, been the only sensible option. The republican peace strategy, even more so than the actual peace terms, thus undermined republican legitimacy to govern and sanctioned a remobilisation of Germany's political discourse.

Illustration XII: Die Dampfwalze des Westens [1221]
[The Steamroller of the West]



[What the peace of justice, reconciliation and understanding really looks like]

[1221] 'Die Dampfwalze des Westens', *Der wahre Jacob* 847 (3 January 1919).

Illustration XIII: Michels Martyrium. Vor den Friedensverhandlungen[1222]
[Michel's martyrdom before the peace negotiations]



[Clemenceau: We should be finish with the offender Michel before Wilson disturbs us]

[1222] 'Michels Martyrium. Vor den Friedensverhandlungen' *Der wahre Jacob* 850 (14 February 1919).

Illustration XIV: Frankreich und Deutschland[1223]
[Germany and France]

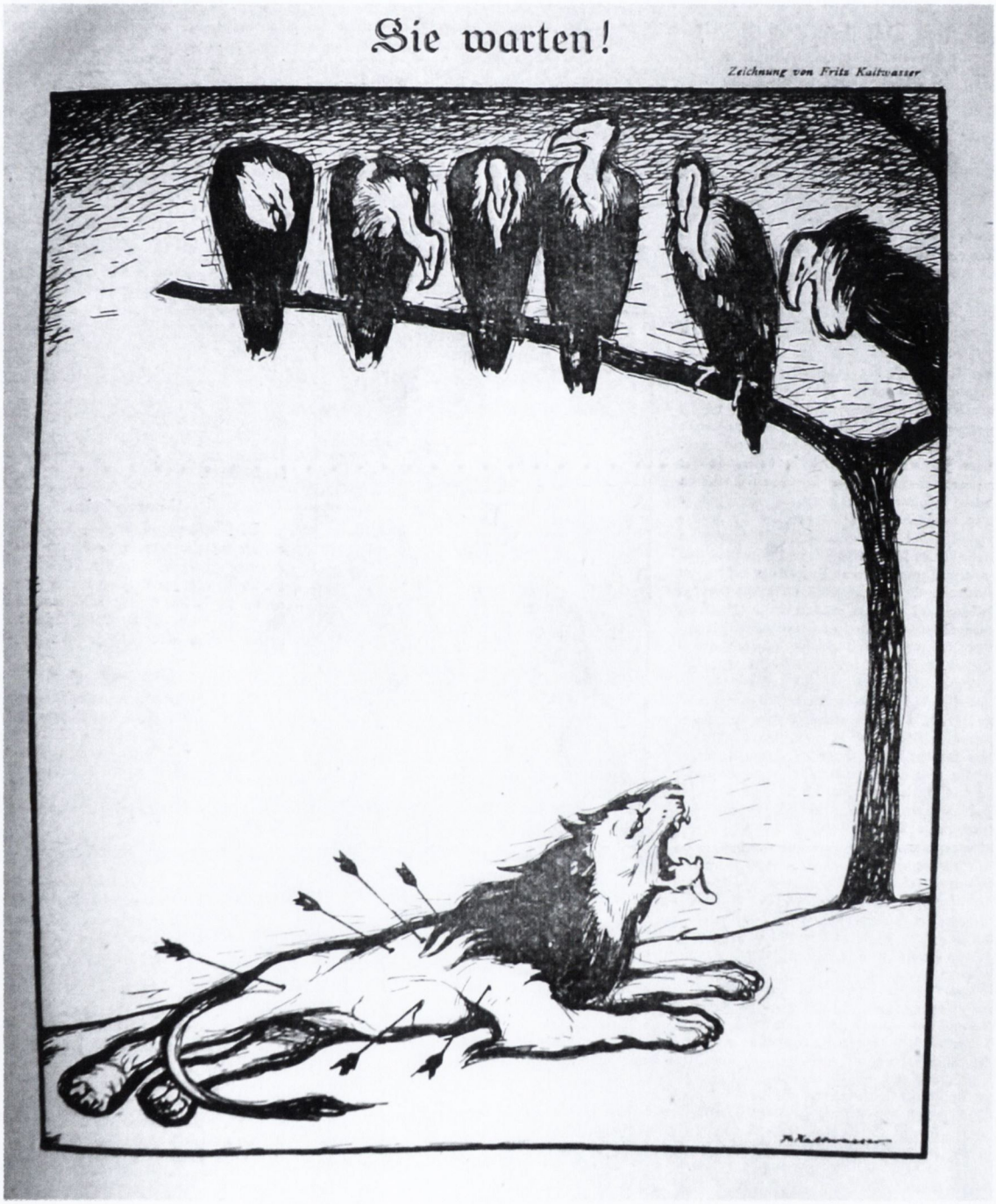


[Look, you have wreaked havoc like the Vandals here. Inhumanely you have made a mess out of poor France! That can be repaired with hard work, yet the consequences of the hunger-blockade cannot be reversed!]

[1223] 'Deutschland und Frankreich' *Der wahre Jacob* 872 (2 January 1920).

Illustration XV: Sie warten [1224]

[They are waiting]



[1224] Fritz Kaltwasser, 'Sie warten' *Ulk* (6 June 1919).

CHAPTER 6: DECLARING WAR ON WEIMAR

German propaganda's bleak depiction of the consequences of implementing the Allied peace terms shaped the political climate in the aftermath of the treaty's enforced acceptance. The government's decision to sign the harsh peace terms deflated the unrealistic hopes raised by the revolution and by Germany's vision of a just peace, thus undermining the widespread toleration of the new state. The treaty's acceptance was a useful catalyst for reactionary opposition to the republic, for it allowed right-wing propaganda to blame the republican government for this unpopular foreign policy decision. This strategy was exemplified in the wartime memoirs of former Quartermaster-General Erich Ludendorff, who remained active amongst the most radical of Germany's anti-democratic right-wingers after the war.[1225] He concluded his interpretation of the war by blaming the revolution alone for the nature of the peace settlement, which he defined as having 'ended the fate of the German nation [...] at present'.[1226] By implying that it was not military defeat but the government's failure to defend Germany's interests which was to blame for the country's humiliation at the hands of the Allies, reactionary forces aimed to obscure their own responsibility for the peace.

In emphasizing the republican government's inability to amend the treaty's terms despite severe German protests, the peace negotiations illustrated the limitations of the government's ability to determine Germany's political future. In addition, the enforced republican acceptance of the peace settlement revealed the full extent of the government's predicament in having to justify a severely unpopular political decision domestically, even as it was forced to satisfy extensive Allied demands. The destabilising political impact of Germany's decision to sign the peace was aggravated by the evident disparity between previous republican propaganda calling for nationalist defiance of the Allied demands, and the government's eventual admission that defiance was in fact impossible. The government's own propaganda regarding the peace destabilised its authority, as its apparent inability to fulfil its promises undermined its political credibility. Recognising the acceptance of the peace as a chance to attack the detested democracy at a time of weakness, reactionary forces seized the opportunity to weaken the republic's reputation and ultimately the republic itself.[1227]

Germany's republican parties were well aware of their decision's devastating political impact. The USPD's refusal to form a government prepared to sign the peace

---

[1225] For a brief summary of Ludendorff's post-war activities see 'Ludendorff, Erich' in Benz, Graml (eds.), *Biographisches Lexikon*, pp. 212f. Roger Chickering offers a more detailed analysis of Ludendorff's political development in 'Sore Loser. Ludendorff's Total War' in Chickering and Förster (eds.), *Shadows of Total War*, pp. 151-178.

[1226] Erich Ludendorff, *Meine Kriegserinnerungen 1914-1918* (Berlin, 1936), pp. 218f.

[1227] Referring to the Erzberger trial as proof of his argument, Heiner Möllers also suggests that Versailles set off a right-wing campaign of hatred against the republic because it showed the government's weakness. See '"Reichswehr schießt nicht auf Reichswehr" Legenden um den Kapp-Lüttwitz-Putsch vom März 1920' in *Militärgeschichte: Zeitschrift für historische Bildung* 3 (2001), p. 55.

terms, the DDP's rejection of the decision to sign, and the demand by parties favouring acceptance that the genuineness of their intentions be universally acknowledged all show how reluctant the democratic parties were to be associated with acceptance of the peace for fear that it would compromise them politically.[1228] USPD chairman Hugo Haase, for example, explicitly justified his party's refusal to accept responsibility for the treaty's acceptance by arguing that those responsible for Germany's collapse should endure the odium of having to make such an unpopular decision.[1229] The SPD and the Centre Party were, however, less secure in the knowledge that someone else would be prepared to endure the predictably damaging consequences.[1230] Eventually a minority government of the SPD and the Centre Party, acting with the support of the opposition USPD, decided to accept the Treaty of Versailles under severe protest and in spite of political reservations.[1231] As it became evident that Germany would be forced to accept, republican discourse tactically ceased to promote the view that any government accepting harsh peace terms would inevitably be discredited.[1232] The hesitation to sign and the corresponding political uncertainty in June 1919 nevertheless illustrated the government's consistent unease with its decision. The subsequent upsurge of right-wing allegations, however, challenged republican discourse to justify the government's change of mind and to clarify the question of responsibility for the treaty in order to defend the republic.[1233] Assessing the dynamism of this political debate and the cohesion of the republican propaganda effort, the final chapter of this thesis will analyse republican attempts to defend the government's political motivations for accepting the peace.

It is striking that despite the treaty's harsh economic and territorial demands, the alleged *Ehrenpunkte* (clauses of honour) also termed *Schmachparagraphen* (shame paragraphs) - clauses 227-231, relating to war guilt and the extradition of suspected war criminals - were crucial obstacles to forming a government willing to sign.[1234] Their

---

[1228] Kolb, *Frieden*, pp. 80-85; Winkler, *Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung*, pp. 221f.

[1229] 'Friede und Nationalversammlung' *Die Freiheit* 227 (13 May 1919); 'Sollen wir unterzeichnen?' *Die Freiheit* 233 (16 May 1919). Interestingly, when asked to form a government rejecting the treaty the DVP declined, also arguing that the Treaty of Versailles should be signed by those who were responsible for it. Mühlhausen, *Friedrich Ebert*, p. 279. For biographical information on Haase see Appendix I, p. 328.

[1230] Winkler, *Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung*, p. 221. Mühlhausen emphasizes that while refusing to let their delegates join a government that would eventually accept the peace, the DDP was convinced that a majority voting for an acceptance of the treaty could be found without their participation. See Mühlhausen, *Friedrich Ebert*, p. 271.

[1231] Kolb, *Frieden*, pp. 80-85; Schwengler, *Völkerrecht*, pp. 222-232.

[1232] Friedrich Stampfer, 'Das letzte Mittel' *Vorwärts* 153 (24 March 1919); 'Deutsche Nationalversammlung' *Vorwärts* 243 (13 May 1919); FES, 1919 Undatiert I: SPD, *Was bringt der Wilsonfriede den Arbeitern?* (Berlin, 1919). For an attempt to amend this perception see 'Das Kabinett der Unterzeichnung' *Vorwärts* 314 (22 June 1919). For biographical information on Stampfer see Appendix I, p. 337.

[1233] For examples of right-wing propaganda against the government see 'Das Ministerium der Schmach' *Deutsche Zeitung* 282 (22 June 1919); 'Belogen und betrogen – Gut geführt, treu beraten' *Deutsche Zeitung* 294 (28 June 1919); 'Die innere Politik der Woche' *Neue Preußische Zeitung* 283 (22 June 1919); 'Finis Germaniae' *Neue Preußische Zeitung* 286 (24 June 1919).

[1234] Kolb, *Frieden*, pp. 82-85; Horne and Kramer, *German Atrocities*, pp. 336f; Walter Schwengler, *Völkerrecht, Versailler Vertrag und Auslieferungsfrage* (Stuttgart, 1982), pp. 219-230. For contemporary commentary see 'Deutsche Nationalversammlung' *Vorwärts* 315 (23 June 1919); 'In letzter Stunde' *Die Freiheit*

acceptance was particularly controversial, as they epitomised the perception that the Treaty of Versailles was intended to humiliate and dishonour Germany. As the German response to the war guilt allegation has already been discussed in chapter 3, this chapter will focus on assessing the republican response to the Allied extradition clauses. This demand for the extradition of war criminals, including Wilhelm II, posed a multi-faceted set of problems for the republican government.[1235] Legally questionable, it fanned the prevalent outrage against the treaty, rendering even politically moderate circles more susceptible to defiant nationalist rhetoric.[1236] Unable to make the Allies modify their demands or to enforce extradition in the face of popular opposition, republican discourse walked a political tightrope in appeasing both sides, a strategy which only succeeded because the Allies eventually agreed to compromise. As the Dutch refusal to extradite Wilhelm II and the German government's inability to enforce extradition became evident, the Allies permitted the republic to prosecute alleged German war criminals in Germany.[1237] Before this compromise was achieved the extradition question developed into a political crisis which threatened the republican government on both a domestic and an international level.[1238] Its analysis within republican discourse consequently shows how the interdependence of allied demands and right-wing propaganda prevented the creation of a distinctively republican foreign policy with regard to the peace.

Although the German army was supposedly averse to political activity in its ranks, it played a decisive role in reactionary attempts to prevent the implementation of the peace.[1239] Both the Allied extradition demands and the reduction of the army to 100,000 men undermined its power.[1240] The military's repeated threat to obstruct the implementation of the peace consequently limited the government's authority to make political decisions for Germany. The army's attempts to influence political decisions were particularly crucial in shaping political discourse as it was the only one of the anti-

---

293 (24 June 1919); 'Der Lösung zu' *Die Freiheit* 290 (22 June 1919); Erich Kuttner, 'Nationalversammlung für Unterschreiben!' *Vorwärts* 315 (23 June 1919). For biographical information on Kuttner see Appendix I, p. 330.

[1235] 'Teil VII des Friedensvertrags von Versailles vom 28 Juni 1919', reprint in Schwengler, *Völkerrecht*, pp. 364-367.

[1236] Schwengler, *Völkerrecht*, pp. 281-283.

[1237] Ibid, pp. 300, 333, 338f, 342f.

[1238] Ibid, pp. 250-253, 311-317; Alan Kramer, 'Versailles, deutsche Kriegsverbrechen und das Auslieferungsbegehren der Alliierten 1919/20' in Wolfram Wette and Gerd R. Ueberschär, *Kriegsverbrechen im 20. Jahrhundert* (Darmstadt, 2001), p. 79; James F. Willis, *Prologue to Nuremberg. The politics and diplomacy of punishing war criminals of the First Word War* (Westport, 1982), pp. 114f. An internal army memo suggested that the Allies would vehemently enforce the extradition demands and that severe repressive measures would have to be expected. See 'Document 129: Meldung des Oberbefehlshabers der Reichswehr-Gruppe 2, Generalleutnant v.-Schoeler, an das Reichswehrministerium über die Auslieferung des Kaisers und anderer von der Entente verfolgter Offiziere' in Heinz Hürten (ed.), *Quellen zur Geschichte des Parlamentarismus und der politischen Parteien: Zwischen Revolution und Kapp-Putsch. Militär und Innenpolitik 1918-1920* (Düsseldorf, 1977), p. 271.

[1239] For examples of the army's attempts to interfere in the government's political decisions see Schwengler, *Völkerrecht*, pp. 234ff, 246-250; Francis L. Carsten, *Reichswehr und Politik 1918-1933* (Cologne, Berlin, 1966), pp. 51-56, 88f; Wette, *Noske*, pp. 466f; 473f, 477, 547-551.

[1240] William Mulligan, *The Creation of the Modern German Army. General Walther Reinhardt and the Weimar Republic, 1914-1930* (New York, Oxford, 2005), pp. 92f; Wette, *Noske*, pp. 447, 461f.

democratic factions which could enforce its demands by using large scale military violence against the republic. In justifying the vehement SPD opposition to the peace as a means of preventing 'an open break with the military and attendant coups less harmless than the Kapp putsch', Klaus Schwabe acknowledged the threat posed to the democratic state by the army.[1241] While accepting Schwabe's assessment of the army as a potential threat to the republic, this chapter aims to question his related assumption that the government's response to the peace saved the republic from attacks potentially more serious than the 'harmless' Kapp-Putsch.[1242]

The concluding section of this chapter will contextualise the problematic influence of the army on republican policy in the aftermath of the peace by outlining its position in the new state. Although the imperial army largely dissolved as a consequence of Germany's defeat, a significant number of officers drawn from it continued to serve in the army's administration or in volunteer forces recruited to safeguard Germany's borders and prevent internal radicalisation.[1243] Although nominally fighting for the republican government, the officer corps remained staunchly monarchist and antagonistic to democratic principles.[1244] The army thus represented the institution which most obviously linked the revolutionary republic to the 'old' system of military power politics after the monarchy's fall. This chapter will assess the extent to which republican discourse dealt with the army as part of republican identity by analysing republican press evaluations of the 'republican' army and of its officers' evident unwillingness to adapt to the republican idea. This analysis will focus particularly on the disparity between the army's vehement insistence on its aversion to politics and its decisive political role in the new state.

The relationship between Germany's civilian and military leadership was initially characterised by a shared interest in containing the revolution and restoring order.[1245] These shared goals laid the basis for co-operation despite ideological differences, although both sides were largely motivated to collaborate by self-interest. While the government realised that it needed to defend its claim to power against the radical left, the military leadership sought to secure the armed forces' structural integrity in the face of

---

[1241] Schwabe, 'Germany's Peace Aims' in Boemeke, Feldman and Glaser (eds.), *Versailles. A reassessment*, p. 67.

[1242] Ibid. Heiner Möllers comes to an even more dubious conclusion when arguing that Noske was the only loser of the Kapp-putsch, which suggests that in focusing on the military decisionmaking process Möllers completely failed to take the ideological dimension of the putsch into account. See '"Reichswehr schießt nicht auf Reichswehr"' in *Militärgeschichte*, p. 60. Walter Mühlhausen, on the other hand, recognised the Kapp putsch as a serious danger to the republic. Mühlhausen, *Friedrich Ebert*, p. 320.

[1243] James M. Diehl, *Paramilitary Politics in Weimar Germany* (Bloomington and London, 1977), p. 29; Mulligan, *General Walther Reinhardt*, p. 36; Ernst-Heinrich Schmidt, *Heimatheer und Revolution 1918. Die militärischen Gewalten im Heimatgebiet zwischen Oktoberreform und Novemberrevolution* (Stuttgart, 1981), p. 395.

[1244] Schmidt, *Heimatheer und Revolution*, pp. 366, 370, 384; Wette, *Noske*, pp. 322, 373f, 582-592; Johannes Erger, *Der Kapp-Lüttwitz Putsch. Ein Beitrag zur deutschen Innenpolitik 1919/1920* (Düsseldorf, 1967), pp. 48f.

[1245] Schmidt, *Heimatheer und Revolution*, pp. 385f, 395; Wette, *Noske*, pp. 264-267, 288; Mulligan, *General Walther Reinhardt*, pp. 36f.

disintegration.[1246] A number of leading figures in the army, such as Ludendorff's successor General Wilhelm Groener and the Prussian Minister of War General Walther Reinhardt, acknowledged the revolutionary government's authority and willingly co-operated with its representatives.[1247] The government's decision to sign the Treaty of Versailles despite strong protests from the army, however, called its loyalty to the republic into question.[1248] This chapter will analyse two similar cases of military disobedience after the peace settlement to assess how republican perceptions of the fragile relationship between the civilian and military authorities affected the legitimacy of the republican idea. The analysis illustrates the government's inability to respond constructively to the counter-revolutionary threat from within the army, by evaluating the republican response to German troops' open defiance of government orders to return from Latvia, and subsequently to the Kapp-Lüttwitz putsch of March 1920 which aimed to prevent the army being reduced by overthrowing the government. These two military offensives against the republic showed that such disobedience was by no means 'harmless' even when abortive, as they severely undermined the republic's legitimacy. In considering the effect of these military insurrections on republican discourse, this chapter suggests that the republican failure to reform the army allowed a reactionary military leadership to influence political decisions, preventing the eventual demobilisation of German society and undermining the credibility of republican ideals.

DEALING WITH GERMANY'S ACCEPTANCE OF THE PEACE

On 28 June 1918 the German Foreign Minister Hermann Müller (SPD) and the Minister of Communications Johannes Bell (Centre Party) signed the peace settlement in the Hall of Mirrors in Versailles.[1249] Although the republican press did not comment on the ceremony itself, its symbolic significance crucially undermined the republic's domestic legitimacy. The signing, held in the hall which had witnessed the proclamation of Wilhelm I as German Kaiser in the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian war, seemed to reverse the achievements of power and prosperity associated with the foundation of a unified German nation state.[1250] Even the *Frankfurter Zeitung* commented on 30 June that the republican ministers' signatures had approved the enormous burdens of the 'violent peace of Versailles', which would 'weigh down the German nation'.[1251] Although such commentary was not intended to hold the republic responsible, it showed how the republican government's role in the peace process inevitably associated the republic with the 'trauma'

[1246] Ibid.
[1247] Mulligan, *General Walther Reinhardt*, pp. 36, 57, 63; Wette, *Noske*, pp. 264f, 475-477.
[1248] Mulligan, *General Walther Reinhardt*, p. 86; Diehl, *Paramilitary Politics*, pp. 49f; Carsten, *Reichswehr und Politik*, pp. 52f; Schwengler, *Völkerrecht*, pp. 234-238.
[1249] Kolb, *Der Frieden*, pp. 8f. For biographical information on Müller see Appendix I, p. 333.
[1250] Ibid, pp. 7-10.
[1251] 'Frankfurt, 30. Juni' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 475 (30 June 1919).

of Versailles.[1252] While attempts to provide the republic with a legitimising myth in the aftermath of the revolution remained rather problematic, Versailles became synonymous with the republican failure to enforce the just peace on which the new state's claim to power was partly based.[1253] Thus the most noteworthy act associated with the democratic government questioned rather than legitimised the republic. The punitive character of the ceremony, also to some extent reflected in the treaty's terms, thus weakened the political forces most dedicated to compromise rather than continued belligerence.

The treaty's impact on the republic's legitimacy affected republican discourse regarding the peace. A day before the German delegation signed the Treaty of Versailles in Paris, the liberal *Berliner Tageblatt's* satirical supplement depicted the Allies as a barbarian farmer 'cultivating the world' with a seed growing into skulls.[1254] The cartoon's caption, which warned that 'no seed would grow quicker than that of the 'victor'', suggested that republican discourse continued to promote the fatalistic view of the peace terms which had defined political rhetoric during the peace negotiations.[1255] While Reich President Friedrich Ebert described the peace in its current form as a 'break between two wars' when he ratified it, SPD deputy Hermann Krätzig warned that it 'threatened to turn Europe into the epicentre for the explosion of new bloody wars' in the National Assembly.[1256] References to the catastrophic international consequences of the treaty generally became less prevalent once Germany had signed it. Although some articles still maintained that enforcing it would ruin the League of Nations, the German nation and eventually the Allies themselves, republican discourse from July 1919 onwards generally pursued a more optimistic quest for means to revise the harsh terms of the treaty.[1257]

Very few contributors to the publications analysed went as far as the pacifist novelist and journalist Armin T. Wegner, who expressed gratitude for the Allied victory in an expressionist *Vorwärts* article, arguing that enforced disarmament outweighed Germany's suffering.[1258] The author thus predicted that the suffering German nation would respond to Allied cruelty with love, compassion, and mercy in an eternal rejection of violence, revealing a somewhat limited grasp of German opinion.[1259] While other

---

[1252] Kolb, *Der Frieden*, p. 7.
[1253] For the symbolic significance of the Treaty of Versailles in anti-republican propaganda see Hagen Schulze, 'Versailles' in Schulze and François, *Deutsche Erinnerungsorte*, p. 225.
[1254] Willibald Krain, 'Weltbestellung' *Ulk* 25 (27 June 1919). See Illustration XVI, p. 296. For biographical information on Krain see Appendix I, pp. 329f.
[1255] See chapter 5, p. 241.
[1256] 'Ratifikation durch den Reichspräsidenten' *Vorwärts* 347 (10 July 1919); 'Die Nationalversammlung und die Ratifikation des Friedens' *Vorwärts* 347 (10 July 1919). The factory weaver Hermann Krätzig joined the SPD in 1890 and the socialist trade union in 1895, rising to become a representative on the party's executive council from 1918 to 1922. He was an active representative of the textile workers' association and edited its publication *Der Textilarbeiter*. See Schröder, *Sozialdemokratische Parlamentarier*, p. 564. For biographical information on Ebert see Appendix I, p. 324.
[1257] For example 'Frankfurt, 10 Januar' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 26 (10 January 1920); 'Mut zum Frieden!' *Vorwärts* 19 (11 January 1920); 'Revision der Friedensverträge' *Der wahre Jacob* 878 (26 March 1920).
[1258] Armin Theophil Wegner, 'Ihr habt uns besiegt – seid gesegnet Feinde!' *Vorwärts* 342 (7 July 1919).
[1259] Ibid.

republican publications were less enthusiastic in their interpretations of the treaty's consequences, they also encouraged a cautiously optimistic belief that the peace terms would ultimately and inevitably be revised. *Der wahre Jacob* predicted that the unbearable peace terms would be amended by negotiation once the Allies realised that they would make themselves sick with 'the poison they [had] served to' the Germans.[1260] The *Frankfurter Zeitung* likewise predicted that the peace of "victors' arrogance, greed, and will for destruction' would eventually self-destruct as the Allies recognised Germany's right to exist, while *Vorwärts* expressed its belief that Germany would escape 'the net of death'.[1261] Although republican discourse was initially rather vague about how revision would be achieved, it consensually appealed for communication rather than provocation and revenge. Immediately after Germany's acceptance of the treaty, *Vorwärts* and the *Frankfurter* Zeitung, for example, repeatedly appealed for rationality and justice as Germany's main instruments in the pursuit of a more conciliatory peace.[1262] *Vorwärts* and *Die Freiheit* also explicitly rejected the right-wing reaction to the peace, arguing that 'no chauvinist phrases, no threats, no curses and no whining' would affect the peace terms, appealing instead for work and belief in the revival of the Socialist International.[1263]

Such considerations show that the act of signing altered republican evaluations of the peace somewhat, although certain aspects of previous republican propaganda remained. On the one hand, republican discourse approached the peace more rationally, seeking to contain the defiant mood created by the nationalist frenzy which had followed publication of the Allies' draft terms. On the other hand, republican propaganda continued to sustain images of the peace as an unwarranted cruelty imposed on the German nation by a merciless enemy. These contradictory elements were particularly evident in an illustration in *Der wahre* Jacob, which depicted the peace as a voracious giant threatening to devour German and Austrian women and their starving children.[1264] The image's caption expressed hope, however, that their 'fate would change because their oppressors would be judged'.[1265] Such contradictory assessments arose naturally in republican

---

[1260] P. E., 'Des Friedens Ratifikation' *Der wahre Jacob* 874 (30 January 1920).

[1261] 'Frauenliga für Frieden und Freiheit' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 702 (21 September 1919); 'Mut zum Frieden' *Vorwärts* 19 (11 January 1920).

[1262] 'Der Augenblick der Unterzeichnung' *Vorwärts* 326 (28 June 1919); 'Frankfurt, 30. Juni' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 475 (30 June 1919); Eduard Bernstein, 'Die nächsten Aufgaben der Friedensfrage. Wie Verbesserungen zu erreichen sind' *Vorwärts* 339 (5 July 1919); 'Frankfurt, 10. Juli' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 503 (10 July 1919); 'Aufruf der deutschen Friedensgesellschaft' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 573 (5 August 1919); 'Frankfurt, 11. September' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 676 (11 September 1919); 'Frauenliga für Frieden und Freiheit' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 702 (21 September 1919).

[1263] Quote from Dr. Werner Peiser, 'Friedensgedanken am Tag des Protestes' *Vorwärts* 367 (21 July 1919). For similar views see 'Nach der Unterzeichnung' *Die Freiheit* 304 (30 June 1919); Eduard Bernstein, 'Die nächsten Aufgaben der Friedensfrage. Wie Verbesserungen zu erreichen sind' *Vorwärts* 339 (5 July 1919); ‚Das Programm der Friedensregierung, *Vorwärts* 373 (24 July 1919); 'Mut zum Frieden!' *Vorwärts* 19 (11 January 1920). Interestingly, the *Frankfurter Zeitung* also expressed the need to revive the Socialist International through Germany's actions. See 'Frankfurt, 23. Juli' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 538 (23 July 1919). For biographical information on Bernstein and Peiser see Appendix I, pp. 323, 334.

[1264] 'Der Moloch', *Der wahre Jacob* 885 (2 July 1920). See Illustration XVII, p. 297.

[1265] Ibid.

discourse, as the government's decision to sign had made the terms of the treaty legally binding on Germany. Having previously advocated a rejection of the peace terms, the government needed to justify its change of mind to maintain its political credibility. Republican discourse therefore intended to appease public opinion to enable fulfilment by simultaneously blaming the Allies for the nature of the peace and portraying acceptance as the only path to revision. Two articles in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* and *Vorwärts* clearly show that this appeasement was a sensible political strategy. Commenting on the ratification of the peace on 10 January 1920, the liberal publication wondered whether the date could be defined as 'a day of peace' for

> [n]ever have a people living in our time celebrated a day which should have been a day of rejoicing or at least a day of liberation, with such grief and bitterness as we do today.[1266]

In suggesting that the Treaty of Versailles had disappointed all hopes invested in the peace, the *Frankfurter Zeitung* recognised that public opinion was not well-disposed towards the government's decision. *Vorwärts* conveyed a similar impression by commenting that history would ultimately 'value the work of the previous coalition government and particularly the German Social Democrats more than the [...] German people have done on 6 June', thus implying that the German population were 'ungrateful' for the party's sacrifice.[1267] The republican press sought to control the domestic impact of the treaty's signing, recognising that it had undermined popular support for republican parties.

An individual article in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* still viewed left-wing unrest as the most serious threat to relations with the Allies, even though it also believed in the possibility of a military coup against the republican government.[1268] Yet republican discourse more frequently expressed concern that the treaty's unpopular acceptance aided anti-democratic propaganda, thus signifying disillusionment with the republican parties.[1269] Republican discourse focused on counteracting this development by defusing reactionary attempts to exploit the tense political climate. *Vorwärts* had already suggested on 9 June that the right-wing parties would have done exactly the same as the republican government had they been in power, notwithstanding their calls for a war of revenge in opposition to the treaty.[1270] This allegation was intended not only to discredit as impossible right-wing calls to oppose the peace by force, but also to identify right-wing propaganda as a deceptive ploy intended to harm the republican government. The article

---

[1266] 'Die deutsche Not' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 27 (11 January 1920).
[1267] 'Regierungsbildung und Auslandspolitik' *Vorwärts* 291 (9 June 1920).
[1268] 'Frankfurt, 27. Juni' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 468 (27 June 1920).
[1269] 'Die Rede Bauers' *Die Freiheit* 346 (23 July 1919); Hans Leuß, 'Das Fest der Geier' *Die Welt am Montag* 25 (23 June 1919); 'Konservative Kriegserklärung' *Vorwärts* 338 (5 July 1919), 'Neue Umtriebe' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 467 (27 June 1919). For biographical information on Leuß see Appendix I, p. 332.
[1270] 'Regierungsbildung und Auslandspolitik' *Vorwärts* 291 (9 June 1920).

sought to reinforce this idea by denouncing such conduct as unpatriotic and stressing that the SPD would have patriotically supported any decision necessary to protect the German nation had it not been in government.[1271] Some two weeks later another article in *Vorwärts* argued that the SPD had put fatherland before party in signing the peace, claiming that the party was therefore more patriotic than the DNVP, which was now risking unrest and civil war by implicitly calling the nation to arms against the new cabinet [1272] *Vorwärts* and the *Frankfurter Zeitung* sought to reinforce this idea by portraying right-wing agitation against the peace as nothing but a cheap attempt to exploit Germany's suffering for party political purposes.[1273]

Republican discourse also stressed that radical nationalist agitation obstructed Germany's chances of revision. Eduard Bernstein, for example, repeatedly argued that nationalist demagogy had prevented a rational assessment of the treaty, which was in turn necessary for a rational amendment of its terms.[1274] Such warnings were mirrored in other publications, albeit with a slightly different focus. While *Die Freiheit* argued that a return to militarism - inherent in right-wing calls for military opposition to the peace - would make revision more difficult, Heinrich Ströbel warned in *Die Weltbühne* that 'Teutonic fury against the humiliating and strangulating peace' would only 'arouse Allied chauvinism' once again.[1275] As a result *Vorwärts* tried to define nationalist agitation against the peace per se as hostile to the German nation, accusing the right of keeping up its agitation despite the threat it posed to the country's survival.[1276]

In order to defuse the political ammunition provided to anti-democratic propaganda by the peace, republican discourse sought to reconnect the settlement's nature with Germany's wartime conduct, a link severed in previous republican propaganda to justify calls for a moderate peace.[1277] Republican press and propaganda returned to the original foundation narrative of the revolution, which denounced any republican contribution to Germany's wartime policies, and portrayed the peace as a direct consequence of the right's wartime conduct. In response to public rejection of the peace and right-wing attempts to saddle the republican government with responsibility for

---

[1271] Ibid.

[1272] 'Das Kabinett der Unterzeichnung' *Vorwärts* 314 (22 June 1919).

[1273] See for example 'Ratifikation durch den Reichspräsidenten' *Vorwärts* 347 (10 July 1919); 'Frankfurt, 10 Juli' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 503 (10 July 1919).

[1274] 'Eduard Bernstein, 'Die nächsten Aufgaben in der Friedensfrage I. Grundsätzliches zu der polnischen Frage' *Vorwärts* 337 (4 July 1919); Ibid, 'Die nächsten Aufgaben in der Friedensfrage II, Wie Verbesserungen zu erreichen sind' *Vorwärts* 339 (5 July 1919); Ibid, 'Vernunftpolitik oder Deklamationspolitik?' *Vorwärts* 345 (9 July 1919).

[1275] 'Friede' *Die Freiheit* 19 (11 January 1920); Heinrich Ströbel, 'Der papierne Friede' *Die Weltbühne* 4 (22 January 1920), p. 98. Friedrich Wilhelm Foerster promoted a similar argument in *Die Freiheit* arguing that nationalist propaganda fanned French passions, undermining the rational realisation that France depended on Germany's economic survival and weakening English and American support for Germany. See Friedrich Wilhelm Foerster, 'Zur Aufklärung des hungernden deutschen Volkes' *Freiheit* 69 (5 March 1920). For biographical information on Foerster and Ströbel see Appendix I, pp. 325f, 337f.

[1276] 'Provokationen' *Vorwärts* 68 (6 February 1919).

[1277] See chapter 5, pp. 212f.

its terms, this allegation appeared in every republican publication analysed. *Die Freiheit*, for example, argued that the German people

> [...] would currently be forced to resign themselves to accepting this peace [of capitalist power politics]. No rattling of weapons, no declamations, no nationalist pathos could avert this fate, after the ruling classes of the old Germany had loaded such eternal blood guilt onto themselves, had used up Germany's entire physical and material resources, and had transformed a flourishing nation first into a large barracks and then into a pile of rubble. All attempts to blame the revolution for Germany's collapse and the violent peace by those who are really responsible – namely war mongers, war profiteers, and those who prolonged the war – will be in vain. The large majority of the German population, all those who have bled and suffered in the trenches or at the home front, and all those who did not only experience the collapse with their hearts but with clear senses, easily recognise the deception in such [...] reactionary demagogy, which seeks to exploit the misery of the German people for their party political purposes. The overwhelming masses of the German people are turning in disgust from the bankrupt of the past who seek to hide their guilt by loudly accusing those who rescued from this chaos what could be rescued.[1278]

The *Frankfurter Zeitung*, *Vorwärts*, *Ulk*, and *Die Freiheit* reinforced this idea arguing that Pan-Germans (depicted in *Ulk* as raving Viking warriors) had no right to attack the peace terms which arose from their own wartime annexationism.[1279] In a similar manner, Philipp Scheidemann concluded his evaluation of the issue by arguing that 'the Pan-Germans, and with them a large, innocent population, have harvested what they have sown: a destructive peace'.[1280]

An article published in *Vorwärts* in May 1919 shows how the struggle for political legitimacy between reactionaries and republicans was superimposed onto the question of responsibility for the peace. In response to the reactionary *Deutsche Zeitung's* demand for protection from allegations blaming Pan-German policies for Versailles, *Vorwärts* justified the government for not having 'lifted a finger [...] to whitewash the Pan-Germans from their blood-guilt'.[1281] The article consequently rejected the right-wing paper's narrative attempting to obscure Pan-German responsibility, concluding that no amount of agitation would 'blow a grain of sand off their sand hill of guilt'.[1282] In another article the SPD mouthpiece mocked the Pan-German League's claim to have done 'everything in its power to prevent the fatherland from descending into its current fate' as a spelling mistake, suggesting that the league really meant to say that it 'had done everything in its power' to bring about such an outcome.[1283] In this way, republican discourse sought to

---

[1278] 'Nach der Unterzeichnung' *Freiheit* 304 (30 June 1919).
[1279] Willibald Krain, 'Kusch!' *Ulk* (9 May 1919). See Illustration XVIII, p. 298; 'Das Selbstbestimmungsrecht der Völker' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 404 (3 June 1919); 'Der Friede der Alldeutschen. Wutgeheul rechts' *Vorwärts* 279 (2 June 1919); 'Auge um Auge, Zahn um Zahn' *Die Freiheit* 20 (12 January 1920), 'Der Freibrief an unsere Feinde' *Vorwärts* 255 (19 May 1920).
[1280] Philipp Scheidemann, 'Der Friede der Alldeutschen' *Vorwärts* 227 (1 June 1919). For biographical information on Scheidemann see Appendix I, p. 336.
[1281] 'Frech wie Oskar. Die Regierung soll die Alldeutschen schützen' *Vorwärts* 263 (24 May 1919).
[1282] Ibid.
[1283] 'Ein Schreibfehler'*Vorwärts* 324 (27 June 1919).

denounce any attempt to restore the right to its former position of power by whitewashing its conduct during the war.

Vorwärts and the *Frankfurter Zeitung* tried to coin a catchphrase summing up this allocation of blame by renaming the peace a 'Ludendorff' or 'Pan-German' peace.[1284] The increased popular support for right-wing parties evident in the election results of June 1920 shows, however, that these catchphrases (and the republican interpretation of the peace which they entailed), were less readily accepted than the concept of a humiliating settlement stigmatising the republican parties. The republican narrative of the peace may have had a limited impact despite its dissemination throughout republican discourse because it was not the only narrative present in republican publications. As shown in the previous chapter, *Vorwärts* blamed the USPD for Germany's failure to amend the peace, as its appeals for acceptance had prevented Allied concessions.[1285] Meanwhile pacifist and USPD interpretations held the government partly responsible for the punitive peace, arguing that the Allies had not revised it because of the government's failure to change.[1286] Once again party political considerations diluted a republican narrative intended to defend the republican government's legitimacy against right-wing challenges.

In spite of their assurances that the population would not believe continued attempts to hide right-wing responsibility for Germany's post-war situation, *Vorwärts* and the *Frankfurter Zeitung* nevertheless believed it necessary to overcome popular opposition by justifying their support for the treaty's acceptance and ratification. Having previously argued against accepting the Allied peace terms, republican discourse needed to explain their change of mind if they were to regain political credibility. The government therefore emphasized that it had only signed the treaty 'with the heaviest of hearts [and] under great pressure of most merciless violence with only one thought: to spare our defenceless people new wartime sacrifices and the torment of starvation'.[1287] Republican newspapers argued that rejecting the peace would only have exacerbated starvation in Germany, while ratification alone would lift the blockade and guarantee the return of German prisoners of war, consequently suggesting that it was vital to accept the sacrifices imposed by the treaty to ensure the nation's survival.[1288]

At the same time republican discourse shifted the public's focus from the acceptance of the treaty, which symbolised the government's inability to influence Allied

---

[1284] 'Frankfurt, 27. Juni' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 468 (27 June 1919); 'Der Friede der Alldeutschen. Wutgeheul rechts' *Vorwärts* 279 (2 June 1919); 'Das Kabinett der Unterzeichnung' *Vorwärts* 314 (22 June 1919).

[1285] See chapter 5, pp. 243f.

[1286] Heinrich Ströbel, 'Friedenssabotage' *Die Weltbühne* 28 (3 July 1919), p. 1; Friedrich Wilhelm Foerster, 'Zur Psychologie des Friedensschlusses' *Vorwärts* 392 (3 August 1919); Emil Julius Gumbel, 'Von der deutschen "Verstocktheit"' *Die Weltbühne* 36 (28 August 1919), p. 261. For biographical information on Gumbel see Appendix I, pp. 327f.

[1287] Quote from 'Ein Aufruf der Reichsregierung' *Vorwärts* 319 (25 June 1919). Also see 'Frankfurt, 30. Juni' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 475 (30 June 1919).

[1288] 'Frankfurt, 27. Juni' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 468 (27 June 1919); 'Ratifizierung des Friedens' *Vorwärts* 346 (9 July 1919), 'Der letzte Akt' *Die Freiheit* 323 (10 July 1919); 'Frankfurt, 10. Januar' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 26 (10 January 1920); 'Für wen?' *Vorwärts* 23 (13 January 1920).

decisions, to its revision. Even as it argued that signing the treaty was necessary to break Germany's 'lethargy of defeat', within a few days of the signing the *Frankfurter Zeitung* was already predicting that Germany's acceptance of the current peace terms would 'not be the last word'.[1289] *Vorwärts* expressed a similar view when commenting on Germany's ratification of the treaty, arguing that

> objectively, the ratification, like the acceptance [of the treaty], only represents a submission to external pressure, not a genuine agreement with [...] [its] content. [...] Particularly after the conclusion of the peace settlement, the battle against this treaty needs to be taken up energetically, albeit – as we repeat in order to prevent attempts to misconstrue [this statement] in the enemy press - as a battle with mental and moral weapons and the support of the entire socialist international working class.[1290]

Such declarations of intent aimed to disperse the perception that the republican government was weak and thus unable to control Germany's fate. Discussions regarding the steps necessary to revise the treaty must thus be seen as a republican attempt to restore public trust in the government's ability to take charge of Germany's fate. This is particularly evident in the *Vorwärts* article quoted above, whose reference to the Socialist International implied that prospects for amending the peace terms depended on socialist participation in government.[1291]

FACING THE TERMS OF THE TREATY

All of the newspapers analysed recognised that the republican government must prove that Germany was committed to fulfilling its obligations if it was to reach an international position where negotiated revision was possible. This sentiment is inherent in Reich Chancellor Bauer's appeal that Germany's fate was in her own hands to fulfil the treaty and reconstruct Germany and in the *Frankfurter Zeitung's* claim that fulfilment and patience would eventually lead to a revision of the treaty.[1292] This argument had two separate political functions. On the one hand, it was aimed primarily at a domestic audience and was intended to revise previous arguments for rejecting the treaty. By emphasizing the need for fulfilment, the republican press sought to legitimise the government's efforts to implement the peace terms. The purpose of such discourse was particularly evident in a government appeal printed in *Vorwärts*, which emphasized that 'all efforts needed to be made to fulfil the treaty because it was the only means to gain concessions', warning that a failure to do so would evoke severe repercussions.[1293] Even

---

[1289] 'Frankfurt, 30. Juni' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 475 (30 June 1919).
[1290] 'Ratifizierung des Friedens' *Vorwärts* 346 (9 July 1919).
[1291] Ibid.
[1292] 'Die Rede Bauers' *Die Freiheit* 346 (23 July 1919); 'Ein Aufruf der Reichsregierung' 319 *Vorwärts* (25 June 1919); Friedrich Ebert, 'An das deutsche Volk' *Freiheit* 295 (25 June 1919); 'Unsere auswärtige Politik' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 540 (24 July 1919). For biographical information on Gustav Bauer see Appendix I, pp. 322f.
[1293] 'Ein Aufruf der Reichsregierung' *Vorwärts* 319 (25 June 1919).

former Reich Chancellor Philipp Scheidemann, who had rejected responsibility for the treaty's acceptance by resigning from his post, stressed that it must be fulfilled now that it had been signed.[1294] At the same time warnings that Germany might prove unable to fulfil all the Allied demands showed the population that the republican government was still most concerned with Germany's welfare.[1295]

Republican promises to fulfil the Allied peace terms 'to Germany's limit', as Foreign Minister Hermann Müller phrased it in an address of the new government, were simultaneously intended to appease their former enemies.[1296] Having thus proved to their own satisfaction the good will of the government, the republic's champions proceeded to declare that 'the world must understand that the ruthless implementation of this peace, under the conditions it has imposed and on the territory it has left Germany, will ruin the chance of survival for millions upon millions of Germans'.[1297] The whole republican press believed that Germany might, despite her best efforts, prove unable to fulfil the peace terms 'paragraph by paragraph' as Reich Chancellor Bauer had promised.[1298] Even *Die Freiheit* - the only mainstream newspaper which acknowledged that the harsh terms were to some extent justified as a consequence of German warfare – argued that the 'yoke of Versailles merely replaces the yoke of war', implying that it was similarly unbearable.[1299] The *Frankfurter Zeitung* mirrored this conviction, suggesting even more explicitly that the Allies had consciously imposed conditions which could not be fulfilled to justify renewed acts of violence.[1300] Such accusations were too close to the nationalist frenzy following the publication of the draft peace terms to stimulate a rational reassessment of the Treaty of Versailles or to achieve its significant revision.

This brief analysis of republican perceptions of the broad concept of fulfilment already illustrates the complex political challenges which the implementation of the peace settlement posed for the republic. In attempting to promote the treaty's fulfilment, republican discourse uncovered the full legacy of its previous rejection of the peace. On the one hand the governing forces had to show strength to limit the adverse effects of their unpopular decision to accept the treaty. On the other hand official propaganda had to

---

[1294] 'Scheidemann spricht in Kassel' *Vorwärts* 466 (12 September 1919).
[1295] 'Der Reichskanzler zum Frieden' *Vorwärts* 27 (15 January 1920); 'Die Deutsche Not' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 27 (11 January 1920); 'Die Notwendigkeiten des Augenblicks' *Die Freiheit* 26 (11 February 1920); 'Das Programm der Friedensregierung' *Vorwärts* 373 (24 July 1919); 'Unsere auswärtige Politik' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 540 (24 July 1919).
[1296] 'Das Programm der Friedensregierung' *Vorwärts* 373 (24 July 1919). Also see 'Hermann Müller für die Erfüllung des Friedens. Die Aufgaben unserer Außenpolitik' *Vorwärts* 344 (8 July 1919).
[1297] Quote from 'Die Deutsche Not' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 27 (11 January 1920); 'Ratifikation durch den Reichspräsidenten' *Vorwärts* 347 (10 July 1919).
[1298] Quote from 'Der Reichskanzler zum Frieden' *Vorwärts* 27 (15 January 1920); Also see 'Die Deutsche Not' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 27 (11 January 1920); 'Die Notwendigkeiten des Augenblicks' *Die Freiheit* 26 (11 February 1920); 'Das Programm der Friedensregierung' *Vorwärts* 373 (24 July 1919); 'Unsere auswärtige Politik' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 540 (24 July 1919); Heinrich Ströbel, 'Der papierene Friede' *Die Weltbühne* 4 (22 Jaunary 1920), p. 98.
[1299] 'Friede' *Die Freiheit* 19 (11 January 1920).
[1300] 'Frankfurt, 7. Februar' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 102 (7 February 1920).

avoid provoking the Allies in seeking a revision of the peace terms on the basis of reconciliation. Having previously promoted entirely unrealistic expectations regarding the peace, its acceptance without fundamental concessions forced the government to balance largely irreconcilable domestic and international demands and interests. Republican discourse assessing the extent of Germany's ability to fulfil the treaty offers a compelling insight into the divergent motivations which shaped the republican response to the peace. As a detailed analysis of the entire revision debate would exceed the parameters of this study, the following analysis will be confined to examining the extradition debate as a case study exemplifying the political difficulties which the republic faced in attempting to fulfil Allied conditions.

The Allied demands detailed in articles 227-230 of the treaty called for the extradition of Wilhelm II and of other individuals accused of violating 'the laws and customs of war' or of committing 'criminal acts' against Allied nationals, for trial by Allied courts.[1301] Implying – quite correctly – that Germany remained unwilling to punish the wartime excesses of her armed forces and former leadership despite the revolution, the extradition clauses questioned both its moral and its legal integrity.[1302] The republican debate regarding the legality of such demands and Germany's ability to enforce them provides a crucial insight into the extent of the republic's willingness to confront the nation's wartime legacy. As one might expect right-wing propaganda showed no such willingness, intrinsically rejecting any suggestion of German misconduct during the war. As a logical consequence, reactionary discourse depicted the Allied extradition demands as an unwarranted attack on Germany's former leadership, whose representatives 'should be honoured rather than extradited', and on the army which had heroically defended German soil.[1303] Right-wing propaganda categorically rejected the extradition demands as dishonourable, advocating a popular boycott of any official attempts to enforce them.[1304] The establishment of a secret organisation to help individual officers on the extradition lists disappear in the summer of 1919 showed the extent to which the army and Germany's

---

[1301] 'Teil VII des Friedensvertrags von Versailles vom 28 Juni 1919', reprint in Schwengler, *Völkerrecht*, pp. 364-367.

[1302] The extent to which the republican press perceived the extradition demands as a violation of German integrity is evident in *Vorwärts* articles, which compared the extradition question to Serbia's response to the Austrian ultimatum in 1914. Arguing that Germany had been even more conciliatory than Serbia in 1914 in agreeing to German war crimes trials under Allied supervision, they suggested that an Allied rejection of these concessions would be even more criminal than the Austrian rejection of the Serbian response. See 'Der Tag des Friedensschlusses' *Vorwärts* 316 (23 June 1919); 'Die Auslieferunsliste' *Vorwärts* 65 (5 February 1920).

[1303] Quote from BfZ, Flugblätter 1918-1933: Alldeutscher Verband, *Erklärung des Alldeutschen Verbandes* (Bamberg, 1919).

[1304] See for example 'Um des Deutschen Volkes Ehre' *Neue Preußische Zeitung* 65 (5 February 1920); 'Anzeichen der Schwäche?' *Neue Preußische Zeitung* 69 (7 February 1920); 'Die Auslieferung' *Deutsche Zeitung* 65 (5 February 1920); 'Die Auslieferung' *Deutsche Zeitung* 67 (6 February 1920). For the republican assessment of such right-wing views see 'Die Drahtzieher' *Die Freiheit* 24 (10 February 1920); 'Die Frage der Auslieferung' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 114 (12 February 1920); 'Frankfurt, 16. Januar' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 42 (16 January 1920); '"Verräterabsichten"' *Vorwärts* 71 (8 February 1920).

reactionary forces were prepared to sabotage the implementation of articles 227-30.[1305] A great wave of ostensibly popular opposition fanned by right-wing agitators thus formed the backdrop to republican responses.[1306]

In light of the republican perception that revision depended on fulfilment, some responses to the extradition demands were purely pragmatic. Commenting on the government's decision to sign the treaty with reservations regarding the war guilt clause and the Allied extradition demands on 22 June 1919 *Die Freiheit* observed that

> a government would act irresponsibly if it risked the failure of the treaty for two clause, and these two clauses in particular, although it is aware of the horrific consequences of such a rejection: to cause a new war to protect those responsible from being held accountable.[1307]

An earlier article in the USPD newspaper had already insisted that the government would be better advised to protest against clauses 'breaching Germany's self-determination or endangering her economic existence' rather than the *Ehrenpunkte*.[1308] Other prominent republicans followed suit once it was acknowledged that rejection of the treaty was impossible. Irrespective of their assessment of the clauses, Hellmut von Gerlach and Eduard Bernstein stressed that the extradition demands were part of the peace settlement which Germany had agreed to fulfil.[1309] In this context it is interesting to note that a government appeal in *Vorwärts* implied a similar approach, although it lacked an explicit commitment to carrying out articles 227-30. Emphasising that the treaty's fulfilment was the first priority to safeguard the peace, the appeal called for the army's support in spite of its justified opposition to the extradition clauses.[1310] The appeal emphasised the government's failed efforts to fight the clauses, thus implying that they would now have to be fulfilled.[1311] Yet the government's reluctance to spell this out more explicitly suggested that it was wary of the political reaction such an admission would evoke.[1312]

Such pragmatism did not suggest that those advocating enforcement of the extradition clauses regarded them as legally justified. Although Hellmut von Gerlach

---

[1305] Kramer, 'Der Umgang mit der Schuld' in Papenfuß and Schieder (eds.), *Deutsche Umbrüche*, pp. 86f; Schwengler, *Völkerrecht*, pp. 246-250.

[1306] While Lothar Wieland argues that the extradition demands caused a 'nationalist flood-wave' in Germany, Alan Kramer has shown that this popular opposition was not spontaneous but carefully orchestrated by the right and the Ministry of Defence. Lothar Wieland, *Belgien 1914. Die Frage des belgischen 'Franktireurkrieges' und die deutsche öffentliche Meinung von 1914-1936* (Frankfurt, Berne, New York, 1984), p. 100; Kramer, 'Der Umgang mit der Schuld' in Papenfuß and Schieder (eds.), *Deutsche Umbrüche*, p. 89; Horne and Kramer, *German atrocities*, p. 336.

[1307] 'Die Entscheidung gefallen' *Die Freiheit* 291 (23 June 1919).

[1308] 'Der Lösung zu' *Die Freiheit* 290 (22 Juni 1919).

[1309] Hellmut von Gerlach, 'Entente contra Kaiser' *Die Welt am Montag* 29 (21 July 1919); 'Zur Auslieferungsfrage' *Vorwärts* 18 (10 January 1920). For biographical information on Hellmut von Gerlach see Appendix I, p. 327.

[1310] Ein Aufruf der Reichsregierung' *Vorwärts* 319 (25 June 1919).

[1311] Ibid.

[1312] Whether or not, as Mühlhausen claims, the expressed commitment to fulfilling the extratition demands was just pretence to force the Allies into recognising Germany's inability to carry out their demands, this conciliatory approach signified a distinctive departure from the provocative peace propaganda. Mühlhausen, *Friedrich Ebert*, p. 312.

blamed Allied extradition demands on the republican failure to pursue war criminals convincingly, he also forcefully questioned their legal justification, arguing that those protesting against extradition were 'entirely right that it contradicts every sense of right and wrong to let the accuser judge the accused'.[1313] Von Gerlach thus advocated fair trials, conceding that the accused should be prosecuted by neutral courts if the Allies harboured understandable doubts about the reliability of German ones.[1314] The fact that *Vorwärts* promoted a similar view suggested that Lothar Wieland's claim that Hellmut von Gerlach's stance was an 'exception' thus needs to be challenged.[1315] Considering that according to the *Frankfurter Zeitung* even Ludendorff had conceded that American trials would be acceptable to prevent the extradition of suspects to the Allies, von Gerlach's suggestions appear by no means radical.[1316] The fact that the *Freikorps* regarded such a moderate call for justice as a declaration of war is therefore strikingly indicative of the political climate in Germany. When von Gerlach was invited to speak on extradition at a meeting of the *Bund Neues Vaterland*, soldiers and officers attacked the gathering, wounding him and a number of other participants.[1317] Such incidents show the vehemence with which members of the army in particular resisted the prosecution of war criminals and illustrate the political polarisation which Alan Kramer identifies as a consequence of the extradition debate.[1318]

Commenting on public responses to the extradition demand outside the realm of nationalist agitation, Alan Kramer notes the lack of 'published opinion' opposing the latter.[1319] He cites the prohibition of left-wing newspapers in January 1920 as a partial explanation before quoting KPD and USPD demands for the execution of Wilhelm II and Ludendorff as evidence of popular support for extradition. A detailed analysis of republican discourse on extradition suggests, however, that these assumptions must be clarified on two counts. Firstly, the following analysis will demonstrate that the republican response was more nuanced than merely advocating the acceptance or rejection of demands for extradition. Secondly, it will show that the lack of support for extradition was motivated by political reasoning rather than censorship or toleration of right-wing interpretations.

[1313] Hellmut von Gerlach, 'Entente contra Kaiser' *Die Welt am Montag* 29 (21 Juli 1919). Also see 'Wilhelms St. Helena' *Die Welt am Montag* 2 (12 January 1920). For further suggestions that the extradition clauses could have been prevented if Germany had voluntarily dealt with the war guilt question and put those responsible on trial see Heinrich Ströbel, 'Friedenssabotage' *Die Weltbühne* 28 (3 July 1919), p. 2; 'Friede', *Die Freiheit* 19 (11 January 1920).

[1314] Ibid.

[1315] 'Zur Auslieferungsfrage' *Vorwärts* 18 (10 January 1920).

[1316] 'Aus dem deutschnationalen Lager' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 138 (21 February 1920).

[1317] 'Nationalistische Methoden' *Die Freiheit* 45 (21 February 1920); 'Politische Banditen' *Vorwärts* 95 (21 February 1920).

[1318] Kramer, 'Der Umgang mit der Schuld' in Papenfuß and Schieder (eds.), *Deutsche Umbrüche*, p. 90

[1319] Ibid, pp. 89f. In similar manner, Wieland claims that the nationalist agitation regarding the extradition question was tolerated in an irresponsible manner. See Wieland, *Belgien 1914*, p. 100.

The press sources analysed contain only one explicit expression of support for extradition as a means to punish war criminals, in an interview with Hugo Haase published in *Die Freiheit* on 5 December 1918.[1320] An article published two days earlier had contradicted the right-wing assumption that the extradition of German nationals was disgraceful, arguing that 'it would be much more disgraceful if those who caused the ruin of the German nation were to go unpunished'.[1321] Although *Die Freiheit* subsequently printed 25 other articles commenting on issues relating to the extradition clauses, these isolated statements were the only evidence of voices welcoming the Allied demands. Like von Gerlach, Bernstein, and *Die Weltbühne*, *Die Freiheit* repeatedly warned against provoking a resumption of warfare by rejecting the Allied demands and vehemently criticised the government for failing to prosecute German war criminals.[1322] It consciously avoided expressing support for extradition demands after December 1918, however, maintaining instead that the USPD wished 'that the enemies had dropped this clause for the sake of international law and German domestic politics'.[1323] It must therefore be noted that demands for the prosecution of German war crimes, expressed even in *Vorwärts* and the *Frankfurter Zeitung* (albeit with less conviction), cannot necessarily be equated with support for the Allied extradition demands.[1324] Although some sections of society and politics certainly agreed with the extradition of war criminals, as Kramer argues, none of the republican parties chose to promote this controversial topic as public policy. In regarding USPD and KPD demands for the execution of Wilhelm and Ludendorff as evidence of popular support for extradition, Alan Kramer fails to differentiate between a general desire to punish those guilty of war crimes and support for extradition as a means of punishment.[1325]

Nevertheless, the opposition to extradition evident throughout the republican press did not imply republican toleration of right-wing agitation against the extradition clauses. All of the publications analysed quite explicitly condemned nationalist attempts to exploit the issue. Even the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, whose stance on extradition was closest to the aggressive rhetoric of the right, attacked right-wing irrationality on the issue. On the one hand the liberal publication claimed that extradition was 'solely intended to humiliate

---

[1320] 'Eine Unterredung mit Haase' *Die Freiheit* 38 (5 December 1918).

[1321] Although this statement cannot be regarded as expressing unqualified support for the extradition, because it merely implied that extradition was an acceptable punishment if no alternatives were available, it nevertheless represents the closest approximation to a USPD endorsement of the extradition apart from Haase's statement quoted above. See 'Was ist eine Schmach – und was ist keine' *Die Freiheit* 34 (3 December 1918).

[1322] See for example 'Die Entscheidung gefallen' *Die Freiheit* 291 (23 June 1919); 'Friede!' *Die Freiheit* 19 (11 January 1920); 'Unverstand und Wahnsinn' *Die Freiheit* 23 (9 February 1920); 'Vor einer neuen Katastrophe' *Die Freiheit* 578 (28 November 1919); Heinrich Ströbel, 'Friedensabotage' *Die Weltbühne* 28 (3 July 1919), p. 1.

[1323] 'Friede!' *Die Freiheit* 19 (11 January 1920)

[1324] For example 'Frankfurt, 15. Dezember' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 936 (15 December 1919); 'Provokationen' *Vorwärts* 68 (6 February 1920).

[1325] Kramer, 'Der Umgang mit der Schuld' in Papenfuß and Schieder (eds.), *Deutsche Umbrüche*, p. 90.

Germany', while accusing the Entente of failing to acknowledge its own atrocities.[1326] On the other hand, it maintained that 'an army of 5 million' could hardly 'get through the war without breaking the law', arguing that it would be unpatriotic to leave such crimes unpunished.[1327] Furthermore the publication reminded the DNVP that it had acknowledged the patriotic intentions of the treaty's signatories, suggesting that the party's exploitation of the extradition issue revealed its promises to be conscious deceptions.[1328] These examples show that even one of the more nationalist republican newspapers analysed explicitly condemned the right's demagogic exploitation of the extradition question.

While promoting a less confrontational stance towards the Allies, *Vorwärts* attacked right-wing threats to obstruct extradition even more vehemently. In the debate following German ratification of the treaty, the socialist newspaper clearly rejected an officer's attempt to reinterpret the extradition demands as an attack on Germany's honour.[1329] Instead, it suggested that those whose 'systematic demagogy before the war and wild annexationist uproar during the war' had forced the people to accept the peace were the only ones who were dishonoured.[1330] Although the article in question was responding to an individual allegation, such commentary nevertheless addressed a broader context, seeking to undermine reactionary attempts to unite the population against fulfilment by depicting the extradition clauses as an insinuation of 'collective guilt'.[1331] Even after the first preliminary Allied list of the accused had been published in the republican press in February 1920, *Vorwärts* continued to criticise the exploitation of the extradition clauses in right-wing propaganda.[1332] On 6 February the newspaper explicitly accused right-wing agitators of showing no concern for honour or justice, claiming that they only defended the accused because they sympathised with them

---

[1326] Die Entente and Wilhelm II.' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 71 (27 January 1919); 'Frankfurt, 16. Januar' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 42 (16 January 1920). For a similar definition of the extradition as French arbitrariness see 'Frankfurt, 7. Februar' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 102 (7 February 1920).

[1327] 'Frankfurt, 15. Dezember' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 936 (15 December 1919).

[1328] 'Die Auslieferungsfrage als Agitationsmittel' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 18 (8 January 1920).

[1329] 'Der Stern des Generalleutnants Keim' *Vorwärts* 353 (13 July 1919).

[1330] Ibid. Such press sources challenge Lothar Wieland's argument that the SPD generally subscribed to the widespread rejection of the extradition demands as a matter of German honour. See Wieland, *Belgien 1914*, p. 101.

[1331] Alan Kramer has described this right-wing approach in 'Der Umgang mit der Schuld' in Papenfuß and Schieder (eds.), *Deutsche Umbrüche*, p. 84.

[1332] Although Germany should have received the Allied extradition lists on 3 February 1920, the German representative responsible for transmitting them, Baron Kurt von Lersner, resigned when he was requested to pass them on to the German government. The initial press reports quoting the lists were based on unofficial copies distributed by Lersner which increased the confusion in Germany because the government could only respond adequately to the lists once it had received the official version. See: Horne and Kramer, *German atrocities*, pp. 341, 343f; 'Die Auslieferunsliste' *Vorwärts* 65 (5 February 1920); 'Die Regierung gegen Lersner. Dr. Maier reist nach Paris' *Vorwärts* 66 (5 February 1920). Tellingly, although Lersner was dismissed in response to his insubordination, he was later re-appointed to preside over the *Arbeitsausschuß Deutscher Verbände* which had been set up to create mass propaganda against German war guilt for the *Schuldreferat* of the Foreign Office. See Wieland, *Belgien 1914*, pp. 116f.

politically.[1333] Demonstrating the unpatriotic nature of such agitation, *Vorwärts* categorically rejected any solidarity with war criminals, reinforcing its commitment to hold them accountable for their crimes.[1334]

In the heated debate regarding the extradition question, article 227, which demanded the extradition of Germany's former monarch 'for a supreme offence against international morality and the sanctity of treaties' had less of an impact on Germany's political climate than the other clauses.[1335] As Wilhelm II had fled to Holland during the revolution, the German government had no influence over decisions regarding his extradition, which were thus not directly related to Germany's fulfilment of the Treaty of Versailles. Most of the newspapers analysed nevertheless suggested that his extradition was both counter-productive and legally questionable, for despite his many shortcomings he could not be held personally responsible for Germany's wartime conduct.[1336] *Vorwärts*, the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, and *Die Welt am Montag* argued in unison that extradition would revive his ruined reputation.[1337] *Vorwärts* and the *Frankfurter Zeitung* suggested that prosecution before an Allied court would inevitably turn Wilhelm into a right-wing martyr, and expressed relief when the Dutch refusal to extradite him settled the matter.[1338] This opposition to Wilhelm's extradition should not, however, be seen as a republican attempt to protect him from punishment. Given that Wilhelm featured as a prominent scapegoat in the republican foundation narrative, it should be understood rather as a move to prevent monarchists reinterpreting his cowardly flight as heroic martyrdom.[1339] One *Vorwärts* article even showed remarkable ingenuity in using the extradition demands to silence Germany's remaining monarchists. Commenting on demands that Wilhelm be allowed to return, it implied that the government would have to extradite him if he did.[1340] *Die Welt am Montag* followed a similar approach, suggesting that explicit German support for the Kaiser would only harm his interests.[1341]

Unlike article 227, which did not compel the republican government to take action within the parameters of the Treaty of Versailles, Allied pressure to extradite figures still resident in Germany was much more problematic. In spite of the republican government's

---

[1333] Provokationen' *Vorwärts* 68 (6 February 1920).
[1334] Ibid.
[1335] For the text of the extradition clauses see Department of State (ed.), *The Treaty of Versailles and After. Annotations of the Text of the Treaty* (Washington, 1947), pp. 371-380.
[1336] 'Die Entente und Wilhelm II.' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 71 (27 January 1919); 'Die Entente und Kaiser Wilhelm' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 149 (25 February 1919); Dr. Frosch, 'Die Preisgabe Wilhelms II.' *Die Welt am Montag* 26 (30 June 1919); 'Wilhelms St. Helena' *Die Welt am Montag* 2 (12 January 1920); 'Recht, nicht Rache' *Vorwärts* 43 (24 January 1920); Otto Landsberg, 'Die Auslieferungsfrage' *Vorwärts* 16 (9 January 1920). For biographical information on Dr. Frosch and Landsberg see Appendix I, pp. 326, 331.
[1337] Dr. Frosch, 'Die Preisgabe Wilhelms II.' *Die Welt am Montag* 26 (30 June 1919); 'Frankfurt, 24. Januar' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 64 (24 January 1920).
[1338] 'Recht, nicht Rache' *Vorwärts* 43 (24 January 1920); 'Frankfurt, 24. Januar' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 64 (24 January 1920).
[1339] See chapter 2, pp. 75-85.
[1340] 'Bund zur Auslieferung Wilhelms II. Sie wollen Wilhelm nach Deutschland haben' *Vorwärts* 343 (8 July 1919).
[1341] Dr. Frosch, 'Die Preisgabe Wilhelms II' *Die Welt am Montag* (30 June 1919).

initial commitment to enforcing the whole treaty, including the *Ehrenpunkte*, it was soon evident that this would evoke considerable resistance from right-wing parties and the army.[1342] While reactionary forces set up an organisation to hide accused war criminals, the army explicitly threatened to disobey the government's orders. Relations were tense between government and army in the aftermath of the treaty's acceptance, as the armed forces had demanded a rejection of the humiliating peace terms.[1343] Hindenburg's statement in a letter to General Foch that officers would accept 'a great deal of sacrifice' as a consequence of the treaty as long as their honour remained uncompromised, must be read as a threat, not a promise.[1344] Given that subsequent army statements showed that individual officers and the army as a whole were resolved in rejecting extradition, their promise to co-operate with the government obviously depended on the latter's acquiescence.[1345] Defence Minister Noske encouraged this view when he announced in an interview with the *Daily Mail* that 'he would not lift a finger' to aid the humiliating extradition of suspected war criminals.[1346] Arguing that 'experience has taught us [that] bullets are loose and that those attempting to enforce extradition would have to make their testament beforehand', Noske warned that anyone trying to enforce the clauses might lose not only their political credibility but their lives.[1347] He also warned that trying to implement extradition would inevitably bring down Germany's democratic government with no hope of a replacement.[1348] Although Noske may have dramatised the impossibility of extradition for an English public, his words were an obvious threat that the army would not tolerate a government which insisted on fulfilling the 'honour clauses'.[1349]

In order to reach a compromise solution which would take the wind out of the nationalist sails and satisfy Germany's former enemies, the government accepted legislation enabling the republic to prosecute war crimes committed by German citizens abroad in German courts.[1350] This solution, which the *Frankfurter Zeitung* depicted as proof that the 'fallen nation [...] had recovered from catastrophe and fully regained its confident sense of justice', was portrayed as evidence that it sincerely intended to punish war crimes and that extradition should thus be renounced.[1351] Accordingly, SPD deputy

---

[1342] Kolb, Frieden, p. 91; Schwengler, *Völkerrecht*, pp. 216-219; Carsten, pp. 47f.
[1343] Wette, *Noske*, pp. 466f, 473-477, 500f; Mulligan, *General Walther Reinhardt*, pp. 94-104.
[1344] 'Hindenburg an Foch' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 494 (7 July 1919); 'Auch Hindenburg bietet sich an. Ein offener Brief Hindenburgs an Foch' *Vorwärts* 341 (7 July 1919).
[1345] See for example 'Die Politik der Obersten Heeresleitung' *Die Freiheit* 298 (26 June 1919); 'Die geistigen Stützen des alten Systems Vorwärts 496 (28 September 1919); 'Eine Anmaßung' *Vorwärts* 77 (11 February 1920).
[1346] 'Noske zur Auslieferung' *Vorwärts* 67 (6 February 1920). For the historical background of this interview see Kramer, 'Versailles, deutsche Kriegsverbrechen und das Auslieferungsbegehren der Alliierten' in Wette and Ueberschär, *Kriegsverbrechen im 20. Jahrhundert*, pp. 79f. For biographical information on Noske see Appendix I, pp. 333f.
[1347] 'Noske zur Auslieferung' *Vorwärts* 67 (6 February 1920).
[1348] Ibid.
[1349] Kramer, 'Der Umgang mit der Schuld' in Papenfuß and Schieder (eds.), *Deutsche Umbrüche*, p. 88.
[1350] Schwengler, *Völkerrecht*, 342f; 'Die Verfolgung von Kriegsverbrechen' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 931 (13 December 1919).
[1351] 'Frankfurt, 15. Dezember' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 936 (15 December 1919).

Otto Landsberg suggested that the 'Entente was no longer obliged to insist on extradition for reasons of prestige' as the legislation had made such insistence redundant.[1352] The republican government had been forced to admit that it was powerless to fulfil the extradition clauses, leaving it reliant on Allied mercy to maintain internal stability. Commenting on this precarious situation, *Vorwärts* criticised the depiction of the accused as heroes or martyrs, arguing that they had plunged Germany into a very difficult political crisis and brought it to the brink of serious unrest.[1353] The fact that even *Die Freiheit* and *Die Weltbühne* conceded that the government was unable to fulfil articles 227-230 suggests that such claims were sincere and not merely a republican gamble to revise the treaty.[1354]

It can therefore be argued that republican opposition to Allied extradition demands was not merely a continuation of the irrational nationalism which had characterised debate on the draft peace terms. Rather (with exception of the *Frankfurter Zeitung* which repeatedly adopted nationalist sentiments) republican discourse regarding extradition and its genuine pursuit of a compromise solution remained largely rational and reconciliatory. Despite its eventual success in gaining Allied support for the holding of war crimes trials in Germany, republican discourse failed on two vital counts. Firstly, it focused almost exclusively on the extradition demands without assessing the allegations behind them in more detail. Although many articles briefly acknowledged that the German army had committed crimes worthy of punishment, very few referred in detail to the atrocities for which the Allies were demanding prosecution.[1355] In failing to inform people of the crimes committed in Germany's name, republican discourse ensured that the war crimes trials which took place in Leipzig in 1921 did not meet with an informed and critical public.[1356] Republican discourse thus contributed to the persistence of wartime propaganda by preventing a critical assessment of German methods of warfare. Secondly, republican discourse showed the government's evident weakness by admitting that it was unable to enforce the peace terms it had pledged to fulfil. The republic was unable to reap the rewards of revising the treaty because it seemed to have represented the country's reactionary forces in doing so. Furthermore, the failure of republican discourse to bring

---

[1352] Otto Landsberg, 'Die Auslieferungsfrage' *Vorwärts* 16 (9 January 1920).
[1353] 'Deutschland kann nicht ausliefern' *Vorwärts* 64 (4 February 1920).
[1354] 'Unverstand und Wahnsinn' *Die Freiheit* 23 (9 February 1920); Heinrich Ströbel, 'Friedensabotage' *Die Weltbühne* 28 (3 July 1919), p. 4.
[1355] Out of 53 articles mentioning both extradition and war crimes, only *Die Freiheit* published detailed accusations from the Allied extradition lists. See 'Die Anschuldigungen gegen deutsche Heerführer' *Die Freiheit* 31 (13 February 1920); 'Die Auslieferungsliste' *Die Freiheit* 30 (13 February 1920).
[1356] Demands for counter-allegations against Allied war crimes, the popularity of 'innocentist' German propaganda, and the press hostility towards the trials have to be seen as evidence for this failed acknowledgement of Germany's war crimes. See Willis, *Prelude to Nuremberg*, pp. 127f, 131.

the crimes themselves into the debate allowed the right to claim the credit for revising the treaty while criticising the government for holding trials at all.[1357]

THE ARMY – A CATALYST FOR COUNTER-REVOLUTION

The political discourse regarding extradition has already illustrated the role of the army in the republic's decision-making process. In order to assess how the army's interference in politics affected the republic's identity, the last section of this thesis will look at how republican discourse assessed the armed forces' transition from defeat and disintegration to a point where they could decisively influence republican policy-making. Perceptions in republican discourse of a future army suitable for the new state were notable for the lack of any coherent military policy. Republican journalists and politicians alike promoted diverse and completely irreconcilable concepts of a republican army, which reflected both idealistic vision and resigned acknowledgement of pragmatic necessity, and shifted according to the circumstances. The diversity of opinion, even within one newspaper, was particularly evident in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*. Stressing the need to maintain a German army on 6 January 1919, it envisaged a reformed force representing the 'spirit of the new age' just as the Wilhelmine army had embodied the 'violent character of Prussian militarism'.[1358] Yet the same article demanded the creation of voluntary *Freikorps* led by wartime officers to defend German territory in the East, thus calling for military continuity.[1359] Six weeks later, another article called for the *Freikorps'* abolition, arguing that they should be replaced by an entirely new army of short-term conscripts trained by excellent leaders.[1360] The liberal publication reversed this view again in late February, adopting Noske's demand for a disciplined army largely incorporating the *Freikorps* as conscripts were alleged to be unreliable.[1361]

Such contradictory views were also evident in other republican newspapers. One article in *Vorwärts*, for example, promoted short-term conscription and recreational military training combined with a large police force.[1362] Yet a number of subsequent articles defended Noske's army policy, accepting that it was politically necessary to use voluntary *Freikorps* despite the atrocities they had committed.[1363] While Lothar Persius demanded complete disarmament in *Die Weltbühne*, the columnist Rudolf Leonard (Olf) suggested that a volunteer force would represent the new state better than a conscript

---

[1357] Horne and Kramer, *German Atrocities*, pp. 345f; Kramer, 'Der Umgang mit der Schuld' in Papenfuß and Schieder (eds.) *Deutsche Umbrüche*, pp. 91f.
[1358] 'Frankfurt, 6. Januar' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 14 (6 January 1919).
[1359] Ibid.
[1360] 'Organisation des künftigen Volksheeres' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 126 (16 February 1919).
[1361] 'Frankfurt, 26. Februar' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 154 (26 February 1919).
[1362] Richard Gädke, 'Der Neuaufbau unserer Wehrmacht' *Vorwärts* 101 (24 February 1919).
[1363] For example '"Vorwärts", Regierung und Regierungstruppen' *Vorwärts* 142 (18 March 1919); Friedrich Stampfer, 'Zur Freiwilligenfrage' *Vorwärts* 178 (7 April 1919).

army.[1364] Only *Die Freiheit* remained consistent in its views regarding the armed forces' future, calling for an end to the imperial army, the dissolution of the *Freikorps* and the establishment of a *Volkswehr* (people's army).[1365] By prohibiting conscription and dictating the creation of a professional army of 100,000 men, the Treaty of Versailles put an end to these divergent approaches.[1366] The multiplicity of ideas regarding a future army published in the months immediately after the revolution suggests, however, that the republic had no coherent plans for a democratic military policy.[1367]

The provisional government's recognition that the imperial army was a power base for the old regime was evident in Philipp Scheidemann's attempt to secure the post of Minister of War for his party immediately after Max von Baden's resignation on 9 November 1918.[1368] The future Reich Chancellor, who wanted to show that a democratic victory had been won over those deemed responsible for 'Prussian militarism', recognised that it was ideologically necessary to state that republicans intended to control the army.[1369] Scheidemann's declaration of intent must also be regarded as a means to prevent political radicalisation, as the revolution had started with a mutiny in the armed forces.[1370] Scheüch, the position's wartime occupant, brushed aside Scheidemann's claim, however, foreshadowing tense relations between the civilian and the military leadership in years to come.[1371]

Having failed to establish a 'revolutionary law' overruling military orders, the provisional government consistently gave in to the military leadership's veto of republican demands for control over army affairs, secretly grateful that it could shift responsibility for the army's post-war dissolution.[1372] Caught between its lack of a 'clear, military policy' and the need to oversee a smooth demobilisation in accordance with the armistice terms, the provisional government opted to collaborate with the military leadership during demobilisation, thus sacrificing a thorough restructuring of the army.[1373] As is evident

---

[1364] Lothar Persius, 'Unsere Flotte gestern und morgen' *Die Weltbühne* 10 (27 February 1919), p. 22; Olf, 'Nach und vor der Revolution' *Die Weltbühne* 11 (6 March 1919), pp. 251f; Ibid, 'Mehr und minder Parlamentarisches' *Die Weltbühne* 14 (27 March 1919), p. 347. For biographical information on Rudolf Leonard and Persius see Appendix I, pp. 331f, 334.

[1365] 'Das Chaos im Heereswesen' *Die Freiheit* 59 (3 February 1919); 'Freiwillige vor' *Die Freiheit* 126 (16 March 1919), 'Gegen die Landplage' *Die Freiheit* 237 (8 May 1919).

[1366] For the full military provisions in the Treaty of Versailles see Department of State (ed.), *The Treaty of Versailles*, pp. 319-359; for the terms of the army reduction and the Allied regulations detailing the structure of Germany's post-war army see pp. 319-332.

[1367] Wohlfeil, *Reichswehr und Republik*, pp. 54, 56.

[1368] Ibid, p. 60; Schmidt, *Heimatheer und Revolution*, pp. 344f. For biographical information on Max von Baden see Appendix I, p. 322.

[1369] Schmidt, *Heimatheer und Revolution*, p. 345.

[1370] Ibid.

[1371] Ibid, pp. 345f.

[1372] Ibid, p. 346. This socialist reluctance to take a more active stance in controlling the army justified Ulrich Kluge's harsh allegation against the SPD leadership, that it regarded itself as an 'custodian of[...] power' rather than establishing assertive government. Kluge, *Soldatenräte*, p. 355.

[1373] Diehl, *Paramilitary Politics*, p. 25; Mühlhausen, *Friedrich Ebert*, p. 288. Interestingly, Guth argues that the government failed to recognise that the *Heeresgruppen* rather than the *OHL* were responsible for the demobilisation and thus upheld the power of the army leadership unnecessarily. Guth, *Der Loyalitätskonflikt das deutschen Offizierkorps*, pp. 45f. In line with the continued republican estimation

from Reich Chancellor Friedrich Ebert's agreement to co-operate with Ludendorff's successor General Wilhelm Groener, and from the declaration of mutual recognition between Scheüch and the provisional government, a common fear of radicalisation provided an initial basis for political compromise.[1374] Beyond this shared goal, the civilian and military authorities pursued different aims: while the government sought protection for the newly established state, the army leadership was mostly concerned with securing a position of power for its officers despite the military collapse.[1375]

These divergent interests were not mutually exclusive as long as the army was willing to co-operate and did not seriously obstruct relations between the civilian and military leadership in the immediate aftermath of the revolution.[1376] While the army appeared to co-operate loyally during the demobilisation, revolutionary security forces maintained domestic order, thus convincing the provisional government that an immediate army reform was not an essential priority.[1377] The provisional government showed its anxiety not to alienate serving troops in an official declaration published in *Vorwärts* on 14 November 1918, which announced that it would refrain from creating a revolutionary 'Red Guard' so as not to offend those under arms at present, who had vouched to defend the republic.[1378] Friedrich Ebert did not see the need to act upon his party's revolutionary promises to contain the influence of military elite until early December, when legislation providing for a voluntary Volkswehr was announced.[1379] The

---

of Hindenburg, however, it is plausible that the provisional government simply feared the disruption which the dissolution of the recognised army leadership would cause to the discipline of the troops.

[1374] Mulligan, *General Walther Reinhardt*, p. 36; Schmidt, *Heimatheer und Revolution*, pp. 348f, 385; Carsten, *Reichswehr*, pp. 20f; Mühlhausen, *Friedrich Ebert*, pp. 110f.

[1375] Wette, *Noske*, pp. 264f; Carsten, *Reichswehr*, p. 20; Mulligan, *General Walther Reinhardt*, p. 36. In his study investigating the role of the soldiers' councils, Ulrich Kluge concludes that in spite of diverging motivations the army and the government pursued 'extensively identical goals' in prioritising 'the return of the army, the stabilisation of domestic order, the creation of a parliamentary system and the fight against left-wing radicalism'. While correct in its basic tenor, Kluge overstates the fact by failing to note that the government did not share the army's desire to restore the army's political power position. See *Soldateräte und Revolution. Studien zur Militärpolitik in Deutschland 1918/1919* (Göttingen, 1975), p. 356.

[1376] Diehl, *Paramilitary Politics*, p. 49.

[1377] Wette, *Noske*, p. 268. Ekkehart P. Guth questions that the army's declarations of loyalty were genuine, arguing that the OHL planned to 'liquidate' the revolution during the soldiers' return by eliminating the revolutionary achievements, removing the USPD from government and providing Ebert with dictatorial power. Guth subsequently concludes that these plans failed because Prussian Minister of War Scheüch ceased to support them while the returning troops failed to co-operate because they sympathised with the revolutionary values and mainly desired to return home. Although Guth occasionally fails to back up his argument sufficiently, it can safely be assumed that the army's promise of co-operation was made on condition that the government did not interfere with the army's interests. See Guth, *Der Loyalitätskonflikt des deutschen Offizierskorps*, pp. 56-68.

[1378] 'Keine besondere Rote Garde' *Vorwärts* 314 (14 November 1918). Also see a more detailed summary of the debate arising from the issue in Langhans, 'Die Haltung der SPD zum Militär', pp. 31f. Lars Langhans' *Magister* thesis, which assesses the *Vorwärts'* stance towards the army covers the same timeframe and partly uses the same sources as this chapter. The predominant part of his analysis, however, particularly focuses on the SPD's evaluation of the army's role in the political unrest throughout 1919, which this assessment merely considers as relevant background to the assessment of the army's impact on the republic's legitimacy. His research furthermore seems to aim for providing a narrative of the *Vorwärts'* press coverage rather than an analysis of its content in its contemporary context.

[1379] Wette, *Noske*, pp. 268f.

military leadership deliberately ignored this legislation, which envisaged the creation of democratic volunteer formations authorised to elect their own leaders.[1380] These two republican attempts to take charge of military policy in the revolutionary period show that the army did not tolerate civilian interference in vital military matters. This fundamental obstacle to supreme civilian control over the army prevailed, despite the army leadership's theoretical subordination to the civilian government.[1381]

The decision to reform Germany's wartime armed forces was therefore motivated by a perceived threat to the government's authority from the radical left, rather than by recognition that the remainders of the imperial army posed a danger to the new state. In late December 1918 it became evident that the government's reliance on the old army had one major drawback, namely that the returning troops envisaged as a defence force for the republic failed to accept their designated role. While a significant number of officers refused to do their duty during the revolution despite Wilhelm II's appeal that they continue to serve their fatherland, returning troops proved equally unwilling to fight for the republic.[1382] The perceived need to create a republican defence force as a guard against the threat from the radical left made ruthless anti-Bolshevism rather than republicanism the prime consideration in shaping the army's ideology.[1383] The lack of a realistic revolutionary policy regarding the army hence forced the republic to respond to the exigencies of day-to-day politics and to adopt the existing structures, rather than creating a truly republican army.

The most heated debate regarding army reform in the aftermath of the revolution concerned the force's hierarchy, which was reflected in the powerful position of the officer corps. A refusal to obey officers' commands had helped to trigger the revolution, while the establishment of soldiers' councils signified the soldiers' desire for representation, implying that the army's traditional command structure was widely resented.[1384] In response to these developments, republican discourse sought to exploit disunity within the army and win soldiers to the republic by fostering a narrative of a corrupt and sadistic officer corps.[1385] This perception, evident throughout the republican press, did not, however, translate into a republican military policy. *Die Welt am Montag*, *Die Weltbühne*

[1380] Ibid, p. 269; Schmidt, *Heimatheer und Revolution*, p. 346, Mühlhausen, *Friedrich Ebert*, p. 130.
[1381] Mulligan, *General Walther Reinhardt*, pp. 57, 128.
[1382] On 23 December rebellious naval troops occupied the palace in Berlin and kidnapped the city commander Otto Wels to enforce demands for continued payment of their wages. When Friedrich Ebert ordered the army to disarm them, the troop's lack of enthusiasm for this task prevented a decisive government victory, thus forcing it into negotiations with the mutineers which appeared as a sign of weakness. Schmidt, *Heimatheer und Revolution*, pp. 352, 367; Carsten, *Reichswehr*, pp. 23f; Diehl, *Paramilitary Politics*, pp. 25f; Wette, *Noske*, pp. 284, 299; Mulligan, *General Walther Reinhard*, p. 40. For biographical information on Wels see Appendix I, p. 339.
[1383] For a summary of the fear Bolshevism expressed in *Vorwärts* see Langhans, 'Die Haltung der SPD zum Militär', pp. 22ff.
[1384] Schmidt, *Heimatheer und Revolution*, p. 42; Winkler, *Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung*, pp.28, 34, 36; Kluge, *Die deutsche Revolution*, pp. 138-141.
[1385] See chapters 1 and 3, pp. 56ff, 150ff.

and *Die Freiheit* explicitly welcomed measures proposed by soldiers' councils to limit officers' power, such as the abolition of badges signifying rank, the election of officers and the rescinding of the soldier's duty to salute superiors.[1386] In accordance with the provisional government's policy of co-operating with the military leadership, *Vorwärts* proved more reluctant to issue such radical demands. Concerned that a significant alteration of the military hierarchy would endanger demobilisation, the provisional government informed the OHL on 13 November 1918 of their decision that

> [t]he relationship between officer and soldier must be based on mutual trust. The soldier's voluntary subordination to the officer and the superior's comradely behaviour towards the soldier are preconditions for such relations. [...] The officer's superior position as such remains. Absolute obedience on duty is crucial to ensure the troops' successful return to the German homeland. Military discipline and order have to be upheld under any circumstances.[1387]

The socialist newspaper's willingness to print appeals against a thorough reform of the military hierarchy from both the army and the government suggests that it supported the perceived need to maintain discipline and uphold the officer corps' authority.[1388]

The provisional government had initially regarded the preservation of the military hierarchy sanctioned in the Ebert-Groener agreement as a temporary provision which would be revised in the new army regulations determined by the National Assembly.[1389] As the government perceived its own position to be increasingly threatened, however, the military leadership's warning that only troops led by experienced officers and subject to strict discipline would prove reliable exercised a strong influence on decisions regarding the creation of a republican army.[1390] Despite the revolutionary foundation narrative's negative stereotyping of officers, sporadic warnings about the prevalence of monarchism in the officer corps, and the central soldiers' council's assertion that officers' power must be curtailed, the National Assembly opted for continuity by passing a temporary *Reichswehr* law which largely upheld the traditional hierarchy in March 1919.[1391] The

---

[1386] Dr. Frosch, 'Die Anbetung des Rocks' *Die Welt am Montag* 48 (2 December 1918); Olf, 'Aufklärungen' *Die Weltbühne* 2 (9 January 1919), pp. 27f; 'Scheüch kritisiert' *Die Freiheit* 67 (21 December 1918); 'Der neue Militarismus' *Die Freiheit* 163 (5 April 1919).

[1387] 'Die Zurückführung in die deutsche Heimat' *Vorwärts* 313 (13 November 1919). For other *Vorwärts* articles reflecting the military leadership's view that the officers' command authority must not be undermined see 'Das Spiel mit dem weißen Schrecken' *Vorwärts* 23 (14 January 1919); 'Das Kriegsministerium zur Regelung der Kommandogewalt' *Vorwärts* 63 (4 February 1919); Richard Gädke, 'Der Neuaufbau unserer Wehrmacht' *Vorwärts* 101 (24 February 1919).

[1388] Lars Langhans pointed out, however, that the *Vorwärts* initially recognised the unpolarity of this view and attempted to cussion its impact by adding the proviso that the government's failure to implement army reforms was not binding for future reforms of the army hierarchy and did not restore the officers wartime position of power. See 'Die Haltung der SPD zum Militär, pp. 18f.

[1389] Wette, *Noske*, pp. 267f; Mühlhausen, *Friedrich Ebert*, p. 129.

[1390] Wette criticises the perception that Noske was forced to create military formations to defend the republic, arguing that the government exaggerated a non-existent Bolshevik threat. Irrespective of whether the perceived threat was imaginary or real, however, the government perceived the need for protection in a time of political unrest. Ibid, pp. 291-293, 322; Carsten, *Reichswehr und Politik*, p. 25.

[1391] Mulligan, *General Walther Reinhardt*, p. 60; Mühlhausen, *Friedrich Ebert*, pp. 140f. For republican discourse warning against reactionary officers see 'Offiziere provozieren weiter' *Die*

formation of voluntary *Freikorps* troops adhering to strict military discipline and the Minister of War's formulation of the army constitution consequently frustrated half hearted civilian attempts to genuinely reform the army.[1392]

Irrespective of whether or not the government consciously chose continuity or acted out of a perceived political necessity, its decision to restore rather than reform traditional military structures had far-reaching practical and ideological consequences for the republic's legitimacy. In November 1918 the republic's revolutionary foundation narrative had distanced itself from Prussian militarism and from the worst manifestations of an allegedly corrupted officer corps to channel and thus control the grievances of naval mutineers, who constituted the core of the revolutionary movement.[1393] The republic's subsequent reliance on military violence to settle domestic unrest and its dependence on the officer corps was therefore perceived as a breach of faith by USPD supporters, pacifists, and even majority socialists.[1394] Ironically, the SPD's decision to show its strength by using military force in response to political challenges undermined rather than strengthened its legitimacy, fuelling a cyclical repetition of provocation and violence which alienated even moderate forces to its left from the republic.[1395] *Die Freiheit* consequently exploited the government's unpopular decision to curtail soldiers' representation within

---

Freiheit 51 (12 December 1918); 'Was wollen die Offiziere' *Die Freiheit* 28 (26 January 1919); 'Provozierende Offiziere' *Vorwärts* 326 (27 November 1918); 'Zur Regelung der Kommandogewalt' *Vorwärts* 50 (28 January 1919). For the officers' negative role in republican propaganda see See chapters 1 and 3, pp. 56ff, 150ff.

[1392] To do justice to Minister of War General Reinhardt, who was largely responsible for the formulation of the army constitution, it has to be acknowledged that his approach was not purely restitutory. He rather attempted to merge traditional and revolutionary values by restoring the officers' power of command while authorising soldiers' representatives who were to be responsible for the soldiers' morale and were to act as a link between soldiers and officers. These concessions to the republic aroused massive opposition throughout the officer corps and they never achieved their potential of democratising the army because they were not sufficiently enforced. See Mulligan, *General Walther Reinhardt*, pp. 63-68; Wette, *Noske*, pp. 334, 360.

[1393] See chapter 1, p. 48f.

[1394] For example Ludwig Jurisch, 'Geist und Güte' *Die Weltbühne* 4 (23 January 1919), pp. 73-75; 'Die Militärkamarilla' *Die Freiheit* 148 (28 March 1919); Wette, *Noske*, pp. 379, 449-451. Also see Mühlhausen, *Friedrich Ebert*, p. 162.

[1395] Wolfram Wette, 'Noske-Ära: Die vertane Chance, mit dem preußisch-deutschen Militarismus zu brechen' in Rainer Butenschön and Eckart Spoo (eds.), *Wozu muß einer Bluthund sein? Der Mehrheitssozialdemokrat Gustav Noske und der deutsche Militarismus des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Heilbronn, 1997), p. 33; Wette, *Noske*, pp. 399-401.There is in fact, significant historiographical debate whether Ebert, Scheüch or the OHL was responsible for ordering the military attack on the *Volksmarinedivision*. While Wohlfeil argues that the *OHL* had already ordered the military attack on the rebellious troops before Ebert had authorised it, Kluge and Guth clearly blame Ebert for this order. Ekkehart P. Guth furthermore refers to antagonistic views whether Prussian Minister of War Scheüch was only ordered to free the kidnapped city commander Wels or dissolve the *Volksmarinedivision* by force. These controversies can not be discussed as part of this analysis. It is worth noting, however, that the question whether the army or the government initiated the spiral of political violence which plagued the republic merits further attention. See Wohlfeil, *Reichswehr und Republik*, pp. 54f; Kluge, *Soldatenräte*, 263; Guth, *Der Loyalitätskonflikt des deutschen Offizierskorps*, pp 92f.

the army and to use troops led by reactionary officers against workers in its efforts to secure grass roots support from these two groups.[1396]

The decision not to enforce fundamental reform of the army not only radicalised left-wing opposition to the republic, but affected civil-military relations. On the one hand by consciously avoiding conflict it allowed the provisional government to use the army as a defence against left-wing unrest. On the other hand, this conduct showed the army that the government lacked the power to interfere in its internal affairs, encouraging reactionary officers to behave more provocatively towards the republic they were paid to defend. Up until the Allied peace terms were published most reactionary activity associated with imperial officers concerned internal army matters, with officers refusing to acknowledge the authority of soldiers' councils or tearing down red flags and badges.[1397] Several articles in the republican press also noted how officers including Hindenburg and *Freikorps* commander Colonel Wilhelm Reinhard were spreading monarchist propaganda, the latter by publicly celebrating the Kaiser's birthday.[1398] These incidents were highly indicative of anti-republican sentiment amongst the officer corps, yet as they mainly concerned the army's internal affairs they did not obstruct its co-operation with the government against the radical left.

Although every major republican newspaper expressed unease regarding the conduct of reactionary officers or demanded their removal, the fact that such incidents were of little political relevance at the time to some extent justified Noske's miscalculation that officers were less counter-revolutionary than was generally assumed.[1399] The fact that *Vorwärts* repeated Noske's assurance regarding the loyalty of the officer corps, while simultaneously reporting more incidents involving reactionary officers than its more radical rival *Die Freiheit*, illustrates the conflict within the paper and the party it represented.[1400] In prioritising the army's perceived indispensability in strengthening the government's claim to power, *Vorwärts* initially failed to follow its other observations to their logical conclusion. *Die Freiheit* had already done so in an article published on 19

[1396] For example 'Die Wiedergeburt des Militarismus' *Die Freiheit* 28 (16 January 1919); 'Innerer Präventivkrieg' *Die Freiheit* 127 (17 March 1919); 'Scheidemanns und Noskes Geschichtsfälschung' *Die Freiheit* 163 (3 May 1920).

[1397] For example 'Offiziere provozieren weiter' *Die Freiheit* 51 (12 December 1919); 'Gegen die renitenten Offiziere' *Die Freiheit* 61 (18 December 1918); 'Wieder ein General, der rote Abzeichen verbietet' *Vorwärts* 331 (2 December 1919); 'Rotkollerige Offiziere' *Vorwärts* 348 (19 December 1918).

[1398] 'Die Kaiser-Geburtstagsfeier im Hauptquartier' *Die Freiheit* 59 (3 February 1919); 'Das Diner der Königstreuen' *Die Freiheit* 86 (17 February 1919); 'Monarchie und Offizierskorps' *Vorwärts* 94 (20 February 1919). *Vorwärts* denounced the allegation against Reinhard, yet considering that he did not deny his monarchist sympathies it seems plausible. See Das erfundene Kaiserhoch' *Vorwärts* 91 (19 February 1919); 'Zum Fall Reinhard' *Vorwärts* 472 (15 September 1919).

[1399] For Noske's defence of the officer corps see 'Erklärung Noskes' *Frankfurter* Zeitung 74 (28 January 1919); 'Noske über die "Noskegarde"' *Vorwärts* 207 (24 April 1919). For expressions of anxiety about officers' reactionary conduct see 'Offiziere und Offiziere' *Vorwärts* 341a (12 December 1918); 'Die Hetze geht weiter' *Die Freiheit* 7 (4 January 1919); 'Bedenkliche Kundgebungen' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 224 (24 March 1919).

[1400] Of 19 articles dealing with officers' reactionary conduct prior to the publication of the peace, *Vorwärts* published 10, *Die Freiheit* 7 and *Die Frankfurter Zeitung* and *Die Welt am Montag* 1 each.

February 1919, which commented on an officer's complaint that Scheidemann's criticism of Ludendorff reflected his party's disregard for officers' wartime and post-war sacrifices.[1401] The article warned prophetically that the government would need to reinstate its power by controlling the officer class.[1402] In light of the army's position of power within the new state, this was the one way in which the government failed to assert its authority.

ARMY RESPONSES TO THE PEACE

The acceptance of the peace terms, which threatened both 'Germany's honour' and the army leadership's plans to restore the country's military might, provided the impetus for an army offensive against the democratic republic. The army generally shared the view expressed by the moderate DNVP deputy Siegfried von Kardorff in the Prussian parliament that '[n]o Prussian statesman must sign a peace settlement which would not allow us to maintain a strong army again'.[1403] Allied restrictions on the armed forces were the army leadership's biggest concern after the so-called 'clauses of honour', for they endangered its power base.[1404] The officer corps, the body most affected by a commitment to reduce the armed forces (an obligation which restricted their numbers to 4,000 in the army as a whole and 1,500 in the navy), was particularly concerned to defend its economic livelihood.[1405] While the army seriously debated opposing the peace by force, the government attached less importance to its military terms. Much to the dismay of the army leadership, it planned to accept them to lay the foundations for amending the Allies' territorial or financial demands.[1406] This decision shows the government did not view the army's goal of restoring Germany's military power as a priority in republican foreign policy, despite its own reliance on the armed forces.

Faced with the right-wing agitation which followed Germany's decision to sign the treaty, republican discourse acknowledged that (as *Vorwärts* put it) the acceptance of the peace was the 'signal for counter-revolution'.[1407] The republican press generally regarded an uprising amongst the troops defending Germany's eastern borders (a move advocated by General Hoffmann and secretly pursued by Prussian Minister of War, General Walther

---

[1401] 'Das Offizierskorps rebelliert' *Die Freiheit* 90 (19 February 1919).
[1402] Ibid.
[1403] Olf, 'Die Naiven' *Die Weltbühne* 15 (3 April 1919), pp. 369f.
[1404] Mulligan, *General Walther Reinhardt*, pp. 93-96; Wette, *Noske*, p. 544; Diehl, *Paramilitary Politics*, pp. 49-51.
[1405] Wette, *Noske*, p. 544f.
[1406] Mulligan, *General Walther Reinhardt*, pp. 93-97; Carsten, *Reichswehr und Politik*, pp. 44f.
[1407] Quote from 'Unterzeichnung und Gegenrevolution' *Vorwärts* 313 (21 June 1919). Also see 'Neue Umtriebe' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 467 (27 June 1919); 'Der Ruf nach der Gegenrevolution' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 424 (11 June 1919).

Reinhardt) as the most probable threat to the republic.[1408] Even the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, which was more reluctant to criticise the army than the other publications analysed, warned Noske that he must investigate the declaration contained in a letter from a *Reichswehr* brigade that soldiers who 'had enthusiastically served the Kaiser and our military leaders for 4 ½ years with obedience and loyalty' would not allow them to be dishonoured by a 'sentence of hate'.[1409] The liberal publication, furthermore, made a direct appeal to the army a few days after Germany's acceptance of the treaty, arguing that military resistance would be futile, counter-revolutionary in defying the government's decision and unpatriotic in leading to the inevitable destruction of Germany.[1410] This recognition that the republic might be in danger of an imminent military putsch was not, however, linked to a fundamental criticism of the army. Although the *Frankfurter Zeitung* demanded the investigation and dismissal of those threatening action, it lauded officers as a whole for holding the army together when a majority of officers finally issued a statement rejecting military action to prevent the implementation of the treaty.[1411]

Although the government implicitly acknowledged that the army might rebel against the government's decision when it appealed for it to remain loyal, it still refused to admit that active opposition was likely.[1412] In response to allegations in *Die Freiheit* that the General Staff was preparing for renewed war, the SPD organ rejected the possibility that anybody in their right mind could think of continuing warfare, noting on the day after the treaty's acceptance that most *Freikorps* leaders approved of the government's decision to sign.[1413] Unlike *Die Freiheit*, *Vorwärts* subsequently ignored a declaration by the *Freikorps* leaders in question published the next day, 'officially' denying their support for the acceptance of the peace terms.[1414] *Vorwärts'* reluctance to correct its inaccurate assessment may reflect more than a simple unwillingness to admit that it was wrong. It was more probably intended to inform the population that the government was in control of the army and not the other way round.

Although *Vorwärts* subsequently reported officers' radical agitation against the peace – such as Colonel von Hahnke's claim that it was unacceptable and his threat not to co-operate with any government willing to sign, made in lectures to the Reinhard brigade

---

[1408] 'Neue Umtriebe' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 467 (27 June 1919); 'Frankfurt, 27. Juni' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 468 (27 June 1919); 'Der frondierende General Hoffmann. Er erkennt den Friedensvertrag nicht an' *Vorwärts* 322 (26 June 1919); 'Sie drohen mit offener Auflehnung und Blutvergießen! Die Fronde beim A.O.K. Süd' *Vorwärts* 328 (30 June 1919); Mulligan, *General Walther Reinhardt*, pp. 95, 98-103.

[1409] 'Dem Minister Noske zur Beachtung' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 427 (12 June 1919).

[1410] 'Frankfurt, 27. Juni' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 468 (27 June 1919). For a similar appeal in *Vorwärts* see 'An die Reichswehr!' *Vorwärts* 318 (24 June 1919).

[1411] 'Frankfurt, 26. Juni' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 465 (26 June 1919).

[1412] 'Ein Aufruf der Reichsregierung' *Vorwärts* 319 (25 June 1919).

[1413] 'Der neue Krieg' *Die Freiheit* 230 (14 May 1919); 'Die Kriegshetze' *Die Freiheit* 232 (15 May 1919); 'Der "Plan zur Volkserhebung"' *Vorwärts* 246 (15 May 1919); 'Die Haltung der Truppen. Generäle für die Unterzeichnung' *Vorwärts* 314 (22 June 1919).

[1414] 'Die Auflehnung der Militärs' *Die Freiheit* 292 (23 June 1919).

– it also readily accepted officers' assurances that they were not motivated by a counter-revolutionary agenda.[1415] This tension between recognising that the army posed a potential threat to the republic and trying to avoid challenging its leadership illustrates the dilemma facing the SPD as it sought to reconcile its authority to govern with its reliance on the army. On the one hand, the largest party in power had to maintain its legitimacy by ensuring that the army complied with the government's decision. On the other hand it could not risk alienating the army through criticism, as it relied on the force to defend its claim to power against the left. In his analysis of the *Vorwärts'* attitudes towards the army, Lars Langhans came to a similar conclusion, arguing that although the publication noted a large number of officers' monarchist agitation, it refused to regard them as more than individual digressions.[1416] In line with Noske's position, the socialist party organ therefore failed to acknowledge anti-republican activity within the army as a structural problem of republican military policy. *Vorwärts'* reluctance to admit that the army might pose a serious threat to the republic, however, might also have intended to convince those involved that their plans were impractical, without damaging the republic's vital interests outlined above.

The USPD paper *Die Freiheit*, representative of political forces which were both out of government and at the receiving end of the government's use of military violence to quell unrest in the first half of 1919, had no such reservations about criticising the army.[1417] In hindsight, its allegations that the army leadership was considering a resumption of the war were at least partly accurate. *Reichswehr* commander Reinhardt and several Freikorps leaders clearly favoured resisting the peace by force.[1418] Ironically one move which *Die Freiheit* cited as proof that the army intended to resist the peace actually prevented a catastrophic military putsch against the peace.[1419] This was a survey to measure popular support for the resumption of war which the OHL conducted without government authority.[1420] The survey's outcome convinced the army leadership that the population did not want war and in late June it conceded that armed opposition was

---

[1415] 'Die Verschwörung des Korps Lüttwitz' *Vorwärts* 318 (24 June 1919). 'Die Reichsmannschaften treu zur Regierung' *Vorwärts* 319 (25 June 1919). This unquestioning acceptance of the officers' assertions proved particularly fateful in the cases of Colonel Reinhard and General Lüttwitz, who proceeded to damage to the republic significantly subsequently to the republican failure to punish their counter-revolutionary agitaiton. See chapter 6, pp. 285f, 289f. For evidence of *Vorwärts'* attempts to excuse the officers' outrage against the peace see Langhans, 'Die Haltung der SPD zum Militär, pp. 79, 91.

[1416] Langhans, 'Die Haltung der SPD zum Militär', pp. 23f.

[1417] Mommsen, *Die verspielte Freiheit*, pp. 48-50; Winkler, *Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung*, pp. 120-131; Noske, *Wette*, pp. 406f; 416-419.

[1418] Mulligan, *General Walther Reinhardt*, p. 95; Wette, *Noske*, p. 477.

[1419] Mulligan, *General Walther Reinhardt*, p. 100; 'Nur zur Beruhigung' *Freiheit* (2 June 1919).

[1420] 'Nur zur Beruhigung' *Freiheit* 263 (2 June 1919); 'Heeresleitung und Wiederaufnahme des Krieges' *Vorwärts* 278 (2 June 1919); 'Regierung und Oberste Heeresleitung' *Die Welt am Montag* 22 (2 June 1919).

unlikely to succeed.[1421] This led most officers to 'pledge loyalty to the government' despite the fact that they 'regarded the peace as a violation of their honour'.[1422]

A letter expressing the political motivations of the officers published by *Vorwärts* on 30 June 1919 showed, however, that loyalty to the republic was not a prime motivation of those who remained in the army.[1423] Their insistence that they merely served their fatherland and did not trust the government emphasized their implicit antagonism towards the government.[1424] *Vorwärts* responded that this loss of trust was mutual, appealing for the deposition of the *Junkergenerale*.[1425] Unlike Noske, who continued to believe in the loyalty of his officers until they refused to act against the counter-revolutionary Kapp-Lüttwitz putsch in March 1920, *Vorwärts* underwent a learning curve in the month following the acceptance of the treaty.[1426] In early July it quoted a letter in which officers declared their loyalty to Wilhelm II and blamed the republican government for the peace.[1427] When *Vorwärts* responded that those blaming the government were themselves responsible for the defeat which led to the peace, it received another letter threatening dire consequences if it continued to irritate the officer corps.[1428] Correspondence such as this convinced *Vorwärts* of the need to cleanse the army of anti-republican forces, leading it to argue that it would be more honourable for people holding such views to resign rather than remain in the republican army.[1429] The ideological impact of the republican failure to intervene in military matters can be seen in a response to *Vorwärts'* comment, which defended officers for staying on despite their opposition to the republic and argued that their decision was an act of loyalty to the fatherland rather than its political representation.[1430] Michael Salewski has argued that in failing to disprove the allegations of 'illoyality' and 'ingratitude', which the 'understandable' disappointment with the government's failure to prioritise their concerns evoked in the army, the government

---

[1421] Mulligan, *General Walther Reinhardt*, p. 100. In his note taken during the political and military debates preceding the treaty's acceptance, First Quartermaster-General Wilhelm Groener specifically referred to this survey as a main argument to back up his conviction that Germany could not successfully resume warfare. Additionally, he vehemently rejected unilateral military action against the treaty, arguing that 'the decision had to be left to the government'. 'Document 114: Aufzeichnungen des Ersten Generalquartiermeisters über die Tage in Weimar vom 18. bis zum 20. Juni 1919' in Hagen Schulze (ed.), *Akten der Reichskanzlei. Weimarer Republik. Das Kabinett Scheidemann 13. Februar bis 20 Juni 1919* vol. 1 (Boppard, 1971), pp. 477f, 486-490.

[1422] Wette, *Noske*, pp. 491-493.

[1423] 'Sie drohen mit offener Auflehnung und Blutvergießen! Die Fronde beim A.O.K. Süd' *Vorwärts* 328 (30 June 1919).

[1424] Ibid.

[1425] Ibid. In this context, the term *Junkergenerale* aims to identify the officers in question as reactionary and tyrannical representatives of the imperial elite, implying that they had no right to continue involving themselves in the political decision-making of the republic.

[1426] Wette, *Noske*, pp. 636.

[1427] 'Der ehrliche Herr von Jena' *Vorwärts* 349 (11 July 1919).

[1428] 'Noch einer. Herr von Jenas Sekundant' *Vorwärts* 355 (14 July 1919).

[1429] 'Der ehrliche Herr von Jena' *Vorwärts* 349 (11 July 1919). Also see Langhans, 'Die Haltung der SPD zum Militär', p. 89.

[1430] 'Noch einer. Herr von Jenas Sekundant' *Vorwärts* 355 (14 July 1919).

was co-responsible for the army's antagonism towards republican politics .[1431] The officer corps' exclusive focus on their own interests irrespective of Germany's post-war situation as well as their at best reserved relationship with the republic suggests, however, that attempts to disprove such allegations would have been unlikely to overcome the army's vehement opposition to the republic.

POLITICS IN THE ARMY

In response to the unwillingness of some army leaders to obey government orders during the debate on whether or not to accept the peace, all republican publications began to assess and debate the role of politics in the army. The Prussian officer corps was traditionally regarded as apolitical in that it did not influence political decisions outside its sphere of authority, even though its personal oath of loyalty to the Kaiser made it by definition staunchly monarchist.[1432] This changed during the war as the military leadership became more and more involved in civilian matters. This trend was particularly noticeable in the *OHL* under Hindenburg and Ludendorff, which interfered decisively in civilian politics to secure the dismissal of Reich Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg in 1917.[1433] The army remained involved in politics after the armistice to safeguard its interests in the aftermath of the revolution.[1434] *Freikorps* commander General Walther Baron von Lüttwitz even justified officers' attempts to influence civilian politics by arguing that they had earned the right to intervene by helping the government.[1435] Despite an obvious shift in the army's perception of its own authority, the force was still often referred to as an 'apolitical army', even if this maxim was interpreted in a variety of irreconcilable ways. Although the revolutionary soldiers were initially lauded as prospective pillars of the republic, it soon became obvious that they were not immune to party political divisions which might affect their reliability.[1436] Noske consequently backtracked briskly from the government's initial revolutionary vision, largely for fear that left-wingers would subvert the army, demanding that soldiers refrain from introducing political disputes into the armed forces.[1437] While acknowledging that soldiers and officers were entitled to hold political opinions, Minister of Defence Noske and his DDP successor Otto Geßler

---

[1431] Michael Salewski, *Entwaffnung und Militärkontrolle in Deutschland 1919-1927* (Munich, 1966), p. 37.
[1432] Carsten, *Reichswehr und Politik*, p. 13.
[1433] Ullrich, *Ende des Hohenzollernreiches*, pp. 147-154.
[1434] Carsten, *Reichswehr und Politik*, pp. 40-44, 54f.
[1435] Erger, *Kapp-Lüttwitz-Putsch*, p. 29; Rainer Wohlfeil also identified the future *Reichswehr* commander General Hans von Seeckt as one of the officers with distinctly political ambitions. Wohlfeil, *Reichswehr und Republik*, p. 53.
[1436] Schmidt, *Heimatheer und Revolution*, pp. 352, 367; Carsten, *Reichswehr*, pp. 23f; Diehl, *Paramilitary Politics*, pp. 25f; Wette, *Noske*, pp. 284, 299; Mulligan, *General Walther Reinhard*, p. 40. For the revolutionary vision of the soldiers see chapter 1, pp. 54f.
[1437] Reprint of Noske's appeal for an apolitical army in the National Assembly in 'Nationalversammlung zu Weimar' *Vorwärts* 379 (27 July 1919).

vehemently rejected any overt political activity within the army.[1438] The officer corps' application of this principle, however, left a lot to be desired. While officers readily adopted the demand for an 'apolitical army', they tended to interpret it according to the pre-war understanding that the officer corps' traditional conservatism and monarchism were apolitical. Active steps to prevent political agitation in the army were generally only taken against alleged Spartacists and republicans seeking to democratise it from within.[1439] This development shows that the republican failure to reform the military hierarchy gave reactionary officers political as well as military control over the troops, undermining the revolutionary republican intention to educate soldiers to be genuine republican citizens. Political unrest in the first half of 1919 and divergent party political interests also contributed to a situation where officers rather than genuine republicans were responsible for soldiers' political education.

Die Freiheit had already noted in early June 1919 that a number of *Freikorps* had exceeded their authority and revealed that they were not as apolitical as they claimed to be by debating the peace terms rather than merely accepting the government's decision.[1440] The most significant public debate regarding the army's political position within the republic was triggered by the foundation of the *Republikanischer Führerbund* (Republican Officers' League) in early July. The *Führerbund* was established in opposition to the 'refusal of sections of the officer corps to accept the new order', and aimed to create a democratic army loyal to the government and led by 'genuinely republican officers'.[1441] The organisation's announcement aroused a reactionary outcry against its alleged attempt to politicise the army: while the right-wing press raged against the danger it posed to the army's integrity and effectiveness, officers openly denounced its members as *'Gesinnungslumpen'* (political scoundrels) and demanded an official prohibition of the *Führerbund*.[1442] Exploiting the government's desire for protection to reinforce their claim

---

[1438] Ibid; 'Geßler über die Zukunft der Reichswehr' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 283 (18 April 1920); 'Disziplin des freien Mannes' *Freiheit* 128 (17 April 1920), 'Der Reichswehrminister über das Berufsheer' *Vorwärts* 195 (16 April 1920).

[1439] 'Militärische Übergriffe' *Vorwärts* 438 (28 August 1919); 'Die schwarz-rot-goldene Judenfahne' *Vorwärts* 440 (29 August 1919); 'Die Angst des bösen Gewissens. Gesinnungsschnüffelei im Heere' *Vorwärts* 356 (15 July 1919); 'Beschimpfung republikanischer Offiziere. Der Höhepunkt konservativer Frechheit' *Vorwärts* 364 (19 July 1919); 'Als Republikaner gemaßregelt' *Vorwärts* 409 (12 August 1919); Colin Roß, 'Republikanische Offiziere' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 652 (3 September 1919); 'Reichswehrsorgen' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 886 (27 November 1919). The editor and writer Colin Roß (1885-1945) worked in the press department of the OHL during the war. In 1918 he was elected to the Central Soldiers' and Workers' Council in Berlin and published the republican army newspaper *Die Reichswehr* fron 1919. See Wolfram Wette (ed.), *Aus den Geburtsstunden der Weimarer Republik. Das Tagebuch des Obersten Ernst von den Bergh* (Düsseldorf, 1991), p.42 FN 87.

[1440] 'Die weiße Garde vor die Front!' *Freiheit* (1 June 1919).

[1441] 'Erklärung des Reichswehrministers Noske über den Republikanischen Führerbund' in Hürten (ed.), *Quellen Zwischen Revolution und Kapp-Putsch*, pp. 177, Footnote 1. Also see: Carsten, *Reichswehr*, pp. 82f.

[1442] Langhans, 'Die Haltung der SPD zum Militär', p. 93. Also see 'Die Angst des bösen Gewissens. Gesinnungsschnüffelei im Heere' *Vorwärts* 356 (15 July 1919); 'Schutzgesetze für die Reaktion? General von Lohringhoven verlangt das Verbot einer republikanischen Organisation' *Vorwärts* 357

to power, the officer corps thus falsely linked the concept of military effectiveness to the continuation of the army's traditional values and hierarchy. Wolfram Wette, however, has shown that some republican formations had in fact proved to be a reliable defence of the government during the January unrest.[1443]

In line with the government's previous stance, Minister of Defence Noske did not support the republican reform of the army envisaged by the *Führerbund*. In response to numerous anxious inquiries from the officer corps as to whether or not the government intended to replace serving officers with men willing to profess their support for the republic, Noske insisted that 'the government and the Minister of Defence have nothing to do with the foundation of the Republikanischer Führerbund'.[1444] He continued to argue that

> [d]ifferent political organisations seek to gain ground within the Reichswehr. This can lead to dangerous confusion and ultimately to the collapse of the Reichswehr. Political organisations within the Reichswehr, for example conservative, democratic, social democratic or communist soldiers' and officers' organisations, like the Republikanischer Führerbund or the Nationalverband Deutscher Offiziere [National Organisation of German Officers], cannot have a place in the Reichswehr and must not make the Reichswehr the playground of their efforts. [...] The instrument [of the army] would be useless if it lost its inner cohesion because of divergent political movements. The entire Reichswehr has to be completely apolitical. The selection of leaders will not take place according to their political conviction but their military suitability.[1445]

These considerations show that Noske still prioritised officers' traditional interpretation of military effectiveness, reflecting his desire to have a strong defence force at the government's disposal.[1446] Noske's position must be regarded as militarily sound and in tune with army leaders' interests, for the reforms suggested by the *Führerbund* would have necessitated significant changes to the leadership. Such alterations would probably have disturbed functioning structures. Yet Noske's dismissal of a body intended to support the republican government was politically short sighted, providing the reactionary officer corps with a legitimate excuse to cleanse the army of republican influence. In trying to tempt officers into pragmatic co-operation with the new state by showing government

---

(15 July 1919); 'Warum wir republikanische Offiziere brauchen. Ein Zwischenfall in Allenstein' *Vorwärts* 361 (17 July 1919); 'Beschimpfung republikanischer Offiziere. Der Höhepunkt konservativer Frechheit' *Vorwärts* 364 (19 July 1919); 'Reaktionäre Anmaßung' *Vorwärts* 368 (21 July 1919).

[1443] Wette, *Noske*, pp. 325-328.

[1444] 'Erklärung des Reichswehrministers Noske über den Republikanischen Führerbund' in Hürten (ed.), *Zwischen Revolution und Kapp*-Putsch, p. 178.

[1445] Ibid; Bauer expressed a similar sentiment when arguing that monarchist officers would be tolerated if they refrained from advocating their political convictions on duty. See 'Reichskanzler Bauer spricht' *Vorwärts* 513 (7 October 1919). Friedrich Ebert also shared Noske's view that officers should be chosen according to their military merits rather than their ideological reliabiliy. See. Mühlhausen, *Friedrich Ebert*, pp. 292f. Also see Rürup, *Probleme der Revolution*, p. 39.

[1446] Langhans argues convincingly that, however misguided, Noske's rejection of the republican organisation reflected his concern not to alienate the officer corps. Langhans, 'Die Haltung der SPD zum Militär', p. 95.

support for their concerns, Noske ensured that the republic largely lost political control over the army.

Vorwärts, for once in agreement with the USPD organ *Die Freiheit,* viewed Noske's response to the *Republikanischer Führerbund* with anger and dismay. It argued that in rejecting the *Führerbund* Noske was implicitly tolerating officers' reactionary views as 'apolitical' while prohibiting republicanism in the army.[1447] *Vorwärts'* observation that his statement had motivated officers to interpret their freedom of political opinion by banning SPD newspapers and replacing them with reactionary ones proved its point.[1448] Over the following months, *Vorwärts* painstakingly recorded the loss of republican influence over officers' conduct which culminated in the Kapp Putsch. It published manifold accusations against individual officers, including monarchist agitation against the republic, reactionary military parades displaying the imperial flag and playing nationalist songs, attempts to prohibit membership of republican military organisations and the strategic dismissal of republicans and socialists from the army.[1449]

Even in cases where official complaints were lodged against officers who had insulted the government key witnesses were publicly maligned while the accused went unpunished. The government, for example, officially absolved the openly monarchist *Freikorps* commander Colonel Wilhelm Reinhard (who had denounced its members as riff-raff) of any wrong-doing and retained him in office.[1450] Georg Neuendorff, however, the man who uncovered Reinhard's anti-republican agitation, was dismissed from the *Reichswehr* and attacked as morally questionable.[1451] Reinhard would later remain in office despite flouting a government ban on public demonstrations with an illegal military

---

[1447] 'Erlaubte monarchistische, verbotene republikanische Propaganda. Eine Armee-Idylle' *Vorwärts* 387 (31 July 1919); 'Noske gegen den republikanischen Führerbund' *Freiheit* 339 (18 July 1919).
[1448] 'Regierung und republikanischer Führerbund' *Vorwärts* 363 (18 July 1919).
[1449] For example 'Erlaubte monarchistische; verbotene republikanische Propaganda. Eine Armee-Idylle' *Vorwärts* 387 (31 July 1919); 'Immer noch Rotscheu. Dinge; die nicht vorkommen dürften' *Vorwärts* 364 (19 July 1919); 'Junkerliche Provokation in Berlin' *Vorwärts* 373 (24 July 1919); 'Bedenkliche Vorgänge in der Garde-Kavallerie-Schützendivision' *Vorwärts* 374 (24 July 1919); 'Schweinitz wird frech' *Vorwärts* 573 (8 November 1919); 'Der "heilige Geist" auferstanden' *Vorwärts* 608 (28 November 1919).
[1450] For a detailed assessment of the Reinhard case see Wette, *Noske*, pp. 583-589; Mühlhausen, *Friedrich Ebert*, pp. 308f; Langhans, 'Die Haltung der SPD zum Militär', pp. 101-103. For the press coverage of the case see 'Eine Anklage' *Vorwärts* 442 (30 August 1919); 'Oberst Reinhard maßregelt! Ein freches Schreiben' *Vorwärts* 447 (2 September 1919); 'Zum Fall Reinhard' *Vorwärts* 472 (15 September 1919); 'Der Fall Reinhard' *Vorwärts* 474 (16 September 1919); 'Reinhard der Schweigsame' *Vorwärts* 478 (18 September 1919); 'Scheidemann und Noske zum Fall Reinhard' *Vorwärts* 481 (20 September 1919); 'Keine Vertrauenskundgebung für Reinhard' *Vorwärts* 482 (20 September 1919); 'v. Trotha und Reinhard vereidigt' *Vorwärts* 483 (21 September 1919); 'Reinhards Loyalitätserklärung' *Vorwärts* 497 (29 September 1919); a'Reinhard entlassen. ... endgültig a.D.' *Vorwärts* 634 (12 December 1919); Wilhelm Dittmann; 'Das militärische Willkürregiment' *Freiheit* 449 (17 September 1919); 'Der "Vorwärts" und der Oberst Reinhard' *Die Freiheit* 460 (23 September 1919); 'Noske und Reinhard' *Die Freiheit* 605 (29 September 1919).
[1451] See for example 'Der Fall Reinhard' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 695 (18 September 1919); 'Das militärische Wilkürregiment' *Die Freiheit* 449 (17 September 1919); 'Zum Fall Reinhard' *Vorwärts* 471 (15 September 1919); 'Zum Fall Reinhard' *Vorwärts* 476 (17 September 1919); 'Der Fall Reinhard' *Vorwärts* 477 (18 September 1919),

parade in honour of Hindenburg.[1452] He was finally asked to resign over the murder of 29 naval sailors by his subordinate Otto Marloh, a crime which Reinhard had at least failed to prevent.[1453] This scenario was mirrored by the case of a democratic officer called Carl Vieweg, who was beaten up by fellow officers after he denounced their reactionary agitation against the government (which included death threats directed towards Matthias Erzberger) at a meeting of the *Republikanischer Führerbund*.[1454] In spite of the fact that Vieweg was immensely popular among the troops, he was immediately dismissed after the incident - a decision which his superiors justified by an investigation led by his main attacker which denounced him as a traitor.[1455] In the subsequent trial against his fellow officers, Vieweg was depicted as a dishonourable and unstable character and his testimony was denounced as untrustworthy in spite of contradictory evidence.[1456] In reporting incidents such as this, *Vorwärts* and other republican organs repeatedly showed that the republic was unable to contain officers' reactionary conduct or to protect those actively seeking to reform the army. Whether interpreted as proof of the government's unwillingness to recognise the threat posed by the officer corps or of its inability to control the army, the repetition of unheeded appeals to contain the army's reactionary conduct greatly undermined the republican government's legitimacy. They implied that the government had to some extent invalidated its revolutionary legitimacy by voluntarily handing back power to the sort of Prussian militarism it had promised to overcome.

DECLARING WAR ON WEIMAR

The practical consequences of this continued inability to restrict the army's political role destabilised the republic by encouraging sections of the army to more blatant defiance of the government's orders. The *Freikorps'* first open declaration of war against the republic was evident in their refusal to obey government orders to return from the

---

[1452] 'Die Berliner Demonstration' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 854 (14 November 1919); 'Reinhard empfängt Hindenburg' *Vorwärts* 581 (13 November 1919).

[1453] Wette, *Noske*, pp. 581f; Langhans, 'Die Haltung der SPD zum Militär', p.103.

[1454] For the press coverage of the case see R. O. Frankfurter, 'Vieweg' *Das Tage-Buch* 14 (17 April 1920); 'Noske über die monarchistischen Bestrebungen im Offizierskorps' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 700 (20 September 1919); 'Grotesk und verlogen' *Die Freiheit* 452 (18 September 1919); 'Die Potsdamer Prügelei' *Die Freiheit* 453 (19 September 1919); 'Wie lange noch soll der Skandal dauern? Mißhandlungen eines republikanischen Offiziers' *Vorwärts* 476 (17 September 1919); 'Uebergelungene Verteidigung' *Vorwärts* 478 (18 September 1919); 'Der Fall Vieweg' *Vorwärts* 622 (5 December 1919); 'Leutnant Vieweg in Haft' *Vorwärts* d18 (10 January 1920); 'Leutnant Vieweg verschwunden' *Vorwärts* 48 (27 January 1920); 'Ein Opfer reaktionärer Rachsucht' *Vorwärts* 200 (19 April 1920). For biographical information on Erzberger see Appendix I, p. 325.

[1455] R. O. Frankfurter, 'Vieweg' *Das Tage-Buch* 14 (17 April 1920), pp. 468-470; 'Grotesk und verlogen' *Die Freiheit* 452 (18 September 1919); 'Uebergelungene Verteidigung' *Vorwärts* 478 (18 September 1919).

[1456] R. O. Frankfurter, 'Vieweg' *Das Tage-Buch* 14 (17 April 1920), pp. 473-475; 'Der Fall Vieweg' *Vorwärts* 622 (5 December 1919); 'Ein Opfer reaktionärer Rachsucht' *Vorwärts* 200 (19 April 1920). The perception that Vieweg was mentally imbalanced was subsequently also reflected in the press coverage of the matter. See 'Noske über die monarchistischen Bestrebungen im Offizierskorps' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 700 (20 September 1919).

Baltic states in 1919. German troops had been used to fight Bolshevism in Latvia after the war, remaining there on Allied orders despite their questionable role in bringing down the country's democratically elected government.[1457] In late August 1919 the *Freikorps* refused to obey a government order to return to Germany, demanding that they be granted land to settle in the Baltic states as had allegedly been promised them on recruitment.[1458] In describing the ensuing battle of wills, which persisted until the Baltic *Freikorps* agreed to return on 18 November, Wolfram Wette stresses that the government's inability to enforce its authority seriously questioned its legitimacy.[1459]

This display of weakness was particularly damaging, as Wette writes, because it reflected 'the only major conflict in 1919 which Noske helped to solve without military violence'.[1460] Considering its readiness to use violence against the radical left, the government's inability to react similarly to a challenge from the right severely undermined its promise to defend the republic against attackers of all origins. The running commentary on *Freikorps* insubordination in republican discourse aggravated its impact on the government's reputation by continually emphasizing its ineffective struggle to regain control of the army.[1461] Although *Vorwärts* noted the government's ban on continued *Freikorps* recruitment on 20 August 1919, later editions reported that new troops and provisions were still being sent to the Baltic states despite government orders to close the borders.[1462] The republican press also criticised the government severely for

---

[1457] Although a *Vorwärts* article on 5 May printed a declaration from the troops in Latvia denying that German troops had been involved in the overthrow of the Latvian government, both *Die Freiheit* and a later edition of *Vorwärts* stressed that they had helped the Latvian barons to carry out their counter-revolutionary coup thus worsening rather than improving Germany's reputation in the East. See 'Und nochmals Libau' *Vorwärts* 227 (5 May 1919); 'Ein Scherbenhügel' *Die Freiheit* 217 (7 May 1919); 'Riga von den Deutschen geräumt' *Vorwärts* 343 (8 July 1919); Karl August Ouer, 'Die Liquidation in Lettland' *Vorwärts* 502 (1 October 1919). Mühlhausen also argues that German troops played a decisive part in the deposition of the Latvian government. See Mühlhausen, *Friedrich Ebert*, p.302f.

[1458] SPD Reich Commissar for Eastern Prussia August Winnig claimed that the Latvian government had initially promised land for the German troops but that no treaty had been signed to that effect: 'Die deutschen Soldaten im Baltikum' *Vorwärts* 455 (6 September 1919). Another *Vorwärts* article commented that the soldiers had consciously been deceived by false promises of settlement land which the Latvian government had never given. See 'Die Militärrevolte im Baltikum' *Vorwärts* 441 (29 August 1919). Also see Wette, *Noske*, pp. 573, 575; Langhans, 'Die Haltung der SPD zum Militär', pp. 97f.

[1459] Wette, *Noske*, pp. 576f.

[1460] Ibid, p. 576.

[1461] In October 1919, *Vorwärts* explicitly admitted that the republic did not have the power to enforce the mutineers' return. Article quoted in Langhans, 'Die Haltung der SPD zum Militär', p. 100.

[1462] 'Die "Freiheit"', *Vorwärts* 423 (20 August 1919); 'Herdenunwesen im Baltikum' *Vorwärts* 475 (17 September 1919); 'Die Meuterei des Detachments Roßbach' *Die Freiheit* 540 (7 November 1919). *Die Freiheit* attempted to discredit the government even more by claiming that it actively tolerated this continuing transport. See 'Vom baltischen Brandherd' *Die Freiheit* 468 (27 September 1919). General von Seeckt, who was appointed as Germany's *Reichswehr* commander after the Kapp-Lüttwitz Putsch, was in fact involved in delivering ammunition to the *Freikorps* in the Baltic States after the German government had ordered this to cease. See Mühlhausen, *Friedrich Ebert*, p. 304.

allowing the situation to deteriorate to the point where *Freikorps* defiance in Latvia could jeopardise the whole nation's survival.[1463]

The situation deteriorated as the Allies announced that they would continue to blockade Germany if it did not withdraw its troops from the Baltic. This eventually led the government to threaten to prosecute those who had not returned by 11 November and to strip them of their citizenship.[1464] *Die Freiheit* finally noted the troops' admission that they would return a full week after the government ultimatum, while Wette dates the return of the *Reichswehr* battalion *Roßbach* (which had left Germany for Latvia illegally after the government had ordered *Freikorps* in the east to return) to 16 December.[1465] Despite its threats to court-martial the rebellious *Freikorps*, the government ultimately sanctioned an amnesty promised to *Freikorps* leaders by a representative of the commission supervising the military evacuation of the Baltic states, without official authority.[1466] Thus these staunchly reactionary troops not only escaped punishment for their disobedience, but remained armed on their return and continued to receive pay until they were dissolved in the spring of 1920.[1467] This undeservedly warm welcome, however, did not pacify them. According to *Vorwärts* they were violent, 'arming themselves to the teeth', and continued to rob, whore, destroy and spread monarchist propaganda.[1468] Such openly defiant behaviour towards the republic proved *Die Freiheit's* allegation that the government's failure to punish the *Freikorps'* right-wing excesses encouraged the army's counter-revolutionary activity by showing that disobedience would not be punished.[1469]

Although the officers of the Baltic *Freikorps* were indisputably reactionary and the government's failure to enforce the military evacuation of the Baltic states threatened the republic's political credibility at home and abroad, the 'Baltic adventure' cannot be seen primarily as a counter-revolutionary putsch. Thus *Vorwärts'* denounced French allegations that a military putsch was being planned in January 1920 as 'ridiculous fairy-tales', despite the obvious reactionary agitation within the army.[1470] Unlike *Die Freiheit*,

---

[1463] For example 'Militärrevolte im Baltikum' *Vorwärts* 441 (29 August 1919); 'Vom baltischen Brandherd' *Die Freiheit* 468 (27 September 1919); 'Neue Verwicklungen' *Die Freiheit* 476 (1 October 1919); Kurt Tucholsky, 'Die baltischen Helden' *Die Weltbühne* 44 (4 October 1919), p. 504. For biographical information on Tucholsky see Appendix I, p. 338.

[1464] Wette, *Noske*, p. 571.

[1465] 'Front nach Westen?' *Die Freiheit* 559 (18 November 1919); 'Die Meuterei des Detachments Roßbach' *Die Freiheit* 540 (7 November 1919); Wette, *Noske*, p. 575.

[1466] Wette, *Noske*, p. 575.

[1467] Ibid, p. 577.

[1468] 'Baltikum Gesindel' *Vorwärts* 12 (7 January 1920). For similar allegations also see 'Die Baltikumer in Berlin' *Die Freiheit* 608 (15 December 1919); 'Baltische Geburtstagsfeiern' *Vorwärts* 53 (29 January 1919); 'Segen aus dem Baltikum' *Vorwärts* 83 (14 February 1919); 'Politische Banditen' *Vorwärts* 95 (21 February 1920). Dirk Schumann identifies the *Freikorps* who had fought in the Baltic states, rather than war veterans in general, as the main perpetrators of atrocities against German civilians in the Weimar period. Their continued role in undermining Germany's democratic culture thus illustrates that the government's failure to punish their anti-democratic activities had far reaching consequences in brutalising political unrest. See *Politische Gewalt in der Weimarer Republik*, pp. 359f.

[1469] 'Die monarchistische Kerntruppe' *Die Freiheit* 49 (23 February 1920).

[1470] 'Lächerliche Ammenmärchen' *Vorwärts* 1 (1 January 1920).

which warned that the Baltic *Freikorps* would eventually turn against the government, the SPD organ refused to interpret the 'Baltic adventure' as a sign that the army would inevitably come to conflict with a government pledged to reduce it. Like the Baltic *Freikorps'* mutiny, the Kapp-Lüttwitz putsch in March 1920 was essentially triggered by the desire of individual officers to defend their position against the government.[1471] While the commander of the Baltic *Freikorps*, Rüdiger von der Goltz, and the commander of the Iron Division, Major Joseph Bischoff, had wanted to ensure that those returning remained in the ranks, General von Lüttwitz rebelled in March to prevent the imminent dissolution of the *Freikorps* which constituted the basis of his power.[1472]

The Treaty of Versailles finally came into force on 10 January 1920, obliging the government to implement the clauses stipulating a reduction in the army.[1473] These clauses were second only to the Allied extradition demands in the opposition they aroused from the military leadership. General Reinhardt insisted in unison with Noske that Germany could not reduce her armed forces as stipulated in the treaty without compromising both internal stability and the security of her borders.[1474] *Die Freiheit* had already acknowledged in autumn 1919 that unrest amongst soldiers was the main threat arising from Allied demands, endangering public order and the government.[1475] The government, which hoped to bring calm by addressing soldiers' concerns, responded by drawing up a law to compensate professional soldiers who lost their jobs as a result of the treaty.[1476]

Yet the government had a strong incentive to weaken the army given its repeated threats to go its own way in the months after the treaty's acceptance. It therefore refused Lüttwitz's request not to dissolve the particularly reactionary Ehrhardt Brigade, which included veterans of the Baltic venture.[1477] Lüttwitz's subsequent decision to issue the government an ultimatum demanding political as well as military reform (including the rescinding of orders to cut back the army) was not, however, sanctioned by the right-wing parties or by his general staff.[1478] Although the counter-revolutionary *Nationale Vereinigung* (Nationalist Organisation), associated with Ludendorff and *Vaterlandspartei* founder Wolfgang Kapp, had already begun to conspire against the government in July 1919, its plans were still to be finalised in March 1920. It did not therefore welcome

---

[1471] A letter in *Vorwärts* expressed a similar sentiment regarding the situation in the Baltic states. See 'Die 'Revolte' im Mitau' *Vorwärts* 437 (27 August 1919).
[1472] Diehl, *Paramilitary Politics*, p. 53; Wette, *Noske*, pp. 627-629; Erger, *Kapp-Lüttwitz-Putsch*, pp. 111-116.
[1473] Erger, *Kapp-Lüttwitz-Putsch*, p.108.
[1474] Langhans, 'Die Haltung der SPD zum Militär', p. 110; Mulligan, *General Walther Reinhardt*, pp. 146-148.
[1475] 'Lüttwitz will nicht abrüsten' *Freiheit* (6 October 1919). For a similar view see Dr. Frosch, 'Soldatenbörse' *Die Welt am Montag* 15 (14 April 1919).
[1476] Wette, *Noske*, pp. 553f.
[1477] For a detailed analysis of the events from the 10 January to Lüttwitz's march to Berlin on 13 March 1920 see Erger, *Kapp-Lüttwitz Putsch*, pp. 110 -149. Heiner Möllers also notes that it was in the government's interest to disband the radically anti-republican marine brigades. See Möllers, '"Reichswehr schießt nicht auf Reichswehr"' in *Militärgeschichte*, p. 55.
[1478] Ibid, pp. 116-118, 121.

Lüttwitz's unplanned initiative, which found the counter-revolutionaries unprepared.[1479] Lüttwitz's announcement that the Ehrhardt Brigade would march on Berlin on 13 March 1920 also allowed the republican government to flee the capital, depriving the conspirators of a chance to arrest and politically eliminate the elected government.[1480]

The political crux of the counter-revolutionary coup, which claimed the 'right of 9 November 1918' to make Kapp Reich Chancellor and establish a nationalist government, was not that part of the army had tried once again to force its will on the republican government.[1481] The most damaging legacy of the Kapp-Lüttwitz putsch was not that some army units openly supported the revolt, but that a large number only refused to do so because it was unlikely to succeed.[1482] Of the troop commanders in Berlin, only General Walther Reinhardt and Noske's adjutant Major von Gilsa declared their willingness to obey the minister's appeal to use armed force against the coup.[1483] The decision of a clear majority within the army to prioritise its integrity over the republican government's safety showed the republican failure to successfully integrate the *Reichswehr* into the new state. The putschists resigned after four days of rather chaotic rule in response to a nationwide general strike and a lack of overt support even amongst right-wingers and the army, which had no desire to implicate itself in a failed counter-revolution.[1484]

As most republican publications with exception of the *Frankfurter Zeitung* were prohibited during Kapp's rule in Berlin, evaluations of the legacy of the putsch for the republic emerged retrospectively. Republican discourse focused largely on assigning responsibility for the putsch and devising strategies to contain the potential for counter-revolution within the army. Noske was the most obvious scapegoat for the army's insubordination, given his constant defence of the officer corps over previous months and his dismissal of the idea that a putsch was possible right on the eve of it.[1485] The rival

---

[1479] Ibid, pp. 126-131.

[1480] Ibid, pp. 150f, 171.

[1481] For an amusing account of Kapp's arrival in the Reich Chancellery where he was reprimanded for his lack of manners because he failed to take off his hat when announcing the counter-revolutionary take-over see Ibid, p. 154.

[1482] Ibid, pp. 180, 183.

[1483] Ibid, pp. 141-146; Carsten, *Reichswehr*, p. 89f; Wette, *Noske*, 637-639. Heiner Möllers' apologia of Hans von Seeckt defends his decision to oppose military action agaist the Kapp-putschists as militarily and politically sound, while arguing that the government rather than the army eventually decided against ordering the army to defend the government. In limiting his argument to a military viewpoint, however, Möllers fails to recognise that in the tense climate following the acceptance of the peace the government could by no means rely on the army to obey orders which explicitly counteracted its interests. His argument subsequently stumbles over the assessment of the government's realistic options: while blaming Noske for not giving clear orders which would have forced the army leadership to abandon their seemingly neutral position, he also criticises the Defence Minister for not accepting the military experts' advice rejecting military opposition to the putsch. See Möllers, '"Reichswehr schießt nicht auf Reichswehr"' in *Militärgeschichte*, pp. 57-60.

[1484] Ibid, pp. 183, 219f, 223f.

[1485] In the light of his evident failure in imposing republican control on the army, Wohlfeil's argument that the main motivation to sacrifice Noske after the Kapp-Lüttwitz Putsch was to appease the 'anti-militarist' sentiments of SPD voters seems somewhat inadequate. Wolfram Wette offers a more convincing narrative, showing a widespread conviction that Noske was politically discredited because of the putsch and could not remain in office. The fact that *Vorwärts* already

socialist papers *Vorwärts* and *Die Freiheit* asserted in unaccustomed unison that Noske was partly to blame for the putsch, having failed to control the officers and underestimated the counter-revolutionary threat.[1486] The *Frankfurter Zeitung was* the only paper analysed which defended him to some extent, arguing that despite his mistake in choosing officers for military rather than political reasons he was not responsible for their desertion.[1487] The liberal publication concluded that ultimate responsibility for the putsch lay with the Treaty of Versailles, which had forced a mercenary army on Germany.[1488] Yet neither of these explanations provided a constructive republican analysis of the political mistakes which had allowed the Kapp putsch to happen. Although the government's criticism of his conduct resulted in Noske's resignation on 18 March 1920, attacks on him did not result in genuine reform of republican military policy. Allegations that the peace terms and hence the Allies were responsible for the putsch also had little impact on republican policy, diverting attention from the domestic failure to contain the reactionary danger and ensuring that the incident did not become a constructive lesson for the republic.

Other discourse regarding responsibility reflected well-known patterns of party-political conflict rather than a genuine attempt to create a republican consensus in opposition to the threat of right-wing counter-revolution. *Die Freiheit* alternated between blaming the SPD and the government for failing to restrict officers' political activities.[1489] *Vorwärts* rather blamed the radical left for the army's reactionary tendencies, arguing that unrest in January 1919 had forced the government to employ right-wing officers to defend the republic.[1490] This shows that even in the wake of a reactionary attempt to destroy the republic, neither socialist faction recognised that their common enemy 'stood on the right'.[1491] On the one hand, republican discourse in the aftermath of the putsch identified that the need to fight the allegedly Bolshevik response to it, an idea promoted by the new

---

considered Noske's military policy as failed upon the revelation of the putsch plans reveals the instability of his political position even before the putsch. See: Wohlfeil, *Reichswehr und Republik*, p. 143; Wette, *Noske*, pp. 655f; Langhans, 'Die Haltung der SPD zum Militär', p. 116.

[1486] For example 'Nieder mit der Reaktion' *Die Freiheit* 84 (13 March 1920); 'Vorwärts in den Kampf' *Vorwärts* 135/151 (22 March 1920); Erich Kuttner, 'Unheilbarer Optimismus' *Vorwärts* 172 (3 April 1920); 'Seeckt, Oven, Oldershausen' *Die Freiheit* 104 (3 April 1919). For similar assessments also see Kurt Tucholsky, 'Kapp-Lüttwitz' *Die Weltbühne* 12-14 (25 March 1919), pp. 358f; Heinrich Ströbel, 'Nach dem Putsch' *Die Weltbühne* 12-14 (25 March 1919), p. 353.

[1487] 'Frankfurt, 23 März' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 223 (23 March 1920).

[1488] Ibid. Also see 'Frankfurt, 18. März' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 210 (18 March 1919); 'Reichswehrfragen' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 301 (25 April 1920).

[1489] 'Die Wiederbelebung des Militarismus' *Die Freiheit* 165 (8 May 1920); 'Wie der kaiserliche Militarismus organisiert wurde' *Die Freiheit* 175 (14 May 1920).

[1490] 'Reichskonferenz der Sozialdemokratie. Scheidemanns Programmrede' *Vorwärts* 230 (5 May 1920); 'Ohne Ledebour kein Lüttwitz! Kautsky Geschichtsfälscher?' *Vorwärts* 237 (9 May 1920).

[1491] This phrase is commonly associated with Reich Chancellor Wirth's *Reichstag* speech in 1922, which held right-wing propaganda responsible for the assassination of Erzberger and Rathenau. In this instance, however, the phrase is taken from a caption of an article in which Scheidemann commented on the Parliamentary Commission in late 1919. See Karl Dietrich Erdmann, *Die Weimarer* Republik, (Munich, 1993), p. 162f; Philipp Scheidemann, 'Der Feind steht rechts' *Vorwärts* 586 (15 November 1919).

Reichswehr commander General Hans von Seeckt, as a transparent attempt to spare the army the consequences of the Kapp-Lüttwitz putsch.[1492] Even the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, which continued to stress the imminent threat from the left when the putsch collapsed, admitted five days later that the real danger lay in aiding reactionary forces by overestimating the Bolshevik threat.[1493] On the other hand, a consensus that the army was trying to fool the republic did not translate into an agreed strategy for its reform. Yet again this was left to the military authorities.

The continued republican failure to reform the army did not originate in a failure to recognise the need to cleanse it of counter-revolutionary influence. All of the newspapers analysed joined with republican politicians and army organisations in demanding that the putschists be severely punished and reactionary soldiers and officers disarmed and dismissed.[1494] Kurt Tucholsky in particular stressed that the only way to prevent a second, potentially more successful revolt was to

> show everybody - politicians, journalists and soldiers - that one cannot back the wrong horse with impunity. Ideology has to be evaluated correctly for once. Our situation is as follows: the monarchist puffs himself up and fights the republic, the officer defends his post against the civilians, the journalist prophesizes and the audience is satisfied that somebody prophesizes at all no matter whether it is true. This situation has to end. For once it has to be shown that it has practical consequences if one spreads monarchist, militarist or nationalist agitation in a democratic republic. These men must be removed.[1495]

Although Tucholsky's considerations were almost childlike in their simplicity, he was right to insist that the republic needed a show of strength to restore its authority and to overcome the consequences of its previous hesitant policy, which had culminated in the Kapp-Lüttwitz putsch. Yet the government allowed the army to once again thwart its plans to cleanse it of reactionary influences, partly to avoid impairing military efficiency, partly because it lacked the power to implement thorough reform.[1496] Instead of prosecuting the reactionary mutineers in an open trial, the republic left their punishment to an army commission.[1497] This body dismissed 172 officers but failed to impose prison sentences, as it was argued that anyone who had obeyed their superiors' orders could not be

---

[1492] 'Vorwärts in den Kampf' *Vorwärts* 135/151 (22 March 1920); 'Frankfurt, 22. März' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 220 (22 March 1920); 'Unehrliches Spiel' *Die Freiheit* 87 (24 March 1920).

[1493] 'Frankfurt, 17. März' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 207 (17 March 1920); 'Frankfurt, 22. März' *Frankfurter Zeitung* 220 (22 March 1920).

[1494] For example Kurt Tucholsky, 'Kapp-Lüttwitz' *Die Weltbühne* 12-14 (25 March 1919), pp. 361f; 'Tollheit order Verblendung' *Die Freiheit* 89 (25 March 1920); Willy Meyer, 'Entmilitarisierung' *Vorwärts* 181 (9 April 1920); 'Tagung der Berufssoldaten' *Vorwärts* 191 (14 April 1920); 'Reichstags-Wähler!' *Die Freiheit* 133 (20 April 1920). For a detailed summar of the *Vorwärts*' stance on the issue see Langhans, 'Die Haltung der SPD zum Militär', p. 118f.

[1495] Kurt Tucholsky, 'Kapp-Lüttwitz' *Die Weltbühne* 12-14 (25 March 1919), pp. 361f.

[1496] Erger, *Kapp-Lüttwitz Putsch*, pp. 284f; Wette, *Noske*, pp. 673f. Considering that the reactionary army had just proved to be rather inefficient in defending the republic, these considerations seem rather absurd. They nevertheless document the republic's assessment of its own political instability based on either an absurd fear of the left or the government's recognition that in order to retain political credibility it needed to cover up its inability to control the army.

[1497] Wette, *Noske*, pp. 677-679; Mühlhausen, *Friedrich Ebert*, pp. 373ff.

punished.[1498] Only one of the putsch's main organisers was eventually sentenced to 5 years in jail, while the government did not even have the power to force the Ehrhardt Brigade to disarm.[1499] The decree which General von Seeckt drew up to prosecute the Kappists did permit the prosecution of general military disobedience during the putsch.[1500] While not permitting the punishment of those who followed orders in joining the revolt, the decree facilitated a continued purge of republicans by giving reactionary officers an excuse to dismiss men who had disobeyed their counter-revolutionary superiors during the putsch.[1501] In response to an increasing number of reports that soldiers who had remained loyal to the republic were being purged, *Vorwärts* journalist Erich Kuttner warned that the government's failure to protect them would discourage troops from endangering their livelihood by defending the republic.[1502] This disinclination to defend the republic was not limited to the army. It was also evident in the results of elections held several months after the Kapp-Lüttwitz putsch which recorded a significant loss of support for the republican parties.[1503] Hellmut von Gerlach foreshadowed such a decline in the republic's legitimacy when he summarised the outcome of reforms meant to deal with the legacy of the putsch seven days before the elections took place on 6 June 1920.[1504] Von Gerlach pointed out that the officers were still largely reactionary, the free corps were not properly dissolved, the Baltic *Freikorps* had not been disarmed, the Kapp traitors had not been prosecuted, while the government was still concerned with convincing the Allies to extend the size of Germany's army.[1505] In letting the army's interests dictate Germany's fate at the expense of democratic principles, the republic surrendered its own legitimacy to govern, as the *Vorwärts* had warned in the aftermath of the Kapp putsch.[1506]

In terms of the long-term continuity of the republic's foundation narrative, the government's unpopular acceptance of the Treaty of Versailles must be regarded as a distinct break, which significantly affected the republic's political legitimacy. The need to

---

[1498] Ibid; Erger, *Kapp-Lüttwitz Putsch*, pp. 287f.
[1499] Wette, pp. 676f, 683-685; Erger, *Kapp-Lüttwitz Putsch*, pp. 289, 294f.
[1500] Erger, *Kapp-Lüttwitz Putsch*, p. 288.
[1501] 'Die "Reinigung" der Reichswehr. Massenentlassungen verfassungstreuer Soldaten' *Vorwärts* 261 (22 May 1920); 'Ein Eidbrüchiger verhaftet Treugebliebene!' *Vorwärts* 156 (25 March 1920); 'Reichskonferenz der Sozialdemokratie' *Vorwärts* 231 (6 May 1920); 'Die Reaktion in der Reichswehr. Maßregelung und Bestrafung der Republikaner' *Die Freiheit* 173 (13 May 1920); 'Der Sieg der Militärreaktion' *Die Freiheit* 111 (8 April 1920); 'Die "Entpolitisierung" der Reichswehr. Verbot des Versammlungsbesuchs' *Vorwärts* 182 (9 April 1920).
[1502] Erich Kuttner, 'Wenn ich Reichswehrsoldat wäre ...' *Vorwärts* 178 (7 April 1920).
[1503] Kolb, *Weimar*, p. 194. Rainer Wohlfeil argues that these losses indicated the lack of support for the republican government which rendered it incapable of utilising its victory in the Kapp putsch to safeguard the republic. Considering that Johannes Erger has convincingly established, however, that the putsch was by no means a political victory for the republican government, it seems more plausible that the devastating impact of the Kapp putsch eroded public trust in the Weimar coalition. Wohlfeil, *Reichswehr und Republik*, p. 23; Erger, *Kapp-Lüttwitz Putsch*, pp. 197, 282f.
[1504] Hellmut von Gerlach, 'Militaristische Fernwirkungen' *Die Welt am Montag* 22 (31 May 1920).
[1505] Ibid.
[1506] Langhans, 'Die Haltung der SPD zum Militär', p. 199.

defend its decision to sign the peace terms despite severe reservations forced the republic into a defensive position vis-à-vis allegations that it had failed to fulfil its revolutionary promises or to defend Germany's interests against the Allies. Although republican discourse tried to redress the perception that the republic was politically impotent by focusing on the prospect of the treaty's long term revision, the inconsistency of its propaganda weakened attempts to legitimise the republican acceptance of the peace. Despite the return of republican discourse to a more pragmatic approach which envisaged Germany's political development within the limits of the treaty, its past appeals for nationalist defiance lent significant credibility to right-wing attacks on the republic. The political impact of the harsh peace terms as a sign of the government's inability to deliver the 'just peace' it had promised was thus aggravated by the inability of the republican forces to remain true to their revolutionary foundation narrative during the peace negotiations. This political inconsistency discredited their subsequent return to political pragmatism, which seemed more like resignation than rational political leadership. The consequent republican failure to link the humiliating peace to Germany's former elite allowed the negative connotations of the Treaty of Versailles to overwrite the original republican foundation narrative.

The republican reaction to the Allied extradition demands provides a useful example of the divergent ideological and political effects of the republican response to the peace. In theory, the republican debate on extradition reflected a comparatively pragmatic approach, largely avoiding a defiant nationalist stance. Despite the fact that most republican discourse rejected extradition as a means to punish German war criminals, it explicitly denounced right-wing threats to sabotage its implementation. Republican discourse also sought a compromise solution when it recognised that the government was unable to carry out Allied demands. Yet domestic perceptions of republican discourse did not appreciate its efforts to restore the republic's international credibility as a reasonable negotiating partner, for they were undermined by the government's inability to overcome internal opposition and enforce its pragmatic appeal for fulfilment. The government's inability to carry out Allied extradition demands without risking severe unrest forced it into a renewed admission of political impotence, reinforcing the perception that it was politically weak and likely to yield to political and military threats. This meant that the government was unable to claim Allied concessions regarding extradition as a republican success in amending the treaty and further reactionary attempts to influence republican policy were encouraged.

Germany's reactionary army proved to be a particularly adverse influence on republican foreign policy in the aftermath of the peace. Despite a revolutionary recognition that the imperial army posed a potential threat to the new state as a power base for old elite, republican attempts to reform the armed forces remained half-hearted. This failure can be attributed to the absence of a coherent republican military policy and

the perceived need for an army willing to defend the republic from the radical left. Initial co-operation between the new civilian government and the old military leadership severely discredited the republican government's claim to power on two counts. On the one hand, the political use of military violence, which the revolutionary foundation narrative claimed to have overcome, increased and radicalised the republic's left-wing opposition. On the other hand, the army' awareness that its position of power had been restored encouraged its leaders to pursue their own political interests, even when this entailed opposition to the republican government. Germany's acceptance of a peace which undermined the status of the army thus provided the catalyst for the army's open defiance of the civilian government. Although initial plans for a military uprising against the government's decision to sign were not implemented, as they could not realistically hope to succeed, the army's response to the peace showed that its loyalty to the republic was fragile at best. Republican military policy prioritised the army's immediate availability over its ideological soundness, failing to carry through its revolutionary intention to create a truly republican force. It thus failed to educate soldiers politically, despite increased numbers of reports that officers were undertaking reactionary agitation against the republic. In spite of a gradual recognition in *Vorwärts* that the reactionary elements within the army needed to be removed, fear of becoming militarily defenceless and the government's inability to control internal army affairs prevented an implementation of this policy. Having thus surrendered political as well as military authority over the army to the officer corps, the republican government also unintentionally abdicated its freedom to make political decisions regarding the peace. As the republican press meticulously recorded the government's failure to exert the same strength against the counter-revolutionary officers as it had against the radical left, the 'Baltic adventure' and the Kapp-Lüttwitz putsch illustrated its inability to enforce the principles of equality and justice, which defined its claim to represent republican values.

Illustration XVI: Weltbestellung [World-Cultivation] [1507]



[No seed grows as quickly as that of the "victor".]

[1507] Willibald Krain, 'Weltbestellung' *Ulk* 25 (27 June 1919).

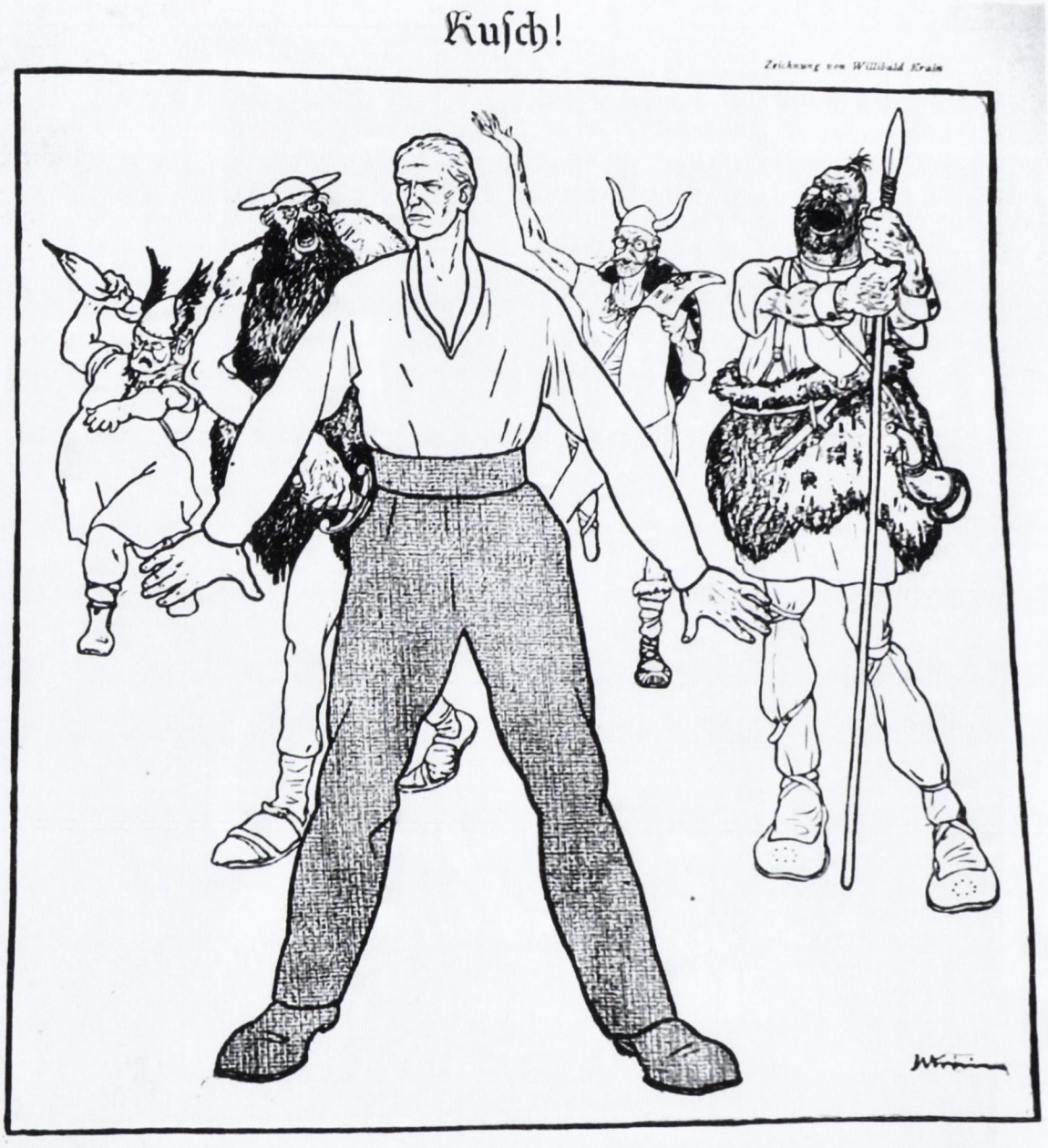
Illustration XVII: Der Moloch [The Moloch][1508]



[They want to send you to the Moloch to completely destroy you – Your harsh fate will change and will judge your oppressors.]

[1508] 'Der Moloch', *Der wahre Jacob* 885 (2 July 1920).

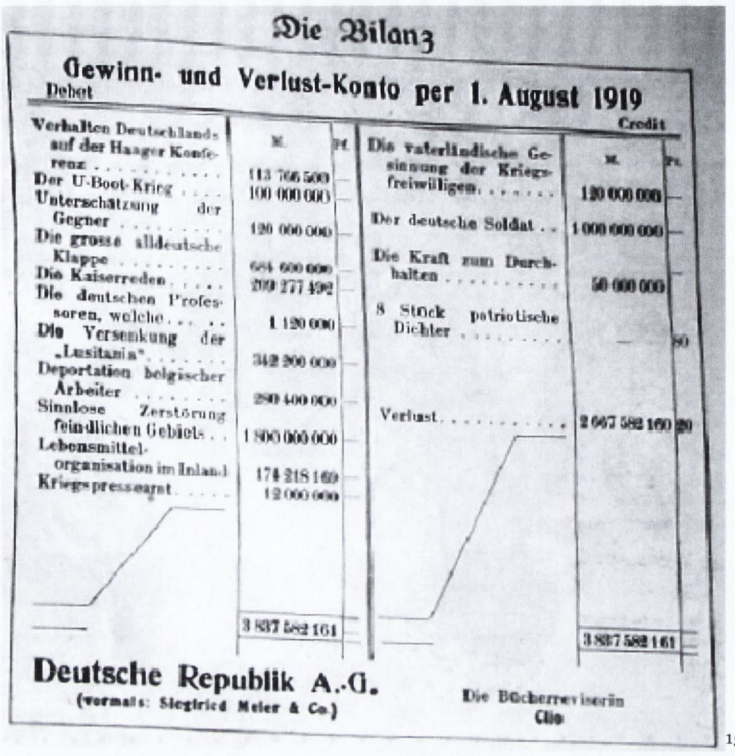
Illustration III: Kusch! [Down!][1509]



– „Lärmt mir wenigſtens heute nicht dazwiſchen! Euerm alldeutſchen Geſchrei verdanken wir Verſailles!“

[At least keep quiet today! We [already] owe Versailles to your Pan-German fuss]

[1509] Willibald Krain, 'Kusch!' *Ulk* (9 May 1919).


Die Bilanz

Gewinn- und Verlust-Konto per 1. August 1919

Debet

	M.	Pf.
Verhalten Deutschlands auf der Haager Konferenz	113 705 500	
Der U-Boot-Krieg	100 000 000	
Unterschätzung der Gegner	120 000 000	
Die grosse alldeutsche Klappe	684 600 000	
Die Kaiserreden	209 277 492	
Die deutschen Professoren, welche	1 120 000	
Die Versenkung der „Lusitania"	342 200 000	
Deportation belgischer Arbeiter	280 400 000	
Sinnlose Zerstörung feindlichen Gebiets	1 800 000 000	
Lebensmittelorganisation im Inland	174 218 169	
Kriegspressegamt	12 000 000	
	3 837 582 161	

Credit

	M.	Pf.
Die vaterländische Gesinnung der Kriegsfreiwilligen	120 000 000	
Der deutsche Soldat	1 000 000 000	
Die Kraft zum Durchhalten	50 000 000	
8 Stück patriotische Dichter	—	80
Verlust	2 667 582 160	20
	3 837 582 161	

Deutsche Republik A.-G.
(vormals: Siegfried Meier & Co.)

Die Bücherrevisorin
Clio

1510

Appointing Clio, the muse of history, as an 'accountant' to take stock of the war's balance sheet for the 'republican joint-stock company', the liberal satirical supplement *Ulk* sarcastically summarised the bankrupt legacy which the new state had inherited from Germany's imperial regime 'Siegfried Meier & Co'.[1511] It listed Germany's 'conduct during the Hague conference, the U-Boat war, the underestimation of [Germany's] enemies, the Pan-Germans' big mouth, the Kaiser's speeches [...], the sinking of the "Lusitania", the deportation of Belgian workers, the senseless destruction of enemy territory, the domestic organisation of food provision, and [Germany's] wartime press bureaucracy' as Germany's debts. The publication suggested that these by far exceeded its credit earned through war

---

[1510] Illustration XIX: 'Die Bilanz' *Ulk* 31 (1 August 1919).

[1511] Ibid. The criticism of Germany's wartime regime, inherent in the degradation of the monarchy to a common economic enterprise which had to be taken over by the republic, was doubly reinforced by the reference to the name Siegfried. Etymologically it was a compound of the German words for victory and peace, referring to those political forces who had prolonged the war by insisting on a peace dictated by a victorious Germany. In the light of Erzberger's recent reckoning with the old regime in the National Assembly, which concluded with the claim that their policies had actively prevented a reconciliatory peace, this reference has to be regarded as particularly condemning for the representatives of Germany's old regime. The name, furthermore, alludes to the tragic hero of the epic *Nibelungenlied* who was killed by treachery. In the context of the massive losses of the war detailed in the 'balance sheet' this allusion, however, cannot be taken at face value. Rather, it undermines the old regime's self-perception as having been betrayed by meticulously listing their failures which made the war into a massive loss for Germany and into a fatal blow for the monarchy. Reprint of Erzberger's speech before the National Assembly on 25 July 1919 in Eduard Heilfron (ed.), *Die Deutsche Nationalversammlung im Jahre 1919/1920 in ihrer Arbeit für den Aufbau des neuen deutschen Volksstaates. Band 5* (Berlin, n.d.), pp. 157-199. For the etymology of the name Siegfried see *Der grosse Brockhaus. Band 10* (16, Wiesbaden, 1956), p. 701. A concise summary of the *Nibelungenlied* can be found in *Ibid. Band 8*, pp. 375f.

volunteers' patriotism, German soldiers' morale, German endurance and Germany's 8 'patriotic poets'.[1512] This laconic reduction of the war to a 'balance-sheet' of costs and gains revealing a massive loss for Germany functioned as a reminder that Germany's first democracy had not been able to rise 'like a phoenix from the ashes' but was heavily burdened with the economic, political and moral consequences of the conflict. Aware that the revolution had developed as a consequence of the war and was ideologically linked to Germany's defeat, republican discourse sought to establish a distinctive interpretation of the conflict to create a moral justification for the new state.

As both high revolutionary ideals and moral aspirations were too abstract to legitimise the revolution, republican forces codified a unified republican narrative of the war focusing on suffering, death, and destruction to confront right-wing attempts to glorify the conflict and deny the reality of defeat. The resulting fractured memory of the war was distinctly political, representing two irreconcilable political cultures which were referred to repeatedly to define the new state's ideological parameters. In focusing on the horrors and the inequality of the war experience, republican discourse largely sought to utilise civilians and soldiers' war weariness to rally support. This interpretation of the conflict also allowed the republic to discredit its political rivals as responsible for the people's suffering and to depict the revolution as a republican victory over German militarism. The republican claim to the true interpretation of the conflict thus must be seen as a crucial component of the Weimar Republic's political identity, meriting more historical attention than it has hitherto received.

Although republican propaganda regarding the war seemed to enjoy wide acceptance in the aftermath of the revolution, it was weakened by its inability to portray the revolution as untainted. Its defensive position in the face of right-wing allegations that the revolution was responsible for the economic and political instability which followed the war led to inconsistencies in the republican foundation narrative. The republic's ultimate failure to provide tangible solutions to the problems inherited from the conflict or to apply its proclaimed pacifist ideals suggested that the new state was unable to implement its revolutionary promises. The explanation for the Weimar Republic's political instability should therefore not be sought in the republican failure to recognise significance of the war for the creation of the new state but in its failure to apply this recognition more consistently.

References to the conflict in post-revolutionary discourse also aimed to exclude the imperial regime's representatives from public life by identifying them as targets for popular resentment arising from the war experience. Republican discourse particularly singled out Germany's former monarch Wilhelm II and former military leader Erich Ludendorff as scapegoats representing the sins of Germany's wartime regime, for their

[1512] 'Die Bilanz' *Ulk* 31 (1 August 1919).

reputations were already tainted by their decision to leave Germany at a time of crisis. Wilhelm was generally depicted as an incompetent fool devoid of any leadership qualities who failed to adhere to his own dictum of wartime sacrifice, while Ludendorff was held responsible for Germany's collapse as Germany's main military decision-maker Thus the two representatives of the old elite which republican discourse chose to symbolise its moral self-destruction were the two least likely to pose a serious threat to the new state, as their condemnation was not a particularly divisive issue.

The corollary was that republican discourse did not really question wartime hero Paul von Hindenburg's continued political role, fearing that criticism would undermine the new state's legitimacy. Although republican propaganda generally defined Hindenburg as apolitical to prevent him regaining political significance, widespread respect for his supposed wartime heroism frustrated a critical assessment of his military failures. Reluctant to question the continued validity of wartime values such as the adoration of Hindenburg, republican discourse failed to exploit a potentially powerful means of limiting their impact on the republic's ideological framework. Unlike Wilhelm II and Ludendorff, who had left their positions of power before or during the revolution, Hindenburg and right-wing parties professing (more or less reluctant) allegiance to the new state were harder to exclude from the inclusive republican design. Identifying right-wing propaganda as a threat to the new state' stability, republican discourse responded by stereotyping political forces who questioned republican legitimacy to govern. Denouncing the right as warmongers and war profiteers, republican discourse questioned its moral and political credibility, suggesting that it had no right to interfere in republican politics. Allegations that prominent right-wingers had evaded their duty to the fatherland also implied the whole imperial hierarchy's failure to adhere to their own creed of wartime sacrifice. Such stereotypes were intended to neutralise right-wing attacks on the republic and to unite the German population against a shared internal enemy.

The political uncertainty following the revolution, which forced each republican party to assert its own claim to power in the new state, seriously obstructed such endeavours. Each party's propaganda intended to establish its respective claim to leadership vis-à-vis its republican rivals as well as the old imperial elite, stretching the boundaries of those considered discredited by their wartime conduct to include its most likely electoral competitor. Allegations of war profiteering, for example, ceased to function as a defence of the republic for they were used by every party from the KPD to the NSDAP. Such rivalries' consequently diluted republican attempts to undermine the political credibility of Germany's former leadership and frustrated a constructive narrative dissociating the republic from the country's wartime conduct.

Political discourse allocating responsibility for the outbreak and outcome of the war provided particularly useful case studies in assessing the weaknesses of the portrayal of the war in republican propaganda. In line with republican attempts to discredit the old

elite with reference to their wartime conduct, a genuine investigation into German war guilt could have strengthened the republic by portraying its opponents as morally and politically questionable. The potential benefits of such an approach were evident in republican attempts to dissociate the population from Germany's wartime politics, a tactic used in republican discourse to defend the new state's legitimacy nationally and internationally. Yet republican discourse failed to investigate the imperial regime's role in the war as a strategy to stabilise the republic because it prioritised the perceived need for political self-defence. Domestically, USPD allegations criticising the SPD's wartime conduct led the latter to defend its support for the war, reintroducing belligerent wartime ideology into post-war discourse. Internationally, the German Foreign Office suppressed any genuine investigation of German war guilt, arguing that admissions of responsibility would help the Allies to impose harsher peace terms. Germany's official position in the war guilt debate thus focused on international rather than German war guilt, preventing a political reckoning for Germany's old elite. This continuation of selective censorship, reminiscent of wartime propaganda in its identification of the Allies as the gravest threat to its existence, obstructed Germany's mental demobilisation. It also prevented a critical assessment of wartime propaganda and the need for political change on the part of the population, providing a platform for the right-wing culture of denial.

In contrast, republican responses to the right-wing 'stab in the back' allegation, which blamed the republic for defeat, did not gloss over the failure of Germany's former military leadership. Instead republican discourse decisively rejected responsibility, blaming erroneous wartime strategy for Germany's military collapse. Focusing particularly on the OHL's unrealistic assessment of Germany's strength, which inspired opposition to a compromise peace, republican propaganda portrayed Ludendorff and the right-wing parties as the ones whose incompetent leadership had really stabbed the German people in the back. Yet rivalry between the SPD and USPD, who attacked each other with reciprocal vehemence, also weakened a shared republican identification of the old elite as the ones responsible for the difficult legacy of the war.

Republican discourse challenged another component of the 'stab in the back' myth by deconstructing the right-wing stereotype of the heroic German warrior to prove that Germany's weakened and demoralised soldiers lacked the strength for a last-ditch defence. By implying that Germany could not have fought on, republican propaganda suggested that the armistice was necessary to prevent a collapse of the front. The impact of the republican narrative of defeat was weakened by contradictory explanations blaming the population's unwillingness to join a last ditch defence on Ludendorff's unnecessarily rash demand for an armistice. Republican attempts to devise a counter-narrative to the right-wing myth reinforced the notion that the war was lost ideologically, undermining the idea that the defeat was purely military in origin. In response to the different strands of the 'stab in the back' allegation, republican propaganda inadvertently adopted the

accusation's irrational logic while losing its simplicity. Although the republican interpretation of defeat was weakened by an attempt to respond logically to a set of irrational allegations, the continued promotion of the republican interpretation of the war may have contributed to the 'stab in the back' myth's failure to win over a majority of the population until the republican forces' political influence declined.

As a symbolic act marking Germany's transition from war to peace, military demobilisation provided another opportunity for the republic to establish its authority in interpreting the war's legacy for the new state. The republic's original narrative of the war as futile carnage, however, failed to acknowledge the widespread sense of loss which accompanied demobilisation. This predicament encouraged republican discourse to imply that the soldiers had died for the values now represented by the republic. A concurrent adoption of the traditional wartime concept of soldiers' heroic sacrifice during the ceremonies welcoming them home restricted the impact of such political constructs. Uncritical republican references to the 'spirit of 1914' and Germany's 'undefeated army', intended to woo soldiers into supporting the republic, contributed to the continued acceptance of wartime propaganda as part of the republic's political discourse and Germany's commemorative culture. The largely uncritical adoption of wartime rituals and symbolism in ceremonies welcoming the troops home also illustrated the republican failure to invest military demobilisation with a symbolic representation of republican values. The republic, more concerned with averting immediate threats than constructing a rigorous republican narrative, thus failed to complement the successful military demobilisation with a cultural one.

In contrast republican approaches to the demobilisation of war invalids, who were often displaced from their former civilian lives, made very little use of wartime rhetoric. Identifying them as a potential political threat to the republic due to their high levels of organisation, republican discourse attempted to bribe rather than woo war invalids into supporting the new state. Seeking to gain moral credit for taking charge of their welfare, republican discourse largely failed to refer to their suffering as a means to discredit those responsible for their fate. The exclusive focus on relieving war victims' economic suffering meant that they did not identify with the new republic when welfare payments overstretched its budget. It can be argued that republican discourse approached the matter the wrong way round: while a more critical interpretation of the war would probably not have obstructed soldiers' reintegration into the new state, Germany's war victims could have been appeased by a more pronounced acknowledgement of their sacrifice.

While the demobilisation of ordinary soldiers and war invalids was a purely domestic affair, the Allied refusal to repatriate Germany's prisoners of war in the aftermath of the armistice had a significant impact on international relations. Continued rumours and assumptions regarding the prisoners' return and reports of prisoner abuse

within republican discourse fuelled popular resentment, seriously politicising the issue. Concerned that right-wing propaganda was making it a target for this bitterness, the government blamed the Allies for the postponement of the prisoners' return. The depiction of Germany as an innocent victim of Allied arbitrariness in appeals to neutrals to support the release of German prisoners severely obstructed Germany's ideological demobilisation. The failure to influence Allied decisions regarding the prisoners' repatriation or to control their political education on return limited the republic's imprint on the prisoners' reintegration into the new state.

The basic misconception which shaped republican self-perception in the debate on prisoners re-emerged with added vigour regarding the Treaty of Versailles. Having defined the revolution as a clear break with Germany's past, republican discourse depicted the new state as disconnected from Germany's wartime conduct and deserving of a just peace. This approach had two major drawbacks: firstly, the attempt to use the popular desire for peace to rally support for the republic only worked as long as the peace terms accorded with the euphoric revolutionary expectations. By integrating these visions into the republican foundation narrative, democratic forces staked their credibility on a process they could not control. Secondly, the perception that the new Germany was innocent lent credibility to the Foreign Office's wilfully unrealistic interpretation of Wilson's Fourteen Points. This interpretation would eventually magnify the shocked response to the unexpectedly harsh peace terms and provide Germany's right wing with ammunition to turn on the republic. Although the republican peace strategy pursued different aims to the imperial regime's wartime propaganda, it showed the same unfounded optimism as official wartime propaganda.

Even as it annexed Wilson's ideals and appealed to the Socialist International to support Germany in its quest for a just peace, German peace propaganda demonised the Allies. Republican discourse focused on the Allied sea blockade as evidence of the Allies' cruelty and continued belligerence and the comparative insignificance of German wartime misconduct. Such aggressive anti-Allied rhetoric invalidated Germany's alleged commitment to Wilson's ideals, while failing to improve the treaty's terms. It also more importantly revived wartime unity against a foreign enemy, preventing a critical assessment of the imperial elite's wartime conduct. The politically indiscriminate nationalist outrage against the peace, which only individual pacifists and the USPD refused to subscribe to, also fuelled unrealistic expectations regarding Germany's options in responding to the peace.

In light of Germany's interpretation of Wilson's ideals which envisaged that Germany would occupy a prominent place in the new world order, the Allied peace draft appeared unbearably harsh, evoking disappointment and dismay. Yet official German propaganda did not amend its aggressive strategy, emphasising the horrific consequences of the peace and thus encouraging people to evaluate it emotionally rather than rationally.

Attacks on political forces promoting a more moderate approach suggested that the political climate obfuscated the division between republican and right-wing forces, instead polarising moderate and nationalist republicans. Thus the treaty's devastating impact on the Weimar Republic did not spring solely from its terms, but from the republican failure to base its response to it on rational, factual considerations.

As the government lacked the military power to ensure an amendment of the treaty, vehement rejection was its only means of forcing the Allies to moderate their terms. This approach also aimed to demonstrate the government's brave defiance towards the Allies, in order to dispel doubts that its inability to influence the Allied peace strategy undermined its political credibility. The respective audiences for these divergent messages were, however, confused. While confirming the Allied willingness to subdue Germany by force, it prevented the German population from recognising that it had no choice but to accept the treaty. The government's ultimate decision to sign the Treaty of Versailles eventually turned the anger fanned by Germany's peace propaganda against the republic, which had linked its political legitimacy to achieving a bearable peace settlement.

The government's inability to amend the terms and the eventual admission that the 'unacceptable' treaty would have to be signed undermined the republic's credibility. Acceptance of the peace therefore burdened the republic with the need to restore its legitimacy while simultaneously implementing the treaty's unpopular terms. Although republican propaganda responded to right-wing attempts to exploit the government's precarious situation by reiterating the responsibility of the right for the nature of the peace, it did so from a defensive position undermined by mutual recrimination between republican parties. Republican attempts to reconnect the causal links between Germany's wartime politics and the peace, severed by its previous propaganda, illustrated the internal inconsistency of the republican foundation narrative. This inconsistency fatally undermined its long-term impact. Standing as evidence of the republican failure to deliver the just peace it promised, the Treaty of Versailles overwrote the positive revolutionary foundation narrative of the new state.

Once Germany was legally obliged to enforce its terms, the fatalistic view of the peace as incompatible with Germany's survival largely gave way to a more pragmatic approach promoting fulfilment. As evident from the extradition debate, the political polarisation arising from the incompatibility of national and international demands posed a significant threat to the government's authority. Although republican discourse attempted to counteract the nationalist frenzy of opposition to the extradition of German war criminals, it remained unable to contain its influence on republican policy-making. Responding to threats from the army and the right that they would actively oppose any enforcement of extradition, the republic was forced to admit that it lacked the power to carry out the Allied demands without seriously destabilising the country. Theoretically, the subsequent compromise with the Allies, who eventually allowed German war criminals to

be tried by a German court, should have been seen as a success for moderate republican pragmatism. The fact that it appeared to be a victory for right-wing opposition to the Treaty of Versailles, however, limited its political benefit for the republic. Irrespective of whether or not republican discourse overemphasized its inability to carry out extradition to moderate Allied demands, the extradition debate suggested that the government was too weak to enforce its promises.

The army's political role within the new state was a significant reason for the government's limited power. Despite their opposition to German militarism in November 1918, Germany's democratic forces lacked a clear concept of a distinctively republican army. The need for smooth demobilisation in accordance with the armistice terms thus led the new state to welcome co-operation with the military leadership. The success of this collaboration in securing a successful military demobilisation despite divergent political objectives initially postponed a thorough restructuring of the army. Reform of the military was only implemented in response to the unreliability of existing formations at a time of instability. The perception that the radical left was an immediate threat to the government meant that army restructuring was more concerned with the troops' fighting strength than with their ideological commitment to the republic. The breach of the revolutionary promise to control the army, evident in the decision to leave reform to its own leadership and to uphold officers' positions of power, and the government's use of it to put down political unrest alienated even moderate left-wingers from the new state. Government reluctance to intervene in the army's internal affairs also encouraged it to agitate against the republic, by indicating that the government was too weak to interfere.

Disillusioned with the government's failure to prioritise the restoration of Germany's military power during the peace negotiations, the army responded to its decision to sign the treaty with open threats of insubordination. Yet with the exception of *Die Freiheit*, none of the party-affiliated newspapers suggested that the threat posed by the officers' questionable loyalty merited a reconsideration of military policy. The repeated coverage of officers' anti-democratic demagogy concurrent with assurances that they were loyal to the republic in the social-democratic *Vorwärts* illustrated the SPD's dilemma, as it recognised that the government was reliant on an army which also posed a significant threat to it. Defence Minister Noske thus opposed any attempt to counteract the increasingly reactionary agitation with republican propaganda, fearing that any political agitation would undermine the army's military effectiveness. Increasing evidence that the reactionary officer corps translated appeals for the creation of an apolitical army into an excuse to purge republican influences from its ranks, eventually led *Vorwärts* to criticise the government's failure to control the army's political radicalisation. Republican military policy thus severely damaged the republic's reputation by apparently giving reactionary militarism free reign while encouraging the army to pursue its own agenda. The government's subsequent inability to prevent or punish efforts to enforce the army's

interests in defiance of government orders eventually suggested that it had surrendered its proclaimed principles of equality and justice. The fact that the republic had lost political control, because it had failed to heed the lessons which the revolutionary foundation narrative had claimed to learn from the war, was eventually reflected in the elections on 6 June 1920. The lack of support for the republican parties clearly showed that the republic was no longer perceived to have improved the 'balance sheet' of the war. The 'revanchist, anti-republican' narrative of the conflict, which Benjamin Ziemann identified as an integrative momentum for Germany's fragmented middle classes from the mid-1920s, could only take hold once the republican interpretation of the war lost its political credibility.[1513]

[1513] Ziemann, 'Die Erinnerung an den Ersten Weltkrieg' in Schneider (ed.), *Kriegserlebnis und Legendenbildung*, p. 523.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Newspapers and Journals

- *Bayerisches Vaterland*
- *Deutsche Zeitung*
- *Der Drache*
- *Frankfurter Zeitung*
- *Die Freiheit*
- *Neue Preußische Zeitung (Kreuzzeitung)*
- *Das Tage-Buch*
- *Ulk*
- *Vorwärts*
- *Der wahre Jacob*
- *Die Welt am Montag*
- *Die Weltbühne*

Archival Material

Bundesarchiv, Berlin
- Kurt Eisner Papers

International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam
- Rudolf Breitscheid Papers
- Karl Kautsky Papers

Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung, Archiv der sozialen Demokratie, Bonn
- 6/FLBL
- NUR
- Wilhelm Dittmann Papers

Bibliothek für Zeitgeschichte, Stuttgart
- Flugblätter 1918-1933

Primary Literature and Edited Sources

- Achten, Udo and Krupke, Siegfried (eds.), *An Alle! Lesen! Weitergeben! Flugblätter der Arbeiterbewegung von 1848 bis 1933* (Berlin, Bonn, 1982).
- Afflerbach, Holger (ed.), *Kaiser Wilhelm II. als Oberster Kriegsherr im Ersten Weltkrieg. Quellen aus der militärischen Umgebung des Kaisers 1914-1918* (Munich, 2005).
- *Ala Zeitungskatalog* (Berlin, 1920).
- Arnold, Friedrich (ed.), *Anschläge. Politische Plakate in Deutschland 1900 - 1970* (Frankfurt, Vienna, Zurich, 1979).

- Bernstein, Eduard, *Die deutsche Revolution von 1918/19. Geschichte der Entstehung und der ersten Arbeitsperiode der deutschen Republik* (Berlin, 1921).
- Department of State (ed.), *The Treaty of Versailles and After. Annotations of the Text of the Treaty* (Washington, 1947).
- Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin (ed.), *Digitale Bibliothek: Der erste Weltkrieg in Deutschen Bildpostkarten* 66 (Berlin, 2002).
- ---, *Digitale Bibliothek: Kaiser, Führer, Republik. Politische Postkarten vom Kaiserreich zur Besatzungszeit* 92 (Berlin, 2003).
- Deutsche Waffenstillstands-Kommission (ed.), *Der Waffenstillstand 1918-1919* (Berlin, 1928).
- Donat, Helmut and Wild, Adolf (eds.), *Hellmut von Gerlach: Die grosse Zeit der Lüge. Der Erste Weltkrieg und die deutsche Mentalität (1871-1921)* (Bremen, 1994).
- Eisner, Kurt, *Sozialismus als Aktion. Ausgewählte Aufsätze und Reden* (Frankfurt, 1975).
- Frank, Leonhard, *Der Mensch ist gut* (Potsdam, 1919).
- Geiss, Imanuel (ed.), *Hermann Kantorowicz: Gutachten zur Kriegsschuldfrage 1914* (Frankfurt, 1967).
- ---, *July 1914. Die europäische Krise und der Ausbruch des Ersten Weltkriegs* (Munich, 1965).
- Gerold-Tucholsky, Mary and Raddatz, Fritz J. (eds.), *Kurt Tucholsky: Gesammelte Werke* (Reinbek, 1996).
- Guth, Ekkehart P., *Der Loyalitätskonflikt des deutschen Offizierskorps in der Revolution 1918-1920* (Frankfurt, 1983).
- Heilfron, Eduard (ed.), *Die Deutsche Nationalversammlung im Jahre 1919/1920 in ihrer Arbeit für den Aufbau des neuen deutschen Volksstaates. Band 5* (Berlin, n.d.).
- Hessisches Landesmuseum Darmstadt, *Politische Plakate der Weimarer Republik 1918-1933* (Darmstadt, 1980).
- Hirschfeld, Magnus and Gaspar, Andreas (eds.), *Sittengeschichte des Ersten Weltkrieges* (2, Hanau, n. d. but 1964).
- Homer, 'Iliad' in CD-ROM, *Great Poetry Classics* (California, 1984).
- Horne, Charles F., *Source Records of the Great War Volume I* (n.p., 1923).
- Engel, Gerhard, Huch, Gaby, and Materna, Ingo (eds.), *Groß-Berliner Arbeiter- und Soldatenräte in der Revolution 1918/19. Dokumente der Vollversammlungen und des Bezugsrates von Generalstreikbeschluß am 3 März 1919 bis zur Spaltung der Räteorgane im Juli 1919* (Berlin, 2002).
- Hürten, Heinz (ed.), *Quellen zur Geschichte des Parlamentarismus und der politischen Parteien: Zwischen Revolution und Kapp-Putsch. Militär und Innenpolitik 1918-1920* (Düsseldorf, 1977).
- Jansen, Christian, *Emil Julius Gumbel: Portrait eines Zivilisten* (Heidelberg, 1991).
- Kaehler, Siegfried A. (ed.), *Albrecht von Thaer: Generalstabsdienst an der Front und in der O.H.L* (Göttingen, 1958).
- Kind, Hero, and Fischer, Heinz-Dietrich (eds.), *Handbuch Deutscher Zeitungen 1917* (Berlin, 1917; reprint: Stuttgart, 1992).
- Kurzke, Hermann and Stachorski, Stephan (eds.), *Thomas Mann. Essays für das neue Deutschland 1919-1925* (Frankfurt, 1993).
- Lamszus, Wilhelm, *Das Irrenhaus* (Hamburg, 1919).
- Latzko, Andreas, *Menschen im Krieg* (Zurich, 1918).
- Lehmann-Russbüldt, Otto, *Warum erfolgte der Zusammenbruch an der Westfront?* (Berlin, 1919).

- Leuß, Hans, *Wilhelm der Letzte! Eine Vorhersage aus 1914* (Berlin, 1918).
- Lipping Alexander (ed.), *Der Traum der Republik: literarische Revue über die Zerstörung der Weimarer Republik* (Cologne, 1988).
- Longerich, Peter, *Die Erste Republik. Dokumente zur Geschichte des Weimarer Staates* (Munich, 1992).
- Ludendorff, Erich, *Meine Kriegserinnerungen 1914-1918* (Berlin, 1936).
- Michalka, Wolfgang and Niedhart, Gottfried (eds.), *Deutsche Geschichte 1918-1933. Dokumente zur Innen- und Aussenpolitik* (Frankfurt, 1992).
- Prager, Eugen, *Geschichte der USPD. Entstehung und Entwicklung der unabhängigen sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands* (Berlin, 1921).
- Scheidemann, Philipp, *Memoiren eines Sozialdemokraten* (Dresden, 1928).
- Schneider, Peter-Paul (ed.), *Heinrich Mann: Macht und Mensch. Essays* (Frankfurt, 1989).
- Schrader, Bärbel (ed.), *Der Fall Remarque. Im Westen nichts Neues. Eine Dokumentation* (Leipzig, 1992).
- Schulze, Hagen (ed.), *Akten der Reichskanzlei. Weimarer Republik. Das Kabinett Scheidemann 13. Februar bis 20 Juni 1919* vol. 1 (Boppard, 1971).
- Schütz, Hans J. (ed.), *Der wahre Jacob. Ein halbes Jahrhundert in Faksimiles* (Berlin, Bonn, 1977).
- Steglich, Wolfgang (ed.), *Die Friedenspolitik der Mittelmächte 1917/18* (Wiesbaden, 1964).
- Steinhoff, Johannes, Pechel, Peter and Showalter, Dennis (eds.), *Deutsche im Zweiten Weltkrieg. Zeitzeugen sprechen* (Munich, 1989).
- Ströbel, Heinrich, *Die Kriegsschuld der Rechtssozialisten* (Berlin, 1919).
- Tate Gallery (ed.), *Otto Dix 1891-1969* (London, 1992).
- Taube, Max, *Zum 9. November dem Trauer- und Bußtag des deutschen Volkes* (Berlin, 1919).
- Ulrich, Bernd, and Ziemann, Benjamin (eds.), *Krieg im Frieden. Die umkämpfte Erinnerung an den Ersten Weltkrieg. Quellen und Dokumente* (Frankfurt, 1997).
- Unruh, Fritz von, *Opfergang* (Berlin, 1919).
- USPD, *Handbuch für die Wähler der Unabhängigen Sozialdemokratischen Partei. Reichstagswahl 1920* (n.p., 1920).
- Vetter, Karl, *Die Anklage der Feldgrauen. Ludendorff ist schuld.* (Berlin, 1919).
- Voigt, Arno, *Der deutsche Offizier der Zukunft. Gedanken eines "Unmilitärischen"* (Stuttgart, 1919).
- Wehler, Hans-Ulrich (ed.), *Ludwig Quidde: Caligula. Schriften über Militarismus und Pazifismus* (Frankfurt, 1977).
- Wette, Wolfram (ed.), *Aus den Geburtsstunden der Weimarer Republik. Das Tagebuch des Obersten Ernst von den Bergh* (Düsseldorf, 1991).
- Zech, Paul, *Das Grab der Welt. Eine Passion wider den Krieg auf Erden* (Hamburg, Berlin, 1919).

Secondary Literature

- Afflerbach, Holger, 'Die militärische Planung des Deutschen Reiches im Ersten Weltkrieg' in Wolfgang Michalka (ed.), *Der Erste Weltkrieg. Wirkung, Wahrnehmung, Analyse* (Munich, 1994), pp. 280-318.

- Albertin, Lothar, *Liberalismus und Demokratie am Anfang der Weimarer Republik. Eine vergleichende Analyse der Deutschen Demokratischen Partei und der Deutschen Volkspartei* (Düsseldorf, 1972).
- Albertini, Luigi, *The Origins of the War of 1914. Volume III: The Epilogue of the Crisis of July 1914; the Declarations of War and of Neutrality* (Oxford, 1967)
- Alemann, Ulrich von, *Das Parteiensystem der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Bonn, 2000).
- Asmuss, Burkhard, *Republik ohne Chance? Akzeptanz und Legitimation der Weimarer Republik in der deutschen Tagespresse zwischen 1918 und 1923* (Berlin, New York, 1994).
- Astore, William J. and Showalter, Dennis E., *Hindenburg. Icon of German Militarism* (Dulles, 2005).
- Barth, Boris, *Dolchstosslegenden und politische Desintegration: das Trauma der deutschen Niederlage im Ersten Weltkrieg, 1914-1933* (Düsseldorf, 2003).
- Bartz, Thorsten, *Allgegenwärtige Fronten - Sozialistische und linke Kriegsromane in der Weimarer Republik 1918-1933. Motive, Funktionen und Position im Vergleich mit nationalistischen Romanen und Aufzeichnungen im Kontext einer kriegsliterarischen Debatte* (Frankfurt, Berlin, Bern, New York, Paris, Vienna, 1997).
- Bavaj, Riccardo, *Von links gegen Weimar. Linkes antiparlamentarisches Denken in der Weimarer Republik* (Bonn, 2005).
- Becker, Jean-Jaques, 'Frankreich und der gescheiterte Versuch das deutsche Reich zu zerstören' in in Gerd Krumeich (ed.), Versailles 1919. Ziele - Wirkung - Wahrnehmung (Essen, 2001), pp. 65-70.
- Behmer, Markus, Von der Schwierigkeit, gegen Illusionen zu kämpfen: Der Publizist Leopold von Schwarzschild – Leben und Werk vom Kaiserreich zur Flucht aus Europa (Münster, 1997).
- Behrenbeck, Sabine, 'Heldenkult und Opfermythos. Mechanismen der Kriegsbegeisterung 1918-1945' in Marcel van der Linden and Gottfried Mergner (eds.), *Kriegsbegeisterung und mentale Kriegsvorbereitung: interdisziplinäre Studien* (Berlin, 1991), pp. 143-159.
- Benz, Wolfgang and Graml, Hermann (eds.), *Biographisches Lexikon zur Weimarer Republik* (Munich, 1988).
- Bergmann, Joachim (ed.), *Die Schaubühne. Die Weltbühne 1905-1933: Bibliographie und Register mit Annotationen* (Munich, 1991).
- Bessel, Richard, *Germany after the First World War* (Oxford, 1993).
- ---, 'The 'front generation' and the politics of Weimar Germany' in Mark Roseman (ed.), *Generations in conflict. Youth revolt and generation formation in Germany 1770-1968* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 121-136.
- ---, 'Kriegserfahrungen und Kriegserinnerungen: Nachwirkungen des Ersten Weltkrieges auf das politisch und soziale Leben der Weimarer Republik' in Marcel van der Linden and Gottfried Mergner (eds.), *Kriegsbegeisterung und mentale Kriegsvorbereitung: interdisziplinäre Studien* (Berlin, 1991), pp. 73-88.
- ---, 'State and Society in Germany in the aftermath of the First World War' in Eve Rosenhaft and W. Robert Lee (eds.), *State and social change in Germany 1880-1980* (New York, Oxford, Munich, 1990).
- ---, 'Die Heimkehr der Soldaten. Das Bild der Frontsoldaten in der Öffentlichkeit der Weimarer Republik' in Gerhard Hirschfeld, Gerd Krumeich and Irina Renz (eds.), *"Keiner fühlt sich hier mehr als Mensch..." Erlebnis und Wirkung des Ersten Weltkriegs* (Frankfurt, 1996), pp. 260-282.
- ---, '1918-1919 in der deutschen Geschichte' in Dietrich Papenfuß and Wolfgang Schieder (eds.), *Deutsche Umbrüche im 20. Jahrhundert* (Cologne, Weimar, Vienna, 2000), pp. 173-182.

- Boemeke, Manfred F., 'Woodrow Wilson's Image of Germany, the War-Guilt Question, and the Treaty of Versailles', in ---, Gerald D. Feldman and Elisabeth Glaser (eds.); *The Treaty of Versailles. A reassessment after 75 years* (Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, 1998), pp. 603-614.
- Boll, Friedhelm, *Frieden ohne Revolution? Friedensstrategien der deutschen Sozialdemokratie vom Erfurter Programm 1891 bis zur Revolution 1918* (Bonn, 1980).
- Bracher, Karl Dietrich, *Die Auflösung der Republik* (Düsseldorf, 1984).
- Brandt, Susanne, *Vom Kriegsschauplatz zum Gedächtnisraum: Die Westfront 1914-1940* (Baden-Baden, 2000).
- Bruendel, Steffen, *Volksgemeinschaft oder Volksstaat. Die „Ideen von 1914" und die Neuordnung Deutschlands im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Berlin, 2003).
- Buchner, Bernd, *Um nationale und republikanische Identität. Die deutsche Sozialdemokratie und der Kampf um die politischen Symbole in der Weimarer Republik* (Bonn, 2001).
- Bucholz, Arden, *Hans Delbrück & The German Military Establishment* (Iowa City, 1985).
- Carsten, Francis L., *Reichswehr und Politik 1918-1933* (Cologne, Berlin, 1966).
- Cavallie, James, *Ludendorff und Kapp in Schweden. Aus dem Leben zweier Verlierer* (Frankfurt, 1995).
- Cecil, Lamar, *Wilhelm II. Emperor and Exile 1900-1941* (Chapel Hill, London, 1996).
- Chickering, Roger, '"War Enthusiasm?" Public opinion and the outbreak of war in 1914' in Holger Afflerbach and David Stevenson, *An Improbable War? The outbreak of World War I and European political culture before 1914* (New York, Oxford, 2007), pp. 200-212.
- ---, 'Sore Loser. Ludendorff's Total War' in Roger Chickering and Stig Förster (eds.), *The Shadows of Total War: Europe, East Asia, and the United States 1919-1939* (Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, 2003), pp. 151-178.
- ---, *Imperial Germany and the Great War, 1914-1918* (Cambridge, 1998).
- Cohen, Deborah, 'The War's Returns. Disabled Veterans in Britain and Germany, 1914-1939' in Roger Chickering and Stig Förster (eds.), *The Shadows of Total War: Europe, East Asia, and the United States 1919-1939* (Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, 2003), pp. 113-129.
- Daniel, Ute, 'Fiktionen, Friktionen und Fakten - Frauenlohnarbeit im Ersten Weltkrieg' in Wolfgang Michalka (ed.), *Der Erste Weltkrieg. Wirkung, Wahrnehmung, Analyse* (Munich, 1994), pp. 530-563.
- *Der grosse Brockhaus. Band 8/10* (16, Wiesbaden, 1956).
- Deist, Wilhelm, 'Der militärische Zusammenbruch des Kaiserreichs. Zur Realität der Dolchstoßlegende' in Ursula Büttner, *Das Unrechtsregime. Internationale Forschung über den Nationalsozialismus* (Hamburg, 1986), pp. 101-129.
- ---, 'Verdeckter Militärstreik im Kriegsjahr 1918?' in Wolfram Wette (ed.), *Der Krieg des kleinen Mannes* (Munich, 1992), pp. 146-167.
- Diehl, James M., *Paramilitary Politics in Weimar Germany* (Bloomington, London, 1977).
- Donat, Helmut and Holl, Karl (eds.), *Die Friedensbewegung. Organisierter Pazifismus in Deutschland, Österreich und in der Schweiz* (Düsseldorf, 1983).
- Dorpalen, Andreas, *Hindenburg in der Geschichte der Weimarer Republik* (Berlin, Frankfurt, 1966).
- Dreyer, Michael and Lembcke, Oliver, *Die deutsche Diskussion um die Kriegsschuldfrage 1918/19* (Berlin, 1993).

- Dülffer, Jost, 'Frieden schließen nach einem Weltkrieg? Die mentale Verlängerung der Kriegssituation in den Friedensschluß' in Jost Dülffer and Gerd Krumeich (eds.), *Der verlorene Frieden. Politik und Kriegskultur nach 1918* (Essen, 2002), pp. 19-38.
- Eksteins, Modris, *The limits of reason. The German Democratic press and the collapse of Weimar democracy* (London, 1975).
- ---, 'The Frankfurter Zeitung: Mirror of Weimar Democracy' in *Journal of Contemporary History* 6, 4 (1971), pp. 3-28.
- Epstein, Klaus, *Matthias Erzberger und das Dilemma der deutschen Demokratie* (Frankfurt, Berlin, Vienna, 1976).
- Erdmann, Karl Dietrich, *Der Erste Weltkrieg* (9, Munich, 1980).
- ---, *Die Weimarer* Republik, (Munich, 1993).
- Erger, Johannes, *Der Kapp-Lüttwitz Putsch. Ein Beitrag zur deutschen Innenpolitik 1919/1920* (Düsseldorf, 1967).
- Feldman, Gerald D., *Army, Industry and Labour in Germany* (Oxford, 1992).
- ---, 'Economic and Social Problems of the German Demobilization, 1918-1919', *The Journal of Modern History* 1 (1975), pp. 1-47.
- Fischer, Fritz, *Der Griff nach der Weltmacht. Die Kriegszielpolitik des kaiserlichen Deutschland 1914/18* (Düsseldorf, 1984).
- Fischer, Heinz Dietrich, *Handbuch der politischen Presse in Deutschland, 1480-1980. Synopse rechtlicher, struktureller und wirtschaftlicher Grundlagen der Tendenzpublizistik im Kommunikationsfeld* (Düsseldorf, 1981).
- Förster, Stig, 'Der deutsche Generalstab und die Illusion des kurzen Krieges 1871-1914. Metakritik eines Mythos' in Johannes Burkhardt, Joseph Becker, Stig Förster and Günther Kronenbitter (eds.), *Lange und kurze Wege in den Ersten Weltkrieg. Vier Augsburger Beiträge zur Kriegsursachenforschung* (Munich, 1996), pp. 115-158.
- Frie, Ewald, 'Vorbild oder Spiegelbild? Kriegsbeschädigtenfürsorge in Deutschland 1914-1919' in Wolfgang Michalka (ed.), *Der Erste Weltkrieg. Wirkung, Wahrnehmung, Analyse* (Munich, 1994), pp. 563-580.
- Fries, Helmut, *Die grosse Katharsis: der Erste Weltkrieg in der Sicht deutscher Dichter und Gelehrter* (Konstanz, 1994).
- Frye, Bruce B, *Liberal Democrats in the Weimar Republic. The History of the German Democratic Party and the German State Party* (Carbondale and Edwardsville, 1985').
- Fussel, Paul, 'Der Einfluss kultureller Paradigmen auf die literarische Wiedergabe traumatischer Erfahrungen' in Klaus Vondung (ed.), *Der Erste Weltkrieg in der literarischen Gestaltung und symbolischen Deutung der Nationen* (Göttingen, 1980), pp. 175-187.
- Gessner, Dieter, *Die Weimarer Republik* (Darmstadt, 2002).
- Graf, Rüdiger, 'Die Politik der reinen Vernunft – das Scheitern des linken Sozialdemokraten Heinrich Ströbel zwischen Utopie und Realpolitik' in Andreas Wirsching and Jürgen Eder (eds.), *Vernunftrepublikanismus in der Weimarer Republik. Politik, Literatur, Wissenschaft* (Stuttgart, 2008), pp. 131-156.
- Grau, Bernhard, *Kurt Eisner 1867-1919. Eine Biographie* (Munich, 2001).
- Grebing, Helga, *Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung* (Munich, 1971).
- Grupp, Peter, *Deutsche Außenpolitik im Schatten von Versailles 1918-1920* (Paderborn, 1988).
- ---, 'Vom Waffenstillstand zum Versailler Vertrag. Die außen- und friedenspolitische Zielvorstellungen der deutschen Reichsführung' in Karl Dietrich Bracher, Manfred Funke and Hans-Adolf Jacobson (eds.), *Weimarer Republik 1918-1933* (Düsseldorf, 1987), pp. 285-302.
- Gutsche, Willibald et. al. (eds.), *Deutschland im Ersten Weltkrieg. Band 2: Januar 1915-Oktober 1917* (Leipzig, 2004).

- Hachtmann, Rüdiger, 'Success and Failure: The revolution of 1848' in Reinhard Rürup (ed.) *The Problem of Revolution in German, 1789-1989* (Oxford, New York), pp. 27-54.
- Hagenow, Elisabeth von, 'Mit Gott für König, Volk und Vaterland. Die Bildpostkarte als Massen- und Bekenntnismedium' in Raoul Zühlke (ed.), *Bildpropaganda im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Hamburg, 2000), pp. 145-178.
- Hagspiel, Hermann, *Verständigung zwischen Deutschland und Frankreich. Die deutsch-französische Außenpolitik der zwanziger Jahre im innenpolitischen Kräftefeld beider Länder* (Bonn, 1987).
- Halfbrodt, Dirk and Kehr, Wolfgang (eds.), *München 1919. Bildende Kunst, Fotografie der Revolutions- und Rätezeit* (Munich, 1979).
- Haupts, Leo, *Deutsche Friedenspolitik 1918-19. Eine Alternative zur Machtpolitik des Ersten Weltkrieges* (Düsseldorf, 1976).
- Heinemann, Ulrich, *Die verdrängte Niederlage: politische Öffentlichkeit und Kriegsschuldfrage in der Weimarer Republik* (Göttingen, 1983).
- Hepp, Michael, *Kurt Tucholsky. Biographische Annäherungen* (Reinbek, 1999).
- Herwig, Holger, 'Clio deceived: Patriotic Self-Censorship in Germany after the Great War' in Keith Wilson (ed.), *Forging the Collective Memory: Government and International Historians through two World Wars* (Providence, Oxford, 1996), pp. 87-127.
- Hirschfeld, Gerhard, Krumeich, Gerd and Renz, Irina (eds.), *Enzyklopädie Erster Weltkrieg* (Paderborn, 2004).
- Historische Kommission bei der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, *Neue Deutsche Biographie. Erster Band Aachen-Behaim* (Berlin, 1953).
- Hoegen, Jesko von, *Der Held von Tannenberg. Genese und Funktion des Hindenburg Mythos* (Cologne, Weimar, Vienna, 2007).
- Horne, John and Kramer, Alan, *German Atrocities, 1914: A History of Denial* (New Haven, London, 2001).
- Horne, John, 'Kulturelle Demobilmachung 1919-1939' in Wolfgang Hardtwig (ed.), *Politische Kulturgeschichte der Zwischenkriegszeit 1918-1939* (Göttingen, 1995), pp. 129-150.
- Hughes, Michael, *Nationalism and Society, Germany 1800-1945* (Kent, 1988).
- Irwin Lewis, Beth, *George Grosz. Art and Politics in the Weimar Republic* (Princeton, Oxford, 1991).
- Jahr, Christoph, *Gewöhnliche Soldaten. Desertion und Deserteure im deutschen und britischen Heer 1914-1918* (Göttingen, 1998).
- Janßen, Karl-Heinz, *Und morgen die ganze Welt... Deutsche Geschichte 1871-1945* (Bremen, 2003).
- Jeismann, Michael and Westheider, Rolf, 'Wofür stirbt der Bürger? Nationaler Totenkult und Staatsbürgertum in Deutschland und Frankreich seit der Französischen Revolution' in Reinhardt Kosselleck and Michael Jeismann (eds.), *Der politische Totenkult. Kriegerdenkmäler in der Moderne* (Munich, 1994), pp. pp. 23-50.
- Jeismann, Michael, 'Die Nationalhymne' in Etienne François and Hagen Schulze (eds), *Deutsche Erinnerungsorte* (Munich, 2001), pp. 490-497.
- Jones, Larry Eugene, *German Liberalism and the Dissolution of the Weimar Party System 1918-1933* (Chapel Hill, London, 1988).
- Jowett, Garth, and O'Donnell, Victoria, *Propaganda and Persuasion* (London, 1999).
- Kent, Bruce, 'Der Preis des Kriegs. Wie Deutschland den Ersten Weltkrieg bezahlte' in Bernd Hüppauf, *Ansichten vom Krieg. Vergleichende Studien zum Ersten Weltkrieg in Literatur und Gesellschaft* (Königsstein/Ts., 1984), pp. 231-239.
- Kienitz, Sabine, *Beschädigte Helden. Kriegsinvalidität und Körperbilder 1914-1923* (Paderborn, 2008).

- ---, 'Der verwundete Körper als Emblem der Niederlage? Zur Symbolik der Figur des Kriegsinvaliden in der Weimarer Republik' in Horst Carl, Hans-Henning Kortüm, Dieter Langewiesche and Friedrich Lenger (eds.), *Kriegsniederlagen. Erfahrungen und Erinnerungen* (Berlin, 2004), pp. 331-342.
- ---, 'Beschädigte Helden. Zur Politisierung des kriegsinvaliden Soldatenkörpers in der Weimarer Republik' in Jost Dülffer and Gerd Krumeich (eds.), *Der verlorene Frieden. Politik und Kriegskultur nach 1918* (Essen, 2002), pp. 199-214.
- Killy, Walther (ed.), *Deutsche Biographische Enzyklopädie. Band 3* (Darmstadt, 1996).
- Klein, Fritz, 'Between Compiègne and Versailles: The Germans on the Way from a Misunderstood Defeat to an Unwanted Peace' in Manfred F. Boemeke, Gerald D. Feldman and Elisabeth Glaser (eds.); *The Treaty of Versailles. A reassessment after 75 years* (Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, 1998), pp. 203-220.
- Klönne, Arno and Reese, Hartmut, *Kurze Geschichte der deutschen Gewerkschaftsbewegung* (Frankfurt, 1986).
- Kluge, Ulrich, *Soldatenräte und Revolution. Studien zur Militärpolitik in Deutschland 1918/1919* (Göttingen, 1975).
- ---, *Die deutsche Revolution 1918/1919. Staat, Politik und Gesellschaft zwischen Weltkrieg und Kapp-Putsch* (Frankfurt, 1985).
- Knock, Thomas J., 'Wilsonian Concepts and International Realities at the End of the War' in Manfred F. Boemeke, Gerald D. Feldman and Elisabeth Glaser (eds.); *The Treaty of Versailles. A reassessment after 75 years* (Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, 1998), pp. 111-130.
- Kocka, Jürgen, *Klassengesellschaft im Krieg. Deutsche Sozialgeschichte 1914-1918* (Göttingen, 1973).
- Kolb, Eberhard, *The Weimar Republic* (London, New York, 1999).
- ---, *Der Frieden von Versailles* (Munich, 2005).
- ---, 'Internationale Rahmenbedingungen einer demokratischen Neuordnung in Deutschland 1918/1919' in Karl Dietrich Bracher, Manfred Funke and Hans-Adolf Jacobsen (eds.), *Die Weimarer Republik 1918-1933* (Düsseldorf, 1987), pp. 257-284.
- Köhler, Henning, *Novemberrevolution und Frankreich. Die französische Deutschland-Politik 1918-1919* (Düsseldorf, 1980).
- Kohlrausch, Martin, *Der Monarch im Skandal. Die Logik der Massenmedien und die Transformation der wilhelminischen Monarchie* (Berlin, 2005).
- Koller, Christian, *'Von Wilden aller Rassen niedergemetzelt' Die Diskussion um die Verwendung von Kolonialtruppen in Europa zwischen Rassismus, Kolonial- und Militärpolitik (1914-1930)* (Stuttgart, 2001).
- Koszyk, Kurt, *Deutsche Presse 1914-1945* (Berlin, 1972).
- Kramer, Alan, *Dynamic of Destruction. Culture and Mass Killing in the First World War* (Oxford, New York, 2007).
- ---, 'Versailles, deutsche Kriegsverbrechen und das Auslieferungsbegehren der Alliierten 1919/20' in Wolfram Wette and Gerd R. Ueberschär, *Kriegsverbrechen im 20. Jahrhundert* (Darmstadt, 2001), pp 72-84.
- ---, 'Der Umgang mit der Schuld. Die "Schuld im Kriege" und die Republik vom Weimar' in Dietrich Papenfuß and Wolfgang Schieder (eds.), *Deutsche Umbrüche im 20. Jahrhundert* (Cologne, Weimar, Vienna, 2000), pp. 77-96.
- Krüger, Peter, Versailles. Deutsche Außenpolitik zwischen Revisionismus und Friedenssicherung (Munich, 1986).
- Krumeich, Gerd, 'Die Dolchstoßlegende' in Etienne François and Hagen Schulze (eds.), *Deutsche Erinnerungsorte* (Munich, 2001), pp. 586-599.

- ---,'Vergleichende Aspekte der "Kriegsschulddebatte" nach dem ersten Weltkrieg' in Wolfgang Michalka (ed.), *Der Erste Weltkrieg. Wirkung, Wahrnehmung, Analyse* (Munich, 1994), pp. 913-928.
- ---, 'Einleitung: Die Präsenz des Krieges im Frieden' in Jost Dülffer and Gerd Krumeich, *Der verlorene Frieden: Politik und Kriegskultur nach 1918* (Essen, 2002), pp. 7-17.
- Kruse, Kai and Wolfgang, 'Kriegerdenkmäler in Bielefeld. Ein lokalhistorischer Beitrag zur Entwicklungsanalyse des deutschen Gefallenenkultes im 19. Und 20. Jahrhundert' in Reinhart Kosselleck and Michael Jeismann (eds.), *Der Politische Totenkult. Kriegerdenkmäler in der Moderne* (Munich, 1994), pp. 91-128.
- Kruse, Wolfgang, 'Die Kriegsbegeisterung im Deutschen Reich zu Beginn des Ersten Weltkrieges. Entstehungszusammenhänge, Grenzen und ideologische Strukturen' in Marcel van der Linden and Gottfried Mergner (eds.), *Kriegsbegeisterung und mentale Kriegsvorbereitung: interdisziplinäre Studien* (Berlin, 1991), pp. 73-88.
- ---, 'Sozialismus, Antikriegsbewegungen, Revolutionen' in Ibid (ed.), *Eine Welt von Feinden. Der Große Krieg 1914-1918* (Frankfurt, 1997), pp. 196-222.
- Lehnert, Detlev, *Sozialdemokratie und Novemberrevolution. Die Neuordnungsdebatte 1918/19 in der politischen Publizistik von SPD und USPD* (Frankfurt, New York, 1983).
- Lemhoefer, Dieter, *Willibald Krain (Breslau 1886-1945 Dresden)* (Berlin, 1987).
- Lilla, Joachim, *Der Reichsrat. Vertretung der deutschen Länder bei der Gesetzgebung und Verwaltung des Reichs 1919-1934. Ein biographisches Handbuch* (Düsseldorf, 2006).
- Linse, Ulrich, 'Das wahre Zeugnis. Eine psychohistorische Deutung des Ersten Weltkrieges' in Klaus Vondung (ed.), *Kriegserlebnis. Der Erste Weltkrieg in der literarischen Gestaltung und symbolischen Deutung der Nationen* (Göttingen, 1980), pp. 90-114.
- Lipp, Anne, *Meinungslenkung im Krieg. Kriegserfahrungen deutscher Soldaten und ihre Deutung, 1914-1918* (Göttingen, 2003).
- Löffler, Fritz, *Otto Dix. Leben und Werk* (Wiesbaden, 1960).
- Lorenz, Thomas, *"Die Weltgeschichte ist das Weltgericht!" Der Versailler Vertrag in Diskurs und Zeitgeist der Weimarer Republik* (Frankfurt, 2008).
- Lütgemeier-Davin, Reinhold, 'Basismobilisierung gegen den Krieg: Die Nie-wieder-Krieg-Bewegung in der Weimarer Republik in Karl Holl and Wolfram Wette (eds.), *Pazifismus in der Weimarer Republik: Beiträge zur historischen Friedensforschung* (Paderborn, 1981), pp. 47-76.
- Mager, Wolfgang, 'Republik' in Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, Reinhard Koselleck (eds.), *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland. vol. 5* (Stuttgart, 1984), pp. 549-652.
- May, Gunther, *Das Ende des Kaiserreichs. Politik und Kriegsführung im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Munich, 1987).
- Möllers, Heiner, '"Reichswehr schießt nicht auf Reichswehr" Legenden um den Kapp-Lüttwitz-Putsch vom März 1920' in *Militärgeschichte: Zeitschrift für historische Bildung* 3 (2001), pp. 55-61.
- Mommsen, Hans, *Die verspielte Freiheit. Der Weg der Republik von Weimar in den Untergang 1918 bis 1933* (Berlin, 1989).
- ---, 'Militär und zivile Militarisierung in Deutschland 1914-1938' in Ute Frevert (ed.), *Militär und Gesellschaft im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart, 1997).
- Mommsen, Wolfgang J., *Bürgerliche Kultur und politische Ordnung. Künstler, Schriftsteller und Intellektuelle in der deutschen Geschichte 1830 - 1933* (Frankfurt, 2000).
- ---, *War der Kaiser an allem schuld? Wilhelm II. und die preussisch-deutschen Machteliten* (Berlin, 2002).

- ---, *Der Erste Weltkrieg. Anfang vom Ende des bürgerlichen Zeitalters* (Bonn, 2004).
- ---, 'Der Vertrag von Versailles. Eine Bilanz' in Gerd Krumeich (ed.), *Versailles 1919. Ziele - Wirkung - Wahrnehmung* (Essen, 2001), pp. 351-362.
- Moores, Kaaren, *Presse und Meinungsklima in der Weimarer Republik. Eine publizistikwissenschaftliche Untersuchung* (Mainz, 1997).
- Morenz, Ludwig and Münz, Erwin, *Revolution und Räteherrschaft in München. Aus der Stadtchronik 1918/1919* (Munich, Vienna, 1968).
- Morsey, Rudolf, *Die Deutsche Zentrumspartei 1917-1923* (Düsseldorf, 1966).
- Mosse, George L., *Fallen soldiers. Reshaping the memory of the World Wars* (New York, Oxford, 1990).
- ---, 'Über Kriegserinnerungen und Kriegsbegeisterung' in Marcel van der Linden and Gottfried Mergner (eds.), *Kriegsbegeisterung und mentale Kriegsvorbereitung: interdisziplinäre Studien* (Berlin, 1991), pp. 27-36.
- Mühlhausen, Walter, *Friedrich Ebert (1871-1925). Reichspräsident der Weimarer Republik* (Bonn, 2006).
- ---, 'Die Sozialdemokratie am Scheideweg – Burgfrieden, Parteikrise und Spaltung im Ersten Weltkrieg in Wolfgang Michalka (ed.), *Der Erste Weltkrieg. Wirkung, Wahrnehmung, Analyse* (Munich, Zurich, 1994), pp. 649-671.
- Müller, Hans Harald and Baron, Ulrich, 'Die Weltkriege im Roman der Nachkriegszeiten' in Dieter Riesenberger and Gottfried Niedhart (eds.), *Lernen aus dem Krieg? Deutsche Nachkriegszeiten 1918 und 1945* (Munich, 1992), pp. 300-318.
- Mulligan, William, *The Creation of the Modern German Army. General Walther Reinhardt and the Weimar Republic, 1914-1930* (New York, Oxford, 2005).
- Neumann, Siegmund, *Die Parteien der Weimarer Republik* (Stuttgart, Berlin, Cologne, Mainz, 1973).
- Nünning, Vera 'Exkurs: Revolution' in Hildegard Hogen (ed.), *Welt- und Kulturgeschichte. Epochen, Fakten, Hintergründe in 20 Bänden. Band 10: Zeitalter der Revolutionen* (Hamburg, 2006), pp. 415-439.
- Oertzen, Peter von, *Betriebsräte in der Novemberrevolution. Eine politikwissenschaftliche Untersuchung über Ideengehalt und Struktur der betrieblichen und wirtschaftlichen Arbeiterräte in der deutschen Revolution 1918/1919* (2, Bonn, 1976).
- Paul, Gerhard, *Aufstand der Bilder. Die NS-Propaganda vor 1933* (Bonn, 1990).
- Peukert, Detlev J. K., *The Weimar Republic. The crisis of classical modernity* (London, 1993).
- Pipes, Daniel, *Verschwörung. Faszination und Macht des Geheimen* (Munich, 1998).
- Pöppinghege, Rainer, '"Kriegsteilnehmer zweiter Klasse"? Die Reichsvereinigung ehemaliger Kriegsgefangener 1919-1933' in *Militärgeschichtliche Zeitschrift* 64 (Munich, 2005), pp. 391-424.
- ---, Rainer Pöppinghege, *Im Lager unbesiegt. Deutsche, englische und französische Kriegsgefangenen-Zeitungen im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Essen, 2006).
- Prädikow, Klaus, *Der Weimarer VORWÄRTS.* Der *VORWÄRTS als Beispiel der Sozialdemokratischen Presse der Weimarer Republik* (Essen, 1998).
- Pyta, Wolfram, *Hindenburg. Herrschaft zwischen Hohenzollern und Hitler* (Munich, 2007).
- Raddatz, Fritz J., *Das Tage Buch. Portrait einer Zeitschrift* (Königsstein/Ts., 1981).
- Ribbhegge, Wilhelm, *Frieden für Europa. Die Politik der deutschen Reichstagsmehrheit 1917-18* (Berlin, 1988).
- Rich, David Alan, 'Russia' in Holger Herwig and Richard Hamilton (eds.), *The Origins of World War I* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 188-226.

- Roerkohl, Anne, *Hungerblockade und Heimatfront. Die kommunale Lebensmittelversorgung in Westfalen während des Ersten Weltkrieges* (Stuttgart, 1991).
- Ruge, Wolfgang, *Matthias Erzberger* (East Berlin, 1976).
- Rupp, Heinz and Lang, Carl Ludwig, *Deutsches Literatur-Lexikon. Biographisch-Bibliographisches Handbuch, Band 6* (Berne and Munich, 1978).
- Rürup, Reinhard, *Probleme der Revolution in Deutschland 1918/19* (Wiesbaden, 1968).
- ---, 'Revolution and Reform: Germany and the French Revolution in 1798' in Idem (ed.) *The Problem of Revolution in Germany, 1789-1989* (Oxford, New York, 2000), pp. 1-26.
- ---, 'Problems of Revolution in Germany, 1525-1989' in Ibid pp. 181-202.
- Sammet, Rainer, *"Dolchstoss": Deutschland und die Auseinandersetzung mit der Niederlage im Ersten Weltkrieg (1918-1933)* (Berlin, 2003).
- Schmidt, Ernst-Heinrich, *Heimatheer und Revolution 1918. Die militärischen Gewalten im Heimatgebiet zwischen Oktoberreform und Novemberrevolution* (Stuttgart, 1981).
- Schröder, Wilhelm Heinz, *Sozialdemokratische Parlamentarier in den deutschen Reichs- und Landtagen 1867-1933. Biographien – Chronik – Wahldokumentation. Ein Handbuch* (Düsseldorf, 1995).
- Schulte, Franz Gerrit, *Der Publizist Hellmut von Gerlach (1866-1935)* (Munich, 1988).
- Schulze, Bruno 'Fiction and truth. Politics and the War novel' in Franz Karl Stanzel and Martin Löschnigg (eds.), *Intimate Enemies. English and German reactions to the Great War* (Heidelberg, 1994,), pp. 297-312.
- Schulze, Hagen, 'Vom Scheitern einer Republik' in Karl Dietrich Bracher, Manfred Funke and Hans-Adolf Jacobsen (eds.), *Die Weimarer Republik 1918-1933* (Düsseldorf, 1987), pp. 617-627.
- ---, 'Versailles' in in Etienne François and Hagen Schulze (eds), *Deutsche Erinnerungsorte* (Munich, 2001), pp. 214-228.
- Schumann, Dirk, *Politische Gewalt in der Weimarer Republik 1918-1933. Der Kampf um die Straße und die Furcht vor dem Bürgerkrieg* (Essen, 2001).
- Schustereit, Hartmut, *Linksliberalismus und Sozialdemokratie in der Weimarer Republik* (Düsseldorf, 1975).
- Schwabe, Klaus, *Deutsche Revolution und Wilson-Frieden. Die amerikanische und deutsche Friedensstrategie zwischen Ideologie und Machtpolitik 1918/19* (Düsseldorf, 1971).
- ---, '"Gerechtigkeit für die Großmacht Deutschland" - Die deutsche Friedensstrategie in Versailles in Gerd Krumeich (ed.), *Versailles 1919. Ziele - Wirkung - Wahrnehmung* (Essen, 2001), pp. 71-85.
- ---, 'German Peace Aims and the Domestic and International Constraints' in Manfred F. Boemeke, Gerald D. Feldman and Elisabeth Glaser (eds.), *The Treaty of Versailles. A reassessment after 75 years* (Cambridge and Washington, 1998), pp. 37-68.
- Schwengler, Walter, *Völkerrecht, Versailler Vertrag und Auslieferungsfrage* (Stuttgart, 1982).
- Seefried, Elke, 'Verfassungspragmatismus und Gemeinschaftsideologie: "Vernunftsrepublikanismus" in der deutschen Zentrumspartei' in Andreas Wirsching and Jürgen Eder (eds.), *Vernunftrepublikanismus in der Weimarer Republik. Politik, Literatur, Wissenschaft* (Stuttgart, 2008), pp. 57-86.
- Seywald, Aiga, *Die Presse der sozialen Bewegungen 1918-1933* (Essen, 1994).
- Showalter, Dennis, 'Niedergang und Zusammenbruch der deutschen Armee 1914-1919' in Dietrich Papenfuß (ed.), *Deutsche Umbrüche im 20. Jahrhundert* (Cologne, Weimar, Vienna, 2000), pp. 39-61.

- Sontheimer, Kurt, *Antidemokratisches Denken in der Weimarer Republik 1918-1933. Die politischen Ideen des deutschen Nationalismus zwischen 1918 und 1933* (Munich, 1983).
- Steinkamp, Peter, 'Kapitän zur See a. D. Lothar Persius (1864-1944) – Ein Seeoffizier als Kritiker der deutschen Flottenpolitik' in Wolfram Wette (ed.), *Pazifistische Offiziere in Deutschland 1871-1933* (Bremen, 1999), pp. 99-109.
- Storz, Dieter, '"Aber was hätte geschehen sollen?" Die deutschen Offensiven an der Westfront 1918' in Jörg Duppler and Gerhard Paul Gross (eds.), *Kriegsende 1918: Ereignis, Wirkung, Nachwirkung* (Munich, 1999), pp. 51-96.
- Strauss, Herbert A. and Röder, Werner et al. (eds.), *Biographisches Handbuch der deutschsprachigen Emigration nach 1933. Band. I: Politik, Wirtschaft, Öffentliches Leben* (Munich, New York, London, Paris, 1980).
- ---, *International Biographical Dictionary of Central European Emigrés 1933-1945. Vol. II/Part 1and 2: The Arts, Sciences, and Literature* (Munich, New York, London, Paris, 1983).
- Ther, Vanessa, "Humans are cheap and the bread is dear.' Republican Portrayals of the War Experience in Weimar Germany' in Heather Jones, Jennifer O'Brien, Christoph Schmidt-Supprian (eds.), *Untold War. New Perspectives in First World War Studies* (Boston, Leiden, 2008), pp. 357-384.
- Ullrich, Volker, *Als der Thron ins Wanken kam. Das Ende des Hohenzollernreiches 1890- 1918* (Bremen, 1993).
- ---, 'Zur inneren Revolutionierung der wilhelminischen Gesellschaft des Jahres 1918' in Jörg Duppler and Gerhard Paul Gross (eds.) *Kriegsende 1918: Ereignis, Wirkung, Nachwirkung* (Munich, 1999), pp. 273-283.
- Ulrich, Bernd, '"... als wenn nichts gewesen ware". Anmerkung zur Behandlung der Kriegsopfer während des Ersten Weltkrieges' in Gerhard Hirschfeld, Gerd Krumeich and Irina Renz (eds.), *"Keiner fühlt sich hier mehr als Mensch...". Erlebnis und Wirkung des Ersten Weltkriegs* (Frankfurt, 1996), pp. 140-156.
- --- and Ziemann, Benjamin, 'Das soldatische Kriegserlebnis' in Wolfgang Kruse (ed.), *Eine Welt von Feinden. Der Große Krieg 1914-1918* (Frankfurt, 1997), pp. 127-158.
- Verhey, Jeffrey, *Der "Geist von 1914" und die Erfindung der Volksgemeinschaft* (Hamburg, 2000).
- Vincent, C. Paul, *The Politics of Hunger. The Allied Blockade of Germany, 1915-1919* (Athens, Ohio, London, 1985).
- Voelker, Judith, '"Unerträglich, unerfüllbar und deshalb unannehmbar" - Kollektiver Protest gegen Versailles im Rheinland in den Monaten Mai und Juni 1919' in Gerd Krumeich and Jost Dülffer (eds.), *Der verlorene Frieden: Politik und Kriegskultur nach 1918* (Essen, 2002), pp. 229-242.
- Vogt, Martin, Parteien in der Weimarer Republik' in Karl Dietrich Bracher, Manfred Funke and Hans-Adolf Jacobsen (eds.), *Die Weimarer Republik 1918-1933* (Düsseldorf, 1987), pp. 134-157.
- Weber, Hermann and Herbst, Andreas, *Deutsche Kommunisten. Biographisches Handbuch 1918 bis 1945* (Berlin, 2004).
- Welch, David, *Germany, propaganda and total war, 1914-1918: The sins of omission* (London, 2000).
- Wette, Wolfram, *Militarismus in Deutschland 1871 bis 1945. Zeitgenössische Analysen und Kritik* (Münster, 1999).
- ---, 'Noske-Ära: Die vertane Chance, mit dem preußisch-deutschen Militarismus zu brechen' in Rainer Butenschön and Eckart Spoo (eds.), *Wozu muß einer Bluthund sein? Der Mehrheitssozialdemokrat Gustav Noske und der deutsche Militarismus des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Heilbronn, 1997), pp. 27-37.

- ---, *Militarismus und Pazifismus Auseinandersetzung mit den deutschen Kriegen* (Bremen, 1991).
- ---, 'Reichstag und "Kriegsgewinnlerei" (1916-1918). Die Anfänge parlamentarischer Rüstungskontrolle in Deutschland' in Reiner Steinweg (ed.), *Lehren aus der Geschichte? Historische Friedensforschung* (Frankfurt, 1990), pp. 117-159.
- ---, *Gustav Noske. Eine politische Biographie* (Düsseldorf, 1987).
- Whalen, Robert Weldon, *Bitter Wounds. German Victims of the Great War, 1914-1939* (Ithaca, London, 1984).
- Wieland, Lothar, *Belgien 1914. Die Frage des belgischen 'Franktireurkrieges' und die deutsche öffentliche Meinung von 1914-1936* (Frankfurt, Berne, New York, 1984).
- ---, 'Vom kaiserlichen Offizier zum Deutschen Revolutionär – Stationen der Wandlung des Kapitänleutnants Hans Paasche (1881-1920)' in Wolfram Wette and Helmut Donat (eds.) *Pazifistische Offiziere in Deutschland 1871-1933)* (Bremen, 1999), pp. 169-180.
- Wildt, Michael, Volksgemeinschaft als Selbstermächtigung. Gewalt gegen Juden in der deutschen Provinz 1919 bis 1939 (Hamburg, 2007).
- Willis, James F., *Prologue to Nuremberg. The politics and diplomacy of punishing war criminals of the First Word War* (Westport, 1982).
- Wilpert, Gero von (ed.), *Lexikon der Weltliteratur. Band I: Autoren* (2, Stuttgart, 1975).
- Winkler, Heinrich August, *Von der Revolution zur Stabilisierung. Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung in der Weimarer Republik 1918 bis 1924* (Berlin, Bonn, 1984).
- ---, *Weimar 1918-1933* (Munich, 1993).
- Winter, Jay. M., *Sites of memory, sites of mourning. The Great War in European cultural history* (Cambridge, 1995).
- ---, 'Surviving the war: life expectation, illness, and mortality rates in Paris, London, and Berlin, 1914-1919' in ibid and Jean-Louis Robert (eds.) *Capital Cities at War. Paris, London, and Berlin 1914-1919* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 3-24.
- Wirsching, Andreas, *Die Weimarer Republik. Politik und Gesellschaft* (2, Munich, 2008).
- Wohlfeil, Rainer, *Handbuch zur deutschen Militärgeschichte 1648-1939. Band VI: Reichswehr und Republik (1918-1933)* (Frankfurt, 1970).
- Ziemann, Benjamin, *Front und Heimat. Ländliche Kriegserfahrungen im südlichen Bayern 1914-1923* (Essen, 1997).
- ---, 'Enttäuschte Erwartung und kollektive Erschöpfung. Die deutschen Soldaten an der Westfront 1918 auf dem Weg zur Revolution' in Jörg Duppler and Gerhard Paul Gross (eds.), *Kriegsende 1918: Ereignis, Wirkung, Nachwirkung* (Munich, 1999), pp. 165-182.
- ---, 'Republikanische Kriegserinnerung in einer polarisierten Öffentlichkeit. Das Reichsbanner Schwarz-Rot-Gold als Veteranenverband der sozialistischen Arbeiterschaft' in *Historische Zeitschrift* 267 (1998), pp. 357-398.
- ---, 'Die Erinnerung and den Ersten Weltkrieg in den Milieukulturen der Weimarer Republik' in Thomas F. Schneider (ed.), *Kriegserlebnis und Legendenbildung. Das Bild des „Modernen Krieges" in Literatur, Theater, Photographie und Film. Band 1*(Osnabrück, 1999), pp, 249-270.

Unpublished Secondary Sources

- Jones, Heather, *The Enemy Disarmed. Prisoners of war and the violence of wartime, Britain, France and Germany 1914-1920* (PhD Thesis, Department of History, Trinity College Dublin, 2006).
- Langhans, Lars, 'Die Haltung der SPD zum Militär vom Waffenstillstand 1918 bis nach dem Kapp-Putsch im Spiegel des Vorwärts' (Magister Dissertation, Philosophische Fakultät, Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn, 1993).

- Schäfer, Ulrich, *Liberaler Journalismus im Dritten Reich am Beispiel Rudolf Kircher* (Diplom Dissertation, Technische Universität Dortmund,1984).
- Ther, Vanessa, 'The Role of the Bourgeois Press in the Bavarian Revolution' (BA dissertation, Department of History, Trinity College Dublin, 2002).
- Mayer, Margot, *Der „Vorwärts" in der Weimarer Republik und seine Rolle in der innerparteilichen Diskussion* (Magister Dissertation, Ludwig-Maximilian University Munich, 1980).

Websites

- BBC News, 'Germany declines armistice day invite' (4 November 1998), accessed 15 September 2008: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/low/special_report/1998/10/98/world_war_i/206760.stm
- Imperial War Museum Website, British recruitment poster 'The Scrap of Paper. Enlist To-Day', accessed 12 August 2009:

  http://www.iwmcollections.org.uk/dbtw-wpd/exec/dbtwpub.dll?AC=GET_RECORD&XC=/dbtw-wpd/exec/dbtwpub.dll&BU=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.iwmcollections.org.uk%2FqryMain.php&TN=Uncat&SN=AUTO12333&SE=9067&RN=7&MR=25&TR=0&TX=1000&ES=0&CS=1&XP=&RF=allResults&EF=&DF=allDetails&RL=0&EL=0&DL=0&NP=1&ID=&MF=WPENGMSG.INI&MQ=&TI=0&DT=&ST=0&IR=199971&NR=0&NB=0&SV=0&BG=0&FG=0&QS=
- Internationales Biographisches Archiv, accessed 23 January 2010: http://www.munzinger.de/search/portrait/Erich+Dombrowski/0/2949.html
- 'Uhde, Wilhelm' in Lee Sorenson (ed.), *Dictionary of Art Historians,_*, accessed 24 January 2010: http://www.dictionaryofarthistorians.org/uhdew.htm

APPENDIX I: BIOGRAPHIES OF POLITICIANS AND JOURNALISTS

Avenarius, Ferdinand, see p. 176 FN 859

Baden, Prince Max von (1867-1925)
The former officer, who was also cousin and heir to Grand Duke Friedrich II of Baden was appointed president of the Upper Chamber in Baden before the First World War. As an honorary chairman of the Red Cross, he was responsible for the welfare of prisoners of war and used his international contacts to promote a conciliatory peace during the conflict. As an opponent of right-wing chauvinism and the unlimited U-Boat warfare, the moderate liberal Max von Baden was appointed as Chancellor upon the OHL's declaration of Germany's military defeat. He advised in vain against the OHL's urgent request for an armistice and implemented Germany's transition to a parliamentary monarchy. He enforced Ludendorff's dismissal on 28 October 1918 and attempted to safeguard the monarchy in the early stages of the revolution by trying to convince Wilhelm II to abdicate. On 9 November he falsely declared Wilhelm's abdication and surrendered his chancellorship to Friedrich Ebert to prevent civil war.[1514] Max von Baden defended himself in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* against allegations of misconduct, arguing that the abdication of the Kaiser was necessary to prevent civil war and save the monarchy. He alleged that it had only been prevented because Wilhelm was misinformed by the OHL. Von Baden also blamed Germany's lack of bargaining power in the armistice negotiations on the OHL's overly hasty request for peace. (See pp. 73, 76, 80 FN 352, 86, 146, 215, 272)

Barth, Emil, see p. 153 FN 745

Barth, Erwin (1884-1959)
The engraver and journalist Erwin Barth worked as an editor for the *Fränkische Tagespost* in Nuremberg from 1906-1910 and for the *Sächsisches Volksblatt* in Zwickau during the war. He was also employed as an editor for the domestic policy section in *Vorwärts* from 1918 to 1920. Barth chaired the *Vereins Arbeiterpresse* (Working Class Press Association) and edited its journal during the mid-1920s. He was chief of police in Altona Wandsbeck from 1926 to 1928.[1515] Barth maintained in *Vorwärts* that Germany did not deserve to be punished for its wartime mindset because the revolution had overcome it. Paradoxically, he supported the sense of *Burgfrieden* against the horrific peace while calling for a moderation of nationalist anger in favour of a rational consideration of Germany's best options. He explicitly denounced the idea of a nationalist Bolshevik defiance of the peace as illusory. (See pp. 213 FN 1042, 221, 236f, 239 FN 1190, 241 FN 1199)

Bauer, Gustav (1870 –1944)
This prominent trade unionist and SPD Reichstag deputy (1912-1918) initially served the republic as administrative head of the Labour Ministry, also representing the SPD in the National Assembly and the Reichstag from 1919 to 1928. Bauer was Minister of Employment in the Scheidemann coalition, becoming Reich Chancellor after Scheidemann's resignation in July 1919. After his chancellorship, during which Germany signed both the Treaty of Versailles and the Weimar Constitution, Bauer served as Minister for Transport in 1920 and Minister of Finance and Vice Chancellor from 1921-1922.[1516] Bauer explicitly defended the government against attempts to hold the revolution responsible for adverse post-war conditions in a *Vorwärts* article, blaming them on Ludendorff's wartime policies. In his first Reichstag speech as chancellor, he accused the USPD of being responsible for Germany's inability to achieve better peace terms and

---

[1514] Klaus Schwabe, 'Max, Prinz von Baden' in Hirschfeld, Krumeich and Renz (eds.), *Enzyklopädie*, pp. 706ff.
[1515] Gerhard Engel, Gaby Huch and Ingo Materna (eds.), *Groß-Berliner Arbeiter- und Soldatenräte in der Revolution 1918/19. Dokumente der Vollversammlungen und des Bezugsrates von Generalstreikbeschluß am 3 März 1919 bis zur Spaltung der Räteorgane im Juli 1919* (Berlin, 2002), p. 16; Prädikow, *Der Weimarer VORWÄRTS*, pp. 165f.
[1516] Imanuel Geiss, 'Bauer, Gustav' in Benz and Graml, *Biographisches Lexikon*, pp. 17f.

appealed for the German population's co-operation in the necessary fulfilment of the treaty. (See pp. 22, 39 FN 151, 243, 258 FN 1269, 261f, 284 FN 1445)

Bernstein, Eduard (1856 – 1932)
This social democratic theoretician, who contributed significantly to the revisionism debate within the SPD in the late 1890s, represented the party in the Reichstag in 1902-1906, 1912-1918, and 1920-1928. Although initially supportive of the SPD decision to vote for war-credits in 1914, Bernstein grew increasingly critical of the party's wartime policies and joined the USPD in 1917. He opposed a further radicalisation of the revolution, supported elections for a National Assembly, and rejoined the SPD in 1919. Among the analysed papers, Bernstein contributed articles to *Vorwärts*, *Die Welt am Montag*, and *Das Tage-Buch*.[1517] In his narrative of the revolution, Bernstein held Germany's military weakness responsible for the military collapse, suggesting that the soldiers were too disillusioned that they ceased to find the victory propaganda convincing. He explicitly denounced the denial of German war guilt as counter-productive, arguing that withholding truth from the German people would prevent them comprehending the reasons for Germany's post war situation. Bernstein severely censured the aggressive German strategy during the peace negotiations, calling for recognition of the devastation the war had wreaked upon the Allied nations. He also argued that most of the terms would have to be accepted. His appeals for a more rational approach to the peace were severely criticised within the SPD. Bernstein stressed that Germany could not allow the peace treaty to fail because of the extradition demands, which were part amongst the conditions it had agreed to comply with. (See pp. 18, 22, 126f, 150, 179 FN 880, 210 FN 1030, 237, 256 FN 1262f, 258, 264, 266)

Bohm-Schuch, Klara see pp. 33 FN 110

Breitscheid, Rudolf (1874 –1944)
As a long-standing liberal democratic journalist and editor of the weekly publication *Das freie Volk*, Breitscheid joined the SPD in 1912. He changed his party political allegiance after the party split in 1917, joining the USPD and editing their weekly publication *Der Sozialist*. Breitscheid was briefly appointed Prussian Minister for the Interior after the revolution and represented the USPD in the Reichstag from 1920 to 1922. After the two socialist parties reunite, he represented the SPD in the Reichstag until 1933, emerging as a major social democratic theoretician in the late 1920s and serving on the party's executive committee between 1931 and 1933.[1518] Breitscheid was a prominent critic of the SPD's nationalist wartime policies in the aftermath of the conflict, defining them as the party's 'war guilt'. As a consequence, he became a target for SPD allegations insinuating that he attempted to shirk his duty at the front. Breitscheid also expressed concern that the parliamentary investigation into Germany's wartime politics would probably fail to delve thoroughly into the question of responsibility. He severely criticises Ludendorff's testimony before the Parliamentary Commission and explicitly blamed the OHL for sabotaging Wilson's mediation and pursuing the U-Boat war rather than negotiating a conciliatory peace. (See pp. 74, 105 FN 505, 123 FN 576, 130 FN 612, 132 FN 622, 139 FN 666f)

Breuer, Robert [real name: Lucien Friedlaender, other pseudonyms: Germanicus, Cunctator] (1878-1943)
The publicist Friedlaender was a close friend of Friedrich Ebert and was appointed as deputy press officer for the government and chancellery in 1919. He sat on the executive committee of the *Schutzverband Deutscher Schriftsteller* (Association for the protection of German writers) and was also an art critic for *Vorwärts*, and a regular contributor to *Die Weltbühne*. Friedlaender served as director of the *Verlag für Sozialwissenschaft* (Publishing House for Social Sciences) in 1920-1925, edited the journal *Die Glocke*, and worked as departmental head of the *Reichszentrale für Heimatdienst* (an institution that promoted republican and

[1517] Imanuel Geiss, 'Bernstein, Eduard' in Benz and Graml, *Biographisches Lexikon*, pp. 26f.
[1518] Manfred Vasold, 'Breitscheid, Rudolf' in Benz and Graml, *Biographisches Lexikon*, pp. 43f.

democratic values) from 1925 to 1932. He emigrated in 1933.[1519] As Robert Breuer in *Die Weltbühne*, Friedlaender stressed that the armistice signified the collapse of the old regime, and appealed for recognition that the politics of violence must be overcome. He defined the revolution as a direct consequence of the monarchy's collapse and the resentment which accumulated during the war, calling for a strong democratic state to brave the conflict's consequences. He argued that only individuals who had insisted on a just peace from the start should represent the new state, calling for those responsible to be punished or at least named and shamed. On the other hand, Breuer vehemently rejected the notion that Germany carried more responsibility for the war than the other belligerent nations (including America). (See pp. 49 FN 203, 63 FN 278, 64 FN 285, 103 FN 494, 125, 130 FN 612, 164 FN 787)

Bröger, Karl, see p. 191 FN 941

Cohn, Oskar, see p. 55 FN 236 (Also see pp. 48 FN 196, 51 FN 213, 54 FN 233, 58 FN 254, 63 FN 278, 79 FN 344)

Däumig, Ernst, see p. 43 FN 169 (Also see pp. 39 FN 150, 54 FN 233, 106 FN 505)

Dittmann, Wilhelm, see p. 123 FN 572. (Also see pp. 43 FN 169, 124 FN 585, 286 FN 1449)

Dortu, Max, see p. 200 FN 997

Ebert, Friedrich (1878- 1925)
A saddler by trade, Ebert started his political career as a journalist and politician in Bremen and rose to be a member of the Reichstag (1913-1918) and co-chairman of the SPD. During the war Ebert supported a return to the territorial status quo ante and made every effort to contain the ammunition workers' strike in 1917. Appointed Reich Chancellor by Max von Baden on 9 November he was anxious to restore order and was responsible for an agreement with the army intended to protect the government against the perceived threat of the far left. He was elected Reich President in February 1919 and remained in office until his death in 1925.[1520] Ebert justified the creation of the republic with reference to the moral collapse of the violent Imperial Regime. Although his welcome speech for the returning troops during demobilisation implicitly reinforced the concept of the 'undefeated soldiers', it skilfully honoured the dead while concentrating on the tasks facing the republic rather than the values the soldiers had fought for. In an interview during the peace negotiations Ebert announced that Germany could not be expected to accept a treaty violating Wilson's 14 points. Reinforcing the necessity for a just peace, he depicted Germany as a dam against Bolshevism and suggested that a harsh peace intent on destroying Germany would sow the seeds of renewed conflict. In rallying the people against the peace, Ebert attempted to unite the German nation in defence of the republic. When the government decided to sign the treaty of Versailles, Ebert directly appealed to the soldiers to continue supporting the republic despite their opposition to the treaty. His declaration that the government had been forced to accept the treaty despite reservations called for its fulfilment to the extent of Germany's capabilities. (See pp. 22, 23 FN 79, 32, 35, 38f FN 141,143f,151, 64 FN 291, 73, 76f, 87, 102 FN 483, 163f, 167f, 173, 218 FN 1071, 220, 229, 233 FN 1152, 236, 255, 261 FN 1291, 273, 274 FN 1381, 276 FN 1394, 284FN 1444)

Eisner, Kurt (1867- 1919)
After resigning from an editorial board at *Vorwärts* in 1905, Kurt Eisner became editor of the *Fränkische Tagespost* and moved to Bavaria. Although he had initially supported Germany's allegedly defensive war effort, this vehement pacifist soon grew critical of Germany's war policies and became one of the founding members of the USPD. Eisner was the figurehead of the Bavarian revolution and was confirmed as Bavaria's Prime Minister in November 1918. He sought to combine parliamentary democracy with a council system

---

[1519] 'Breuer, Robert' in Bergmann (ed.), *Die Schaubühne. Die Weltbühne 1905-1933*, p. 31; Herbert Strauss, Werner Röder et al. (eds.), *International Biographical Dictionary of Central European Emigrés 1933-1945. Vol. II/Part 1: The Arts, Sciences, and Literature* (Munich, New York, London, Paris, 1983), p. 94.
[1520] Manfred Vasold, 'Ebert, Friedrich' in Benz and Graml, *Biographisches Lexikon*, p. 70.

and promoted the admission of German war guilt as a basis for more moderate peace terms. His pacifist views aroused massive opposition in bourgeois and right wing circles, however, and he was murdered just as he was about to resign due to the lack of electoral support for his party.[1521] Eisner stated clearly that the German people were free from responsibility for Germany's wartime policies. He argued that they could have acted no differently because they had been deceived, insisting that they did not therefore deserve to be punished by harsh peace terms. He regarded the quest for truth as a main priority of republican policy and unilaterally published Bavarian 'war guilt' documents in pursuit of his quest to prove that Germany had changed ideologically. During the Socialist International conference in Berne in February 1919, Eisner appealed in vain to the SPD to recognise German war guilt. His admission of war guilt paved the way for a Franco-German resolution expressing a common commitment to the return of German prisoners of war. Eisner's comment that Germany had no right to demand the prisoners' immediate return but could only appeal to the Allies' sense of compassion was, however, severely misconstrued in the German press and fanned the nationalist hatred which ultimately resulted in his assassination. (See pp. 19 FN 48, 34 FN 115, 42 FN 165, 60 FN 264, 73f FN 317, 108 FN 522, 119-124, 127, 192f, 212 FN 1040)

Enderling, Paul, see p. 42 FN 165

Erkelenz, Anton, see p. 42 FN 159 (Also see p. 42 FN 160)

Erzberger, Matthias (1875- 1921)
This Catholic Centre Party politician, who was elected to the Reichstag in 1903, moved from being a fervent annexationist to a prominent supporter of a conciliatory peace and an opponent of the U-Boat campaign during the First World War. A former wartime propagandist, Erzberger was appointed as permanent secretary and head of the armistice commission in Max von Baden's cabinet. As Minister without portfolio from February 1919, Erzberger supported the acceptance of the Treaty of Versailles and led a thorough tax reform as Minister of Finance under Bauer's chancellorship. Erzberger's political conduct after his wartime change of heart made him loathsome to Germany's right-wing forces, who launched a campaign of slander against him. Erzberger unsuccessfully sued the worst of his attackers, Karl Hellfferich, for libel. Following the trial and a failed assassination attempt Erzberger resigned from his ministerial post to restore his political credibility in an official investigation of his financial affairs. This investigation rehabilitated him and he was re-elected to the Reichstag in 1920, but was murdered by radical rightists before he could resume his role in Weimar politics.[1522] Erzberger defended the republic against right-wing allegations, acknowledging that it had inherited the bankrupt legacy of the Imperial Regime but insisting that the new state could not be held responsible for this legacy. In response to the allegations against him, he launched an attack on Germany's former elites that had failed to follow up a papal peace offer in 1917 which could have ended the war more quickly and more favourably to Germany. Commenting on the harsh armistice terms Erzberger warned that Allied conduct would destroy the chance for reconciliation. (See pp. 24, 107-111, 131, 134, 138, 148f, 159 FN 764, 191, 250 FN 1227, 286, 291 FN 1491, 299 FN 1511)

Foerster, Friedrich Wilhelm (1869 - 1966)
The pacifist educationalist Friedrich Wilhelm Foerster, who published widely on ethical and theological matters, had already criticised Germany's role in the outbreak of the war and the OHL's active opposition to a reconciliatory peace during the conflict. While Ludendorff demanded his arrest, Foerster was officially invited to Vienna by Kaiser Karl I to advise him on the Austrian question. After the revolution, Kurt Eisner briefly appointed Foerster as Bavarian ambassador to Switzerland. His thoroughly pacifist convictions, which were evident in his criticism of the continuing prevalence of military ideology and innocentist propaganda in Germany as well as his appeals for reconciliation with France

---

[1521] Ruth Körner, 'Eisner, Kurt' in Benz and Graml, *Biographisches Lexikon*, pp. 73f.
[1522] Wolfram Selig, 'Erzberger, Matthias' in Benz and Graml, *Biographisches Lexikon*, pp. 77f.

and Poland, eventually forced him to leave Germany in 1922 when his life was threatened by right-wing radicals.[1523] Foerster published articles in *Die Freiheit, Vorwärts*, and *Die Weltbühne* as well as other publications. Commenting on the results of the Second Parliamentary Commission Foerster identified the war policies of the old regime as criminal, arguing that they needed to be uncovered as Prussian militarism was already trying to secure advantages for the next war. He also criticised that Germany's self-righteous propaganda demanding the return of prisoners of war, arguing that it did not take Allied wartime suffering sufficiently into account. He likewise argued that Germany was jointly responsible for upholding the legitimacy of the Allied sea blockade as an acceptable wartime weapon while blaming the war and Germany's wartime policies rather than the blockade for wartime food shortages. He furthermore defined the continuation of the blockade after the armistice as an Allied attempt to protect their populations rather than a continued act of war. He criticised the nationalist frenzy against the Versailles settlement, arguing that it would merely serve to fan French passions and prevent a rational assessment of the peace. In general, he blamed lack of ideological change in Germany for the Allied failure to amend the peace terms. (See pp. 18, 139, 192, 226f, 258 FN 1275, 260 FN 1286)

Fischart, Johannes [real name: Erich Franz O. Dombrowski] (1882-1972)
The writer and journalist Erich Dombrowski worked for a number of newspapers in Danzig, Kiel, and Breslau from 1907 onwards. He was a regular contributor to *Die Weltbühne* and the editor-in-chief of the domestic policy section of the liberal *Berliner Tageblatt* from 1916 to 1926. He was appointed editor-in-chief of the *Frankfurter Generalanzeiger* in 1926, suffering dismissed in 1936 because the Nazis regarded him as 'politically unreliable'.[1524] He published a series of short critical biographies of prominent publicists and politicians in *Die Weltbühne*, including a severe critique of Wilhelm II as a weak, incompetent megalomaniac who was forced to flee against his will because could no longer trust his troops. In his portrayal of Eisner, Dombrowski noted his attempts to portray prominent republicans as discredited by their wartime conduct without questioning Eisner's political judgement. (See pp. 19, 80 FN 349, 351, 108 FN 523)

Fischer, Hans-Waldemar [Dr. Frosch] (1876-1945)
Fischer obtained his doctorate of philosophy in Breslau and worked as a freelance writer, editor, and theatre critic in Berlin and Hamburg. His publications included a number of plays.[1525] Fischer saw the post-war surge of dancing and debauchery as a sign of wartime hysteria. Although he stressed the need to stop it due to the poor impression it gave to the Allies, Fischer also implied that it needed to be combated by creating values rather than by banning dances. He argued that little blood was shed during the revolution, because the soldiers had intended to end the blind murder of the war, suggesting that the war experience must teach the republic to reject violence. Fischer further claimed that the soldiers rejected official war propaganda during the conflict and blamed war propagandists for prolonging their suffering. With regard to the war guilt question, Fischer argued that it was unnecessary to punish those responsible because the revolution had sufficiently discredited them. He likewise attributed the lack of support for Wilhelm's extradition in Germany to the fact that he was simply too irrelevant to be extradited, pointing out that the former monarch's outspoken supporters harmed rather than helped his cause by exaggerating his influence. Fischer supported reform of the army's military hierarchy, identifying officer's pointless harassment of soldiers' as a main source of the latter's increasing bitterness and disillusionment. He warned that the existence of extensive armed force posed a danger to the republic. (See pp. 41f FN 159f, 48f FN 197, 203f, 51 FN 215, 91 FN 422, 98f FN 463, 465, 468, 151 FN 734, 268 FN 1336f, 1341, 275 FN 1386, 289 FN 1475)

[1523] Helmut Donat, 'Foerster, Friedrich Wilhelm' in Benz and Graml, *Biographisches Lexikon*, pp. 89f.
[1524] 'Fischart, Johannes' in Bergmann (ed.), *Die Schaubühne. Die Weltbühne 1905-1933*, p. 55; Internationales Biographisches Archiv, accessed 23 January 2010: http://www.munzinger.de/search/portrait/Erich+Dombrowski/0/2949.html
[1525] Wilhelm Kosch, *Deutsches Theater-Lexikon. Biographisches und Bibliographisches Handbuch. Erster Band* (Klagenfurt, 1953), p. 451.

Ganz, Hugo, see p. 222.

Gerlach, Hellmuth von (1866- 1935)
As a liberal of noble descent, von Gerlach developed into a radical democrat and vehement pacifist during the First World War. He had already appealed for a conciliatory peace during the conflict, believing that Germany was responsible. Despite wartime censorship, von Gerlach turned *Die Welt am Montag*, which he edited, into a pacifist organ. He was appointed to the Prussian Ministry of the Interior as an expert on Poland after the revolution, working towards reconciliation with that country and with France. He resigned from this position in March 1919 because of irreconcilable differences with the government. He was maligned, attacked, and almost assassinated in February 1920 because of his pacifist agitation in countless public meetings as well as *Die Freiheit, Die Welt am Montag, Die Weltbühne, Die Friedens-Warte,* and the *Dortmunder General-Anzeiger*. He left the DDP in 1922 and worked as a German correspondent for the Carnegie Foundation between 1922 and 1930.[1526] Acknowledging the adverse effects of post war conditions on republican legitimacy to govern, von Gerlach warned that they would eventually alienate the people from the new state. He furthermore argued that Germany's ideological change would have to be implemented beyond all doubt, suggesting that the continuation of military justice after the war disgraced the republic. A strong opponent of wartime German propaganda, von Gerlach continued to call for a thorough investigation of German wartime policies after the conflict. He remained critical of the Parliamentary Commission set up for this purpose, however, warning that it was biased and unable to control its own witnesses. He defined Ludendorff and Wilhelm as discredited, yet argued that Hindenburg was less dangerous due to his apolitical position. Von Gerlach insisted that only politicians who had not been discredited by their wartime conduct should represent Germany in the peace negotiations. He criticised both aggressive German demands for the return of prisoners of war and the infeasible threat that to reject the treaty. Instead, he promoted a more moderate approach which recognised that the Allies could force Germany to submit. Although von Gerlach criticised the extradition demands as legally questionable, he insisted that they would have to be fulfilled. He partly blamed the Allied demands on the republic's failure to investigate the German war crimes, yet suggested neutral courts as a compromise solution. Prior to the election of 1920, von Gerlach severely chided the republic for demanding a larger army than the Treaty of Versailles permitted although it had completely failed to enforce necessary military reforms in the aftermath of the Kapp-Lüttwitz putsch. (See pp. 19, 22, 37, 39, 66, 81f FN 359, 365, 93f, 103 FN 491, 108f FN 523, 531f, 118 FN 549, 126f FN 594f, 597, 599, 131f, 152 FN 741, 193f FN 958, 964, 213f FN 1047, 221, 228 FN 1123f, 231 FN 1143, 239 FN 1188, 1190, 241, 243 FN 1211, 264ff, 293)

Goldschmidt, Alfons (1879-1940)
An economist and writer, Goldschmidt served as editor-in-chief of the economic section of the *Berliner Zeitung am Mittag* from 1909, moving to the same position in the *Berliner Morgenpost* in 1910. He published the council organ *Räte Zeitung* in 1918, also contributing to *Die Weltbühne* throughout the Weimar era. He was forced to emigrate in 1933.[1527] During the initial revolutionary period, Goldschmidt already advocated a thorough cleansing of Germany's politics and press of those who were discredited by their conduct during the war. Accordingly, he appealed for Germany to punish those responsible for the population's suffering rather than waiting for the Entente to enforce such punishment. (See pp. 19, 103 FN 494, 130 FN 612)

Graf, Georg Engelbert, see p. 231 FN 1142

Gumbel, Emil Julius (1891-1966)
Turned into a convinced pacifist by his experiences as a volunteer during the First World War, the eminent mathematician and publicist Emil Julius Gumbel joined the pacifist *Bund Neues Vaterland* (New Fatherland League) in 1915 and became a member of the USPD. He

---

[1526] Helmut Donat, 'Gerlach, Hellmut von' in Benz and Graml, *Biographisches Lexikon*, pp. 103f.
[1527] 'Goldschmidt, Alfons' in Bergmann (ed.), *Die Schaubühne. Die Weltbühne 1905-1933*, p. 73.

was involved in the *Deutsche Liga für Menschenrechte* (German Human Rights League) and contributed articles to the pacifist publication *Die Menschheit* as well as to *Die Weltbühne* and the legal journal *Justiz*. His pacifism, as well as his pioneering research into right-wing political violence, made him a target for nationalist protests and threats which ultimately led to the revocation of his professorial teaching position in 1932. He subsequently emigrated to France, teaching in universities in Paris and Lyon before moving to Columbia University in New York.[1528] Gumbel severely criticised the republic for failing to contain the political influence of the country's failed military leaders. Despite his pacifist opposition to Germany's wartime policies, Gumbel failed to recognise that civilian suffering during the war could not be attributed solely to the Allied sea blockade. He partly blamed the republic's lack of genuine ideological change for Versailles, yet also accused the Allies of failing to aid Germany's truly reconciliatory forces. (See pp. 19, 89 FN 410, 227 FN 1120, 260 FN 1286)

Haase, Hugo (1863- 1919)
As co-chairman of the SPD from 1911 onwards, the solicitor Hugo Haase reconciled the party's left and its centre until the outbreak of war. He announced the SPD's support for the war credits in 1914, despite his personal opposition. In 1917, however, Haase followed his anti-militarist convictions by co-founding the USPD. He joined the Council of People's Representatives after the revolution, remaining on until the USPD left the government in opposition to the SPD's use of military force against protesting troops. Haase was killed by a gunshot wound in 1919.[1529] He sought to defend the revolution by promoting the idea that a postponement of the armistice would have left the Germany army in complete disarray. Haase supported the USPD's view that it was the only party to promote a conciliatory peace during the war and vehemently attacked the SPD for continuing to support war credits. Haase defined the war as 'futile mass carnage' during demobilisation and was concerned by the lack of revolutionary flags on display during welcome ceremonies for the soldiers. In response to SPD attacks, Haase defended the USPD's refusal to join the government which had signed the peace. He argued that although the party had explicitly promoted the acceptance of the treaty, it should be signed by those responsible for Germany's collapse. Haase was the only politician cited within the sources analysed who publicly favoured extradition. (See pp. 19 FN 48, 34 FN 115, 54 FN 233, 105 FN 504f, 124 FN 586, 137 FN 657, 141, 145, 163, 172f, 251, 266)

Haenisch, Conrad, see p. 41 FN 159 (Also see p. 42 FN 163)

Hahnewald, Edgar William, see p. 179 FN 877

Jacobsohn, Siegfried, see p. 23 FN 75 (Also see p. 37 FN 136)

Kahrstädt, Fritz (1885-1946)
Having worked for the *Berliner Tageblatt* until 1919, Fritz Kahrstädt joined *Vorwärts* in January 1920 as editor-in-chief of the local section of the SPD party organ, remaining in this position until 1933. He also edited the local section of the social democratic newspaper the *Abend* from 1928.[1530] Kahrstädt described the horrors and the desolation of the soldiers at the front in *Vorwärts*, suggesting that they did not receive the gratitude they deserved on returning home. He argued that the home front disregarded the soldiers' immense sacrifices because people were safeguarding the advantages they had gained during the war. Kahrstädt also described a blind war invalid musician as a symbol for the war's sacrifice and suffering, arguing that those indulging in drinking and dancing could use his sobering influence. (See pp. 171 FN 830, 179 FN 878)

Kautsky, Karl (1854-1938)
Having contributed to socialist newspapers in Germany and Austria from the mid 1870s, Karl Kautsky developed contacts with SPD leaders in Germany as well as Marx and Engels

---

[1528] Ingo Müller, 'Emil Julius Gumbel' in Donat and Holl (eds.), *Die Friedensbewegung*, pp. 168f.
[1529] Klaus Schönhoven, 'Haase, Hugo' in Benz and Graml, *Biographisches Lexikon*, p. 120.
[1530] Prädikow, *Der Weimarer VORWÄRTS*, p. 211.

in London. He was involved in shaping the party's theoretical framework by editing the SPD organ *Die neue Zeit* from 1883 onwards, drawing up the theoretical part of the party's *Erfurter Programm* in 1891. He remained the SPD's leading theoretician in the 1890s, defending the party's Marxist doctrine against Eduard Bernstein's revisionism. Although Kautsky supported war credits in 1914 in spite of theoretical reservations, he began to criticise Reichstag support for the war in 1915 and was dismissed as editor of *Die neue Zeit* in 1917. Kautsky joined the USPD in that year, although he called for a reunification of the socialist factions after the war. The provisional government appointed him to analyse Germany's wartime documents and he was a member of the socialisation commission in 1920. He left the USPD when it merged with the KPD in 1920 and rejoined the SPD after its reunification with the USPD in 1922. Kautsky moved to Vienna in 1924, yet continued to publish and co-authored the SPD's *Heidelberger Programm.*[1531] As an expert on German war guilt documents Kautsky rejected the idea that admitting war guilt would reflect badly on the German people, arguing that only the deposed elites could be held guilty. Accordingly, he severely criticised the government's perception of the Allied accusations as a slander against Germany rather than against her former elites. Kautsky warned that postponing publication of the war guilt documents would arouse Allied mistrust and appealed for a peaceful foreign policy capable of regaining international trust and a rational, reconciliatory peace strategy which recognised that continuing to wage war would be worse signing a harsh peace. (See pp. 19 FN 48, 121, 124, 126 FN 586, 129, 213 FN 1044, 231 FN 1143)

Kircher, Rudolf (1885-1954)
The civil servant Dr. Rudolf Kircher joined the editorial staff of the *Frankfurter Zeitung* in 1912, initially as a correspondent for the Baltic States and later as an expert on military strategy during the First World War. He was the newspaper's London correspondent in 1920. Kircher was employed as the main editor of the *Frankfurter Zeitung* in 1930, remaining in this position until 1943.[1532] In his welcome to returning soldiers in the *Frankfurter* Zeitung, Kircher exemplified the propagandistic difficulty of dealing with defeat by addressing the returnees as 'defeated victors'. He acknowledged the need to establish new ideals, appealing to the soldiers to lead this endeavour. Attacking Germany's military strategy, Kircher picked up Scheidemann's accusation of Ludendorff as a 'gambler', suggesting that he had 'played out all his cards' when requesting the armistice. With reference to official war propaganda, he criticised the German tendency to believe in unfounded hopes rather than analysing the political situation rationally. (See pp. 140 FN 673, 169, 176 FN 860f, 218f)

Klaar, Ernst, see p. 44 FN 171

Krätzig, Hermann, see p. 255.

Krain, Willibald (1887-1945)
The artist Willibald Krain studied at the renowned Royal Art School in Breslau and the Royal Bavarian Academy of Arts in Munich, publishing his sketches and caricatures in *Kladdaradatsch, Die Gartenlaube, Westermanns Monatshefte,* Simplicissimus, and *Der wahre Jacob.* Having moved to Berlin in 1913, Krain's initial war enthusiasm was soon replaced by a profound pacifism, which he expressed in an anti-war cycle of drawings. These images were published in Zurich and prohibited in all belligerent countries. As a republican democrat, Krain opposed right- and left-wing radicalism. He republished his anti-war cycle in 1924, when it was lauded in the republican press. He furthermore illustrated books and continued to contribute to several newspapers and journals until 1933.[1533] Krain's critical focus on the war's human losses accorded with the pacifist republican narrative of the conflict as essentially suffering and carnage. He caricatured

---

[1531] Strauss, Röder et al (eds.), *International Biographical Dictionary of Central European Emigrés, Vol. II/Part 1*, p. 357.
[1532] Ulrich Schäfer, Liberaler Journalismus im Dritten Reich am Beispiel Rudolf Kircher (Diplom Dissertation, Technische Universität Dortmund,1984), pp. 48f.
[1533] Dieter Lemhoefer, *Willibald Krain (Breslau 1886-1945 Dresden)* (Berlin, 1987), pp. 3-15.

Ludendorff as a 'genius gambler' and suggested that the pan-Germans were responsible for the peace and thus had no right to interfere in the peace negotiations. He nevertheless depicted the peace terms as a seed of hatred which would grow into a new war. (See pp. 88 FN 406, 96 FN 455, 114 FN 539, 255 FN 1254, 259 FN 1279, 297 FN 1507, 298 FN 1509)

Kuttner, Erich (1887- 1942)
The lawyer Erich Kuttner left the civil service to become a writer in 1912, editing the SPD newspaper *Volksstimme* in Chemnitz from 1913 to 1915. From 1916 to 1922, Kuttner edited *Vorwärts* and remained a regular contributor until 1933. As a war invalid, Kuttner was a founding member of the *Reichsbund der Kriegsbeschädigten, Kriegsteilnehmer und Kriegshinterbliebenen* (Reich Association of war invalids, war veterans, and war dependants). He led the regiment *Reichstag* in defence of the government in January 1919 and was a co-founder of the *Republikanischer Führerbund* (Republican Officers' League). Kuttner edited the weekly publication *Die Glocke* from 1922 to 1923 and the satirical journal *Lachen Links* from 1924 to 1927, while also working for the J. H. W. Dietz publishing house from 1923. He served on the executive committee of the socialist war veterans' association *Reichsbanner Schwarz-Rot-Gold* from 1924 to 1933. Kuttner emigrated in 1933, working as a war correspondent in the Spanish Civil War. He was murdered in Mauthausen concentration camp, where he was deported upon his arrest in the Netherlands in 1942.[1534] As a vehement supporter of the revolution, Kuttner stressed that it had almost been bloodless in comparison with the war. Even so, the left criticised him for his nationalist propaganda during the conflict. Kuttner sought in turn to discredit Kurt Eisner by emphasising his support for Germany's war effort in 1914, claiming that it had undermined the SPD's efforts to prevent the conflict. Commenting on the government's draft plan for a Supreme Court to investigate Germany's wartime policies, Kuttner complained that it did not punish those responsible enough, arguing that they must be removed from public life. Although Kuttner shared the common perception that the consequences of the peace would be apocalyptic, he called for a calm consideration of Germany's options and rational negotiations alerting the Allied peoples to Germany's plight rather than a heroic gesture of defiance. Kuttner stressed the need for a decisive response once the Allied ultimatum prohibiting further amendment of the peace terms was issued, arguing that however much all parties rejected the terms, the government could still be forced to sign them. In retrospect, Kuttner viewed the government's heavyhearted decision to sign as a prerequisite for Germany's slow and painful recovery. I He severely criticised Gustav Noske's failure to reform the disloyal officer corps in the wake of the Kapp-Lüttwitz putsch and warned that the government's failure to protect soldiers who had resisted their putschist officers would discourage the soldiers from defending the republic. (See pp. 19, 22, 48, 74, 118 FN 549, 122 FN 572, 183, 236 FN 1172, 239 FN 1189, 241 FN 1199, 251 FN 1234, 291 FN 1486, 293)

Lamszus, Wilhelm (1881-1865)
The pacifist primary school teacher and author Wilhelm Lamszus published two novels in 1912 and 1919 which are seen as precursors of Erich Maria Remarque's *All quiet on the Western Front*. Both depict the horrific nature of warfare in a dystopian vision of wartime carnage and brutality. Upon its republication in 1919, the combined edition of the two novels sold 70 print runs in a number of languages. Initially close to the SPD, Lamszus belonged to the KPD member from 1919 to 1927 and promoted significant anti-authoritarian educational reform.[1535] He also pursued his pacifist convictions by contributing to *Das andere Deutschland*, *Die Friedens-Warte*, and *Die Deutsche Zukunft*. In 1933, he was forced to retire with a reduced pension.[1536] Lamszus severely criticised the Kaiser in *Vorwärts* for living a life of leisure and luxury instead of taking responsibility for the catastrophic legacy of his reign. His depiction of warfare focused particularly on the devastating consequences of the war experience on the soldiers' psyche. (See pp. 78, 144 FN 697, 700)

[1534] See Schröder, *Sozialdemokratische Parlamentarier*, p. 575.
[1535] Susanne Brandt, 'Lamszus, Wilhelm' in Hirschfeld, Krumeich and Renz (eds.), *Enzyklopädie*, p. 671.
[1536] Wolfgang Emmerich, 'Wilhelm Lamszus' in Donat and Holl (eds.), *Die Friedensbewegung*, pp. 246ff.

Landsberg, Otto (1869-1957)
Having joined the SPD in 1890, this lawyer of Jewish descent became the party's legal expert and represented it in the Reichstag from 1912 to 1918. Close to the conservative wing of the party throughout the war, Landsberg dealt with legal and financial questions within the Council of People's Representatives. He strongly opposed radicalisation of the revolution, thus arousing hostility on the extreme left. Landsberg was an SPD delegate to the National Assembly and Minister of Justice in the Scheidemann government, resigning in protest at Germany's decision to sign the Treaty of Versailles in 1919. Following his resignation, he was appointed German ambassador to Belgium. He returned unsuccessfully in 1923 to work as a lawyer in Berlin. He fled to Holland in 1933, where friends hid him from German persecution during the occupation.[1537] In the immediate aftermath of the First World War, Landsberg envisaged domestic and international freedom as one of the main achievements of the revolution. He appealed against Wilhelm's extradition in early 1920, warning that it would turn him into a martyr. He also suggested and that the establishment of laws to try war crimes in Germany, made it unnecessary for the Entente to insist on extradition as a matter of prestige. (38 FN 141, 228 FN 1123, 268 FN 1336, 270)

Lask, Berta, see p. 49 FN 203

Lehmann-Russbüldt, Otto (1873-1964)
As a co-founder of the pacifist *Bund Neues Vaterland* (New Fatherland League) in 1914 and general secretary of the *Deutsche Liga für Menschenrechte* (German Human Rights League) the monist and radical democratic pacifist Otto Lehmann-Rüssbüldt was a leading figure in Germany's pacifist movement. He supported Franco-German reconciliation, published a number of pacifist publications, opposed the *Reichswehr,* and contributed to *Die Weltbühne.* After a brief imprisonment in 1933, Lehmann-Russbüldt emigrated to Great Britain where he continued to write for German émigré newspapers.[1538] Lehmann-Russbüldt quickly became disillusioned with the revolution, already denouncing it as pretence in March 1919 because the old system had not genuinely changed. He had tried to draw Ludendorff's attention to the soldiers' grievances during the war, particularly with regard to the military hierarchy. Arguing that the soldiers suffering and their eventual disillusionment contributed significantly to Germany's military collapse, Lehmann-Rüssbüldt challenged the right-wing claim that the soldiers had fought for right-wing values. He explicitly attacked the OHL for sacrificing millions of lives by not only refusing the papal peace offer in 1917, but also rejecting attempts by the *Bund Neues Vaterland* to initiate peace negotiations in 1915. (See 19, 33 FN 112, 52, 98 FN 463, 140 FN 672, 143f FN 690f, 693, 151 FN 735)

Leonard, Rudolf [Olf] (1889- 1953)
This expressionist, poet, playwright, essayist, and journalist was court-martialled during the war and actively supported Liebknecht during the revolution. He worked as a freelance journalist for *Die Weltbühne* and an editor in the publishing house 'Die Schmiede'.[1539] Leonard vehemently defended the revolution against bourgeois criticism, arguing that wartime mass slaughter was the real crime, not revolutionary disorder. In order to discredit the old regime, he held Wilhelm II, the generals and Prussianism responsible for the revolution. Leonard pointed out the irony of the crown prince's complaint that he was not allowed to return to his troops, considering that he should not have left in the first place. He criticised the continued presence of DDP politicians discredited during the war in the National Assembly and disputed the benefits of hiding German war guilt. With regard to military policy, he welcomed the Allied prohibition of conscription in Germany and promoted the establishment of a volunteer force. Leonard also sought to explain attempts to deprive officers of their paraphernalia as a necessary restriction on their

---

[1537] Imanuel Geiss, 'Landsberg, Otto' in Benz and Graml, *Biographisches Lexikon*, p. 199.
[1538] Strauss , Röder et al. (eds.), *International Biographical Dictionary of Central European Emigrés,Vol. II, Part 2*, p. 425.
[1539] 'Leonard, Rudolf' in Wilpert, *Lexikon der Weltliteratur, Band I: Autoren*, p. 961.

position of power rather than as an act of petty revenge. (See pp. 48 FN 199, 64 FN 285, 79 FN 346, 109 FN 527, 124 FN 584, 271f, 275 FN 1386, 280 FN 1403)

Leuß, Hans (1861-1920)
As a freelance journalist, Leuß contributed to a number of newspapers between 1892 and 1894, among them the bourgeois *Kasseler Journal,* the *Schaumburg-Lippische Landeszeitung,* and the *Volk* in Berlin. Elected to the Reichstag as an independent ('German social antisemite') candidate in 1893, Leuß was imprisoned for 3 1/2 years for committing perjury during a trial. He joined the SPD after his release and went on to become co-editor of *Die Welt am Montag*. He was elected to the provincial parliament in Mecklenburg-Strelitz in 1919, where he chaired the SPD faction until his death in 1920.[1540] In *Die Welt am Montag* Leuß emphasized the need to subordinate the revolution to democratic principles, vehemently rejecting violence as a political tool. In early 1920, Leuß revoked his initial enthusiasm for the revolution, complaining that the political change was merely a consequence of the old regime's collapse. Leuß, who had already publicly criticised the conduct of the crown prince in 1914 and had been sentenced to 6 months in jail, continued to denounce the monarchy's attempts to defend their wartime after the revolution, arguing that the royal family had been thoroughly discredited by their flight. (See pp. 49 FN 204f, 66 FN 302, 74f FN 318, 322, 79 FN 345f, 257 FN 1269)

Liebknecht, Karl see p. 34 (Also see p. 110)

Luxemburg, Rosa see p. 35 (Also see p. 110)

Mann, Heinrich and Thomas see p. 31f (Also see pp. 189f FN 934, 942)

Metzger, Dr. Arnold see p. 33 FN 111 (Also see p. 39 FN 148)

Metzler, Georg [real name: Richard Witting (originally Witkowski)] (1856-1923)
From 1891 to 1902, the writer and liberal politician Richard Witting served as mayor of Posen before being appointed first director and later head of the executive committee of the German *Nationalbank* (National Bank). He represented the National Liberal Party in the Reichstag before the war, yet emerged as a vehement critic of Germany's wartime policies during the conflict. Joining the *Bund Neues Vaterland* (New Fatherland League) and the *Zentralstelle Völkerrecht* (Central Commission for International Law) during the war, Witting formulated a draft for a democratic constitution in 1917/18 which later served as a basis for the Weimar constitution. Witting half-heartedly joined the DDP after the revolution, promoting political co-operation between USPD, SPD, and bourgeois democratic forces and working towards Franco-German reconciliation.[1541] Writing in *Die Weltbühne,* Witting severely criticised the fact politicians discredited by their wartime conduct continued to represent Germany, arguing that the Entente would not trust them. Among them, he listed Adolf Groeber, Konstantin Fehrenbach, Matthias Erzberger, Friedrich von Payer, Friedrich Naumann as well as Philipp Scheidemann, Eduard David and Otto Landsberg. He criticised the German people for continuing to believe in deceptive war propaganda and stressed that the survival of the German nation depended on investigating the question of responsibility for Germany's wartime policies, a move necessary to fully inform the German population and cleanse the political sphere. Metzler strongly criticised the Second Parliamentary Commission's war guilt investigation as biased, impotent, and insufficiently concerned with the truth. In addition to censuring Germany's former political leaders for their wartime conduct, he considered the Reichstag to be jointly responsible for Germany's wartime policies because it had failed to take charge of the political situation. (see pp. 74 FN 318, 102 FN 484, 489, 108f FN 523, 527, 116 FN 544, 118 FN 549, 121 FN 566, 126 FN 595, 128 FN 603, 132 FN 621, 137 FN 657, 170 FN 824)

Meyer[-Hambruch], Alfred Richard, see p. 57 FN 251

[1540] See Schröder, *Sozialdemokratische Parlamentarier*, p. 585.
[1541] Helmut Donat, 'Richard Witing' in Donat and Holl (eds.), *Die Friedensbewegung*, pp. 420ff.

Molkebuhr, Hermann (1851-1927)
Hermann Molkebuhr was a founding member and later the main representative of the Allgemeiner Deutscher Arbeiterverein (General German Workers' Association). After his expulsion from Hamburg in 1884, he left Germany for America, yet returned as an editor of the *Hamburger Echo* in 1890. He acted as party secretary for the SPD's central committee in Berlin from 1904 until his death, and was elected to the party's executive Reichstag committee from 1907-1924. He was a member of the Reichstag from 1890-1924.[1542] Representing the Central Council of People's Representatives Hermann Molkebuhr and Richard Müller signed an appeal to the Allied peoples which blamed Germany's monarchist and military elites for the horrors and suffering of the war and emphasized the people's common desire for peace. Stressing the nation's rejection of violence amongst Germany's achievements, Molkebuhr appealed to the Entente populations for help in easing Germany's post-war suffering and moderating the harsh armistice terms. (See pp. 19 FN 48, 44 FN 171, 63 FN 278, 212f FN 1040f)

Müller, Hermann (1876- 1931)
An SPD member since 1893, Hermann Müller was elected to the party's executive committee in 1906 and given responsibility for public and foreign relations. He failed to convince the French socialist to refrain from voting for war credits in 1914 and subsequently supported the *Burgfrieden* idea in Germany. After the revolution he was elected as SPD representative for the Soldiers' and Workers' Council in Berlin. Müller represented the SPD in both the National Assembly and the Reichstag. He also served as Foreign Minister in the Weimar Coalition co-signing the Treaty of Versailles. Müller was later Reich Chancellor from March to June 1920 and again in 1928, although his cabinet was forced to resign after it failed to reach a compromise on the size of contributions to unemployment insurance.[1543] Defending the SPD against Allied and USPD allegations attacking the party's wartime policies at the conference of the Socialist International in Berne, Müller strongly rejected German and SPD war guilt. He nevertheless argued in a letter to Karl Kautsky a month later that the German people had to be thoroughly informed if they were to assess Germany's wartime policies critically. Retrospectively, he held a mourning period following the Treaty of Versailles responsible for postponing public debate regarding responsibility for Germany's wartime conduct. He defined German war invalids as 'living memorials to the horrors of war', thus promoting a victimised rather than heroic image of their war experience. After the acceptance of the Treaty of Versailles, Foreign Minister Müller promised that Germany would do its utmost to fulfil its terms. (See pp. 19 FN 48, 124, 129 FN 609, 131, 187, 254, 262)

Nicolai, Georg Friedrich, see p. 23 FN 75 (Also see p. 37 FN 136)

Nippold, Otfried, see p. 121 FN 565

Noske, Gustav (1868- 1946)
Following his appointment as editor of the *Chemnitzer Volksstimme* in 1902, the political autodidact Noske was elected to the Reichstag in 1906 where he soon advanced to an expert on military and colonial issues. At the end of the war the SPD sent Noske, who had worked as a war reporter during the conflict, to Kiel to contain the revolutionary momentum. He was later recalled to Berlin to defeat the left-wing unrest in January and March 1919. Noske violently defeated the Council Republics in Bremen and Bavaria as Minister of Defence. He was forced to resign when the Kapp-Putsch revealed his failure to reform the army into a reliable republican force.[1544] Noske publicly declared that he would refuse to assist in fulfilling the Allied extradition demands, suggesting that those attempting to carry it out were likely to be murdered. Noske defended the use of *Freikorps* as necessary and continuously supported the officer corps against allegations questioning their loyalty to the republic. As a logical consequence of his conviction that any political agitation within the

---

[1542] Schröder, *Sozialdemokratische Parlamentarier*, p. 620.
[1543] Manfred Vasold, 'Müller, Hermann' in Benz and Graml, *Biographisches Lexikon*, pp. 233f.
[1544] Helga Grebing,'Noske, Gustav' in Benz and Graml, *Biographisches Lexikon*, pp. 240f.

army would destabilise its military effectiveness, Noske vehemently criticised the creation of the *Republikanischer Führerbund* which aimed to democratise the army. In response to the Treaty of Versailles, Noske demanded concessions with regard to the size of the army in order to allow Germany to uphold domestic order and defend her borders. (see pp. 19 FN 48, 73 FN 316, 74, 88f, 184, 213 FN 1047, 253 FN 1242, 269, 271, 275 FN 1390, 277, 279-287, 289ff, 306)

Peiser, Dr. Werner (1895- 1978)
The lawyer Werner Peiser joined the domestic policy section of *Vorwärts* in 1919 while studying Romanic languages at Berlin University. He left the SPD organ in 1921 to serve as Prussian government press officer, later becoming a senior civil servant at the Prussian Historical Institute in Rome in 1931. He was dismissed from the civil service in 1933, initially teaching at a number of universities in Italy before emigrating to the United States in 1939. After the Second World War, he worked as a legal advisor for the American prosecuting council during the Nuremberg trials. During the 1950s, Peiser was re-employed by the German Foreign Office.[1545] In a *Vorwärts* article which expressed the SPD's unfaltering hope in the Socialist International as a means of revising the peace, Peiser recycled Brockdorff Rantzau's phrase by expressing the hope that the peace treaty would someday turn into 'a scrap of paper'. (See pp. 240 FN 1196, 256 FN 1263)

Persius, (Karl Ludwig) Lothar (1864- 1944)
Motivated by a desire to travel, Persius joined the navy in 1882 as an officer cadet and became captain of the *Seeadler* in 1903. His refusal to obey a request from Tirpitz and publications criticising Germany's colonial administration in China, however, aroused his superior's suspicions. Continued criticism of Tirpitz's naval policy which led to the naval arms race with Great Britain brought about his resignation, when his alias was uncovered and he was denied further promotion in 1908. Persius worked mainly for the conservative *Kreuzzeitung* until 1912, also contributing to a number of other publications before accepting a post as editor at the liberal *Berliner Tageblatt*. Although he contributed to the pacifist *Friedens-Warte* from 1913, his pacifist convictions grew stronger during the war. He welcomed Germany's demobilisation and demanded an ideological reform of the officer corps in 1919. In the second half of the 1920s, Persius was a member of the *Deutsche Liga für Menschenrechte* (German Human Rights League).[1546] Writing in *Die Weltbühne*, Persius vehemently criticised the old regime's war propaganda that had deceived the German population, emphasizing the need to address the question of responsibility for Germany's wartime policies. After the war, Persius argued for Germany's complete disarmament. (See pp. 19, 74 FN 318, 97f FN 462, 135, 271f)

Polgar, Alfred, see p. 59.

Quidde, Ludwig (1858- 1941)
This long-standing critic of militarism and the monarchy, who was sentenced to three months in prison on the grounds of lèse-majesté in 1896, was a German pacifist of international repute. He became chairman of the *Deutsche Friedensgesellschaft* (German Peace League) in 1914 and attempted to shield it from official persecution. In spite of his vehement opposition to the treaty of Versailles, the DDP failed to nominate Quidde for re-election because of his pacifism. He was arrested for treason in 1924 because he had criticised Germany's secret armament, but was freed after international protests. He received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1927 for his efforts towards Franco-German reconciliation.[1547] In his memoirs, Quidde was highly critical of the monarchy's legal measures against criticism before the war. He considered the armistice terms as an Allied deception, because the food deliveries promised by the Allies took too long to arrive. He

---

[1545] Prädikow, *Der Weimarer VORWÄRTS*, pp. 169f; 'Peiser, Werner' in Strauss, Röder et al. (eds.), *Biographisches Handbuch der deutschsprachigen Emigration nach 1933. Band. I: Politik, Wirtschaft, Öffentliches Leben* (Munich, New York, London, Paris, 1980), p. 522.
[1546] Peter Steinkamp, 'Kapitän zur See a. D. Lothar Persius (1864-1944) – Ein Seeoffizier als Kritiker der deutschen Flottenpolitik' in Wette, *Pazifistische Offiziere*, pp. 99-108.
[1547] Helmut Donat, 'Quidde, Ludwig' in Benz and Graml, *Biographisches Lexikon*, pp. 260f.

argued that an admission of German war guilt was unnecessary because the revolution had removed those responsible; warning that it would not relieve the hatred and was only useful if all combatant nations opened their archives. (See pp. 19, 21, 75 FN 322, 126 FN 594, 229)

Rade, Martin, see p. 190 FN 942

Rathenau, Walther (1867- 1922)
Succeeding his father as executive director of AEG, Rathenau led a large industrial empire while publishing widely on contemporary economic, social, and philosophical questions. During the war, Rathenau had been appointed to create the Ministry of War department which co-ordinated Germany's use of raw materials during the conflict. As a DDP politician, Rathenau was involved in the Stinnes-Legien agreement after the war, yet pursued radical demands for the abolishment of private entrepreneurship. He was one of the economic experts who offered advice on the beginning of Germany's 'fulfilment policy' negotiated at the Spa conference and pursued Franco-German reconciliation as Minister for Reconstruction and Foreign Minister under Chancellor Wirth. Having succeeded in securing the Rapallo Treaty as a significant step towards Russo-German reconciliation, the 'fulfilment' politician Rathenau was murdered by right-wing extremists.[1548] After the war, Rathenau argued that the German people could not be held responsible for Germany's war policies because they had been unable to influence their course. Rathenau furthermore complained about the Allied retention of German prisoners, arguing with reference to German offers to help reconstruct French and Belgian territory that this work must be carried out by volunteers and not by slave labour. (111, 120, 190 FN 943, 291 FN 1491)

Rausch, Bernhard
Having been editor-in-chief of the *Schleswig-Holsteinische Volks-Zeitung* in Kiel until 1918, the SPD member Bernhard Rausch was appointed as Gustav Noske's private secretary in the Ministry of Defence. He was released from this post when Noske resigned after the Kapp-Lüttwitz putsch in 1920. Rausch, who retrospectively defended Noske's military policy, rose in the ranks of the reactionary war veterans' association *Stahlhelm* in the last years of the Weimar Republic and came to sympathise with the radical right.[1549] Looking back on the revolution from its first anniversary, Rausch depicted its outbreak as a natural force unrelated to human agency, while emphasising the old regime's responsibility for the violent outbreak of discontent. Defending Gustav Noske against allegations from Ludendorff, Rausch vehemently attacked the former military leader, suggesting that he recognise that his military failures deprived him of the right to assume political authority. Responding to Ernst zu Reventlow's allegations against the SPD, Rausch denounced the right-wing agitator's questionable political tactics, suggesting that his refusal to acknowledge facts made political engagement with right-wing propaganda futile. (See pp. 22, 62 FN 277, 64 FN 285, 88f FN 408, 410, 135)

Reck-Malleczewen, Fritz, see p. 51 FN 215f

Reifenberg, Carl Benno, p. 167 FN 805 (Also see p. 169 FN 813)

Remarque, Erich Maria [birth name: Remark] (1898- 1979)
Remarque's first major novel *All Quiet on the Western Front* critically described the experience of the First World War from the perspective of a young war volunteer, describing his generation's increasing disillusionment with a conflict which eventually broke them. Both the novel, pre-published in episodes in the *Vossische Zeitung* and the subsequent film aroused major political controversy.[1550] (See pp. 11, 25 FN 87, 47, 142 FN 687, 145)

[1548] Walter H. Pehle, 'Rathenau, Walter' in Benz and Graml, *Biographisches Lexikon*, pp. 262f.
[1549] Wette, *Noske*, pp. 383, 681, 709, 865.
[1550] Margit Ketterle, 'Remarque, Erich Maria' in Benz and Graml, *Biographisches Lexikon*, p. 268.

Roß, Colin, see p. 283 FN 1438

Schäfer, Wilhelm, see p. 173 (Also see pp. 165f FN 796, 800, 176 FN 859)

Scheidemann, Philipp (1865- 1939)
Having worked for a number of social democratic publications, Scheidemann represented the party in the Reichstag from 1903 and joined the executive committee of the parliamentary SPD faction in 1913. He strongly supported a reconciliatory peace without annexations during the war and was appointed as permanent secretary in Max von Baden's cabinet. Scheidemann declared the republic on 9 November 1918 without consulting his party and joined the provisional government. Appointed as Prime Minister by Ebert in February 1919, Scheidemann resigned in June in protest at the decision to sign the Treaty of Versailles. He was mayor of Kassel between 1919 and 1925, mainly dedicating his efforts to his publications afterwards.[1551] In the immediate post-war period, Scheidemann defined the revolution as representing peace and freedom, arguing that the entire German population would have to co-operate in producing bread. Scheidemann publicly denounced Ludendorff as a 'clever gambler of the world war', blaming him for Germany's wartime failures. He reacted to subsequent right-wing criticism by insinuating that Germany's former elites had proven their lack of moral courage by running away. Although he recognised the domestic propaganda potential of a thorough investigation of the old regime's failures, Scheidemann announced in the National Assembly that Ludendorff's responsibility for the armistice could not yet be disclosed in detail. In response to right-wing provocation he warned, however, that the old regime's responsibility would be uncovered and attacked the DNVP as jointly responsible for Germany's defeat. Attempting to promote the Allied armistice concession of food provisions as a republican success, Scheidemann defined it as a first sign of peace. The postponement of its implementation, however, led to increasing disillusionment. Scheidemann put forward a number of unrealistic demands regarding the peace, such as unification with Austria and the possibility of demanding reparations for the consequences of the Allied Sea Blockade. Despite his vehement opposition to the Treaty of Versailles, he insisted, however, that once signed it must be fulfilled. (19 FN 48, 22, 34f, 38 FN 141,143, 58 FN 257, 73f, 76f, 87f, 91, 108, 116 FN 544, 123, 130, 135 FN 644, 138 FN 663, 141, 147 FN 713, 173, 226, 228f, 233, 236, 259, 261f, 272, 278, 285 FN 1450, 291 FN 1491)

Schiff, Victor (1895-1953)
Having fought the First World War in the Austro-Hungarian army, the journalist Victor Schiff joined the SPD in 1917 and was a member of the German peace delegation in Versailles in 1919. Schiff was responsible for *Vorwärts'* foreign policy section from 1920 to 1933 and was involved in a number of émigré publications and SPD politics during his exile in France and Great Britain.[1552] Schiff defended the SPD's decision to prioritise achieving peace over revolution, arguing that the Allied peace terms proved the accuracy of the party's wartime assessment of Germany's situation. He severely criticised the French socialists for failing to oppose the peace out of impotence or spite, citing this as proof that the SPD was justified in trying to avert defeat at any cost. On a domestic level, Schiff welcomed the Parliamentary Commission investigating Germany's war policies as an act of reckoning for the old regime which would thoroughly discredit Germany's former elites. He severely attacked the USPD's appeals for acceptance of the peace as a 'stab in the back' blocking a united socialist front against the Treaty of Versailles. (See pp. 18 FN 41, 22, 62 FN 276, 101 FN 482, 219, 238 FN 1183, 243f)

Schulz, Heinrich see p. 40.

Schwarzschild, Leopold (1891-1950)

[1551] Helga Grebing,'Scheidemann, Philipp' in Benz and Graml, *Biographisches Lexikon*, pp. 286f.
[1552] Strauss , Röder et al. (eds.), *International Biographical Dictionary of Central European Emigrés, Vol. II, Part* II, pp. 645f.

From 1913 /1914, Schwarzschild published his first reviews and political poems in *Simplicissimus, Jugend, März, Zeit im Bild* and the *Frankfurter Zeitung* before he was sent to the front in 1914. Upon his return he continued to work as a freelance journalist until he became editor of the Frankfurt *General-Anzeiger's* economic section and a contributor to Stefan Grossmann's *Tage-Buch* (later serving as sole editor in 1927 until its closure by the Nazis). Schwarzschild also edited the *Berliner Börsen-Courier* and the *8-Uhr-Abendblatt* throughout the early 1920s. He co-founded the weekly newspaper *Der Montag Morgen* in 1923, followed by the *Magazin der Wirtschaft* in 1925, which he sold again in 1931 and 1929 respectively. He was elected into the executive committee of the *Deutsche Liga für Menschenrechte* (German Human Rights League) in 1930, but was forced to emigrate in 1933.[1553] In the *Frankfurter Zeitung* Schwarzschild argued that the divide between the returning soldiers and the home front needed to be overcome, appealing to the latter to adopt the soldiers' comradeship and reconciliatory spirit. He also attempted to defend the revolution, arguing that it could not be held responsible for adverse post-war conditions because it was little more than a replacement for the collapsing monarchy. (See pp. 63 FN 282f, 171, 176 FN 360)

Sinzheimer, Dr. Hugo, see p. 132 FN 623

Sollmann, Wilhelm, see p. 152 FN 741

Stampfer, Friedrich (1874- 1957)
After his military service, the Austrian journalist Friedrich Stampfer was appointed editor-in-chief of *Vorwärts* in 1916 to bring the SPD organ back in line with the party's *Burgfrieden* policy. Appointed as a delegate of the German peace delegation, Stampfer resigned from his post at *Vorwärts* in protest at the acceptance of the treaty, yet returned a year later. As a Reichstag delegate for the SPD, Stampfer was elected to the party's executive committee in 1925. He emigrated to Prague after the prohibition of the SPD and continued his journalistic work there and in New York.[1554] Stampfer vehemently rejected acceptance of the Allied peace terms during the peace negotiations, instead suggesting that Germany should force the Allies to acknowledge the strength of its convictions by provoking an occupation. He severely criticised the draft Allied plan for the League of Nations and argued that the imposition of the harsh Allied peace terms would inevitably lead to Germany's collapse, irrespective of its form of government. In the aftermath of the German acceptance of the peace treaty, Stampfer accused the USPD of undermining Germany's peace efforts, suggesting that the country's inability to fulfil the terms would harm its international credibility if the treaty was accepted. Stampfer consequently argued that German acceptance of the treaty would thus disarm forces objecting to the harsh peace terms within the Allied countries. (See pp. 18, 19 FN 48, 22, 216 FN 1061, 219 FN 1075, 239 FN 1192, 1195f, 242f, 251 FN 1232, 271 FN 1363)

Ströbel, Heinrich (1869-1944)
The journalist Heinrich Ströbel joined the SPD in 1889. He began his career as an editor of the *Volksblatt* in Kassel and the *Volkszeitung* in Kiel before occupying the same position at *Vorwärts* in1900- 1916. Ströbel joined the USPD in 1917, rejoining the SPD in 1920 when the Independent Socialists expelled him. He left and rejoined the SPD yet again in 1931. Between November 1918 and January 1919, the pacifist Ströbel headed the provisional Prussian government. He sat on the executive committee of the *Bund Neues Deutschland* (Association for a new Germany) from 1918-1922 and the *Deutsche Friedensgesellschaft* (German Peace League) while contributing to its publication *Das andere Deutschland.* He also served on the commission of the *Deutsche Liga für Menschenrechte* (German Human Rights League) between 1922 and 1926 and co-edited the Marxist publication *Der Klassenkampf.*[1555] Ströbel vehemently rejected the wartime perception that Germany had fought a defensive war. Although he clearly identified military miscalculations and the OHL's opposition to a

---

[1553] Markus Behmer, *Von der Schwierigkeit, gegen Illusionen zu kämpfen: Der Publizist Leopold von Schwarzschild – Leben und Werk vom Kaiserreich zur Flucht aus Europa* (Münster, 1997), pp. 607-609.
[1554] Norbert Frei, 'Stampfer, Friedrich' in Benz and Graml, *Biographisches Lexikon*, pp. 324f.
[1555] Schröder, *Sozialdemokratische Parlamentarier*, p. 762.

reconciliatory peace in 1917 as reasons for Germany's military collapse, he maintained that the responsibility for Germany's defeat lay not solely with Michaelis, Hellfferich, and Ludendorff alone but also with the Reichstag. Ströbel particularly attacked the SPD for supporting the monarchy's wartime policies and suppressing USPD dissent, suggesting that it continued to pursue the same policies after the revolution. He questioned the Parliamentary Commission set up to investigate Germany's wartime conduct, viewing it as biased, nationalist, and impotent. Commenting on the German peace strategy, Ströbel warned that the German expectations of instant reconciliation were illusory and emphasized the need to recognise Allied suffering rather than fuel nationalist outrage. In the aftermath of the peace treaty's acceptance, Ströbel argued that the government's failure to change contributed to the harsh peace terms, while appealing for the Allies to recognise that Germany could not fulfil the treaty without concessions. Ströbel was particularly concerned that the army would oppose the Allied extradition demands. He furthermore warned that extradition would turn Germany's discredited former elites into martyrs. In the aftermath of the Kapp-Lüttwitz putsch Ströbel demanded that Noske's troops would be replaced with armed workers. (See pp. 19, 34 FN 115, 86 FN 391, 106, 125 FN 589, 129 FN 604, 132 FN 621f, 137 FN 657f, 139 FN 666f, 233f, 258, 260 FN 1286, 262 FN 1298, 265f FN 1313, 1322, 270 FN 1354, 291 FN 1486)

Toller, Ernst, see p. 51 FN 216

Troeltsch, Ernst, see p. 190 FN 942 (Also see pp. 59 FN 260, 219 FN 1073)

Tucholsky, Kurt [Paulchen Panther, Kaspar Hauser, Theobald Tiger and Ignaz Wrobel] (1890- 1935)
As one of the most prominent satirists of the Weimar Republic, the lawyer, journalist and novelist Kurt Tucholsky wrote for the *Schaubühne* (later *Weltbühne), Simplicissimus, Ulk, Vorwärts,* the *Berliner Volks-Zeitung,* the *Vossische Zeitung* and (after joining the USPD in 1920), also *Die freie Welt* and *Die Freiheit*. The pacifist Tucholsky was a co-founder of the *Friedensbund der Kriegsteilnehmer* (War Veteran's Peace League) and joined the organisational committee of the 'No more war' peace movement in 1920. In 1926, he joined the executive committee of the *Deutsche Liga für Menschenrechte* (German Human Rights League) and briefly became editor-in-chief of the *Weltbühne*. Having been diagnosed with cancer, Tucholsky committed suicide in 1935 while in exile in Sweden after being diagnosed with cancer.[1556] Before the revolution, Tucholsky warned against a last ditch defence arguing that those advocating it never heeded their own call. Tucholsky was highly critical of the revolution in retrospect, suggesting that the new republic had failed to change sufficiently, continuing to rely on military force and failing to prescribe a tangible set of values. He strongly censured the conduct of German officers and the former Kaiser during the war, rallying against political compromise on compensation for Wilhelm. He stressed that Ludendorff had requested an armistice before fleeing like a coward and suggested that he should be held responsible for his fatal misjudgements. Tucholsky also repeatedly insisted that anyone continuing to spread war propaganda should be considered as thoroughly discredited, criticising their lack of compassion for war invalids in particular. In the wake of the *Freikorps* revolt in the Baltic States, Tucholsky condemned the government's inability to control the rebellious units and stressed the need to show strength to the republic's enemies by punishing the Kapp-Lüttwitz putschists. (See pp. 19, 32f, 57, 66, 77 FN 336, 83f, 87 FN 394, 89-92, 98f, 185 FN 915, 288 FN 1463, 291 FN 1486, 292)

Uhde, Wilhelm (1874-1947)
The lawyer, art dealer and art historian Wilhelm Uhde was a supporter of Cubism and Expressionism who lived and worked in Paris from 1904. The First World War forced him to return to Germany, where he advocated cultural reform and published a number of historical and art historical monographs, in addition to short stories, plays, novels and political commentary.[1557] In his welcome address to the soldiers in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, Uhde

---

[1556] Michael Hepp, *Kurt Tucholsky. Biographische Annäherungen* (Reinbek, 1999), pp. 543-569.
[1557] 'Uhde, Wilhelm' in Lee Sorenson (ed.), *Dictionary of Art Historians,* accessed 24 January 2010: http://www.dictionaryofarthistorians.org/uhdew.htm

claimed that the revolution offered soldiers truth and freedom as a worthwhile reward for their and their dead comrades' suffering. Implying that the war was necessary if the people were to recognise the deceptiveness of the old regime's values, Uhde sought to promote a new order based on a rejection of violence. He nevertheless consciously evoked the soldiers' heroic achievement in safeguarding Germany from invasion to lift their spirits, which he envisaged as sombre and exhausted. Uhde reinforced the notion that there was no emotional division between front and home front, appealing for the soldiers' aid in creating the new state. (See pp. 161 FN 776, 163 FN 781, 164f, 166f FN 801, 806, 171 FN 828, 175f FN 856, 860)

Unruh, Fritz von (1885- 1970)
His critical plays forced the playwright and publicist Fritz von Unruh to resign from the officer corps, while the experience of the First World War converted him to pacifism. His plays were widely staged in the Weimar era and he became a moral advocate of the revolution. Yet his attempts to become actively involved by founding democratic parties in 1924 and in the early 1930s, however, failed. After right-wing attacks, von Unruh left Germany in 1932.[1558] His accounts of the war described the devastation that soldiers and officers witnessed, suggesting that the soldiers became increasingly disillusioned with and resentful of their role in the conflict. (See pp. 44, 143f FN 690, 692, 697f, 700)

Wels, Otto (15 September 1873-16 September 1939)
The former SPD party secretary from Brandenburg joined the Reichstag in 1912 and supported the SPD's commitment to the war effort. Otto Wels was a member of the Workers' and Soldiers' Council and city commander of Berlin after the revolution. He represented the SPD in the National Assembly and the Reichstag from 1919-1933, serving as the party's first chairman from 1931. He co-organised the general strike during the Kapp-Putsch, calling for Noske's dismissal once the government had returned to Berlin. Wels supported the war veteran's organisation *Reichsbanner Schwarz-Rot-Gold* and smuggled a significant proportion of the SPD's funds to Czechoslovakia when he emigrated to Prague in 1933.[1559] At the socialist conference in Berne Wels drew up a resolution declaring that the Allied refusal to return German prisoners of war was unjustified and caused hatred in Germany. He also decisively rejected the allegation that the SPD was jointly responsible for the war, suggesting that the Allied sea blockade was worse than Germany's occupation of Belgium. (See pp. 123 FN 577, 124, 131 FN 616, 191, 274 FN 1382, 276 FN 1395)

Wissel, Rudolf (1869-1962)
The lathe-operator Rudolf Wissel joined the SPD in 1888 and the metalworkers' association in 1891. He acted as labour secretary for the unions in Lübeck until 1908 before he was appointed as director of the central labour and social policy office of the general trade union commission in Berlin. He contributed to the socialist trade union newspaper from 1916 to 1929 and was elected to the *Reichstag* in March 1918. As vice chairman of the general trade union commission, Wissel took responsibility for social policy decisions within the Central Council of People's Representatives to replace the departed USPD members. He was an SPD delegate in the National Assembly and the Reichstag and was appointed as Minister for Economic Affairs in 1919 but was forced to resign in July after advocating a limitation of workers' rights. He served as Minister for Economic Affairs again from 1928 to 1930, arguing against increasing contributions to unemployment insurance in the debate which brought down the Müller cabinet.[1560] Wissel emphasised the catastrophic psychological and economic impact of the war on the German psyche in a *Vorwärts* article, blaming its traumatic impact for the German population's inability to work. (See pp. 19 FN 48, 41ff FN 159f, 163, 165, 168f)

Wolff, Fritz, see p. 42 FN 161 (Also see 69 FN 309

Zech, Paul (1881-1946)

[1558] Sigrid Schneider, 'Unruh, Fritz von' in Benz and Graml, *Biographisches Lexikon*, pp. 349f.
[1559] Manfred Vasold, 'Wels, Otto' in Benz and Graml, *Biographisches Lexikon*, pp. 361f.
[1560] Manfred Vasold, 'Wissel, Rudolf' in Benz and Graml, *Biographisches Lexikon*, pp. 369f.

This working class poet, dramatist, and novelist co-edited the journal *Das neue Pathos* in 1913-1923 and practised a number of professions in the Weimar era, working as civil servant, editor, script editor, industrial white-collar worker, and librarian. Zech's articles, Zech described the adverse conditions soldiers faced at the front and their resentment of those who prolonged their suffering and tried to glorify it. He suggested that some soldiers were broken to the point where they preferred fighting on at the cost of their sanity to revolting. (See pp. 45 FN 180ff, 51, 98 FN 463ff, 143f FN 690, 697, 699)

Zickler, Artur [Paulchen] (1897-?)
Artur Zickler worked as a milk coach driver, a packer, and a market assistant in Dresden in his teenage years. He was employed to cut tobacco and worked in a blast furnace in Dortmund while contributing poems to the *Sächsische Arbeiterzeitung* and to *Vorwärts* from 1913. Zickler feigned insanity during the war to avoid the draft and was interned in a mental institution. Having resumed his freelance work for *Vorwärts* in 1917, he published am account of his wartime experiences and worked in the paper's domestic policy section. He was dismissed by the SPD paper in 1922 when his contributions to the reactionary *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* were noticed. Zickler never joined the SPD and continued to work as editor for Hugenberg's *Der Tag*, the *Freischar,* the *Blätter der neuen Bereitschaft* and *Der Firn*. According to Klaus Prädikow, Zickler claims that Goebbels approached him to contribute to the National Socialist publication *Der Angriff* in the early 1930s, although he refused to surrender his party political independence.[1561] Zickler's satirical poems in *Vorwärts*, Zickler mocked the cowardice of Germany's former elites and of the Kaiser, suggesting that they were responsible for Germany's post-war misery. He ridiculed Ludendorff for refusing to share the profits he had made from the conflict with German war invalids. In a poem addressed to the returning soldiers, Zickler particularly emphasized the need to honour the war dead and argued that those who returned were greeted by freedom and the chance to create their own future. With regard to the war guilt question, Zickler conceded a degree of German war guilt while calling for an investigation of Allied war guilt and blaming capitalism for the outbreak of war. (See pp. 19, 125 FN 588, 163f FN 781, 787, 175 FN 856, 186)

[1561] Prädikow, *Der Weimarer VORWÄRTS*, pp. 166ff. In spite of thorough research it proved impossible to establish the date of Artur Zickler's death.

APPENDIX II: NEWSPAPERS AND JOURNALS

COMMONLY HELD VIEWS IN *DIE FREIHEIT*, *VORWÄRTS*, AND THE *FRANKFURTER ZEITUNG*

All three of the main political newspapers briefly assessed the negative psychological consequences of the war on social interaction, yet focused instead on the conflict's political and economic consequences. (42) Their depiction of the war particularly emphasized human and topographical destruction and the soldiers' suffering in order to promote the values of the revolution as the antithesis of the horrific war experience. (44f) In order to justify the revolution as the soldiers' achievement *Die Freiheit*, *Vorwärts*, and the *Frankfurter Zeitung* stressed the soldiers' opposition to official war propaganda and the war itself. (51f, 54f, 98). These publications also shared the perception that officers had abused their position of power during the war and agreed that war weariness was a major motivation for the revolution. (58,63f)

The newspapers and journals analysed defined the war conduct of individuals and parties as a decisive marker defining their legitimacy to govern in the new state. (73f) All three publications thus agreed that Wilhelm II had been a weak yet megalomaniac leader, whose flight had dealt a deathblow to the monarchy. (77ff). Additionally the political broadsheets placed most of the blame for Germany's collapse on Ludendorff, questioned the soundness of his wartime decisions, and implied that he did not learn from the wartime experience. (87f, 90) Defining the reactionary parties as the architects of Germany's war propaganda, these publications also suggested that right-wing forces had not only deceived the people but were responsible for defeat. In this manner right-wing attacks on the republic were discredited as attempts to hide the political bankruptcy of Germany's reactionary forces. (98, 101) All of the republican publications, apart from *Die Welt am Montag*, attacked Matthias Erzberger and questioned either his suitability to represent the republic or his post war role in German politics. (107-110)

All of the publications recognised that the attribution of responsibility for the outbreak and the outcome of the conflict was an important means of deciding whether parties or individuals were suitable to represent the new state. (118) *Die Freiheit, Vorwärts, and the Frankfurter Zeitung* mainly discussed the war guilt question with reference to its impact on the peace negotiations. (126) All the political broadsheets respectively blamed one or both battle(s) of the Marne for Germany's defeat, blaming the OHL for wilfully sabotaging peace negotiations and preventing a reconciliatory peace. They furthermore held the military leadership responsible for the armistice. (137-140, 146) The political newspapers challenged the right-wing view of the soldiers as heroic warriors by depicting them as resentful, suffering, and submissive human beings. In this context, all three identified wartime officers' misconduct, which was discussed with particular reference to the Hiller case, as a main source of soldiers' disillusionment. (150-154)

Recognising that welcome ceremonies should be used to introduce the returning soldiers to the new state, all political broadsheets agreed that demobilisation was an opportunity to strengthen republican values. (161) Neither publication acknowledged that the soldiers posed a potential threat to the new state, but described the positive atmosphere during the welcome ceremonies as proof of the unity of front and home front. (164, 170f) *Die Freiheit*, *Vorwärts*, and the *Frankfurter Zeitung* alike quoted Ebert's welcome speech to the soldiers without comment and none of the publications, (apart from *Die Freiheit*), noted that the ceremonies relied on traditional ritual elements. (171, 173) Although every newspaper was concerned about the fate of German war victims, they hardly evoked the traditional image of destitute, invalid beggars. (179) Instead, they emphasised the war invalids practical everyday difficulties and appealed for more consideration for their needs. (182) All publications printed equally unreliable information regarding the return of German prisoners of war. They also appealed to Allied humanity on the issue and explained that the signing of the peace treaty was a prerogative for the prisoners' release. (189f)

The newspapers analysed promoted the notion that the Allies need no longer fear German aggression any more, because the revolution had transformed Germany's values. Accordingly, it was suggested that it would be unfair to punish the republic for its predecessor's sins. (212f) This focus on Germany's ideological change was used to dispel doubts about the revolution's genuineness, in addition to a common declaration that Germany had renounced violence as the foundation of its foreign policy. (213f) The publications also agreed in defining Wilson as Germany's saviour who was genuinely committed to achieving a just peace. (215) *Die Freiheit*, *Vorwärts*, and the *Frankfurter Zeitung* alike expressed commitment to the reconstruction of the devastated regions of Belgium and France, yet unanimously rejected the Allied peace terms. (230, 249f)

The newspapers agreed that the pan-Germans had no right to attack the peace treaty that they were responsible for, while emphasizing that the peace was signed with a heavy heart because Germany had no other alternative. (259ff) Emphasizing that Germany had to take charge of her own fate, the republican publications called for fulfilment and patience while warning the Allies that Germany could potentially prove unable to fulfil the treaty entirely. (261f) Apart from *Die Freiheit*, all of the broadsheets opposed Wilhelm II's extradition, because they were concerned that it would revive his destroyed reputation by making him a martyr. (268) The newspapers analysed all expressed concern about the officers' reactionary conduct, appealing for the disarmament of rebelling *Freikorps* and the punishment of those responsible for the Kapp-Lüttwitz putsch. (278f, 287f, 292f)

FRANKFURTER ZEITUNG

The *Frankfurter Zeitung* originated in 1853 as a printed commentary on stock exchange developments. It was first published as a predominantly economic newspaper in

1856 and promoted the liberal democratic values of its editor Leopold Sonnemann.[1562] The newspaper diversified its political and social commentary from the mid-1860s and replaced its editor-in-chief with an editorial committee in 1873.[1563] The publication, which had opposed the anti-socialist laws, Bismarck's policies, and German Imperialism, warned against the dangers of war in 1914, and promoted a conciliatory peace throughout the conflict.[1564] The *Frankfurter Zeitung* was closely affiliated with the political agenda of the DDP after the war and had a print run of three daily editions, which fluctuated between 103,415 in 1918 and 84,000 in 1919.[1565] The publication's readership was drawn mainly from the educated middle class and it regularly featured articles by prominent DDP members such as professors Ernst Troeltsch, Max Weber, Ludwig Quidde, and Walther Schücking.[1566] The *Frankfurter Zeitung* survived Hitler's seizure of power while he sought to maintain a pretence of political tolerance abroad, but was forced under complete Nazi control in 1939 and prohibited in 1943.[1567]

Although it advocated containing the revolutionary movement, the *Frankfurter Zeitung* soon recognised the need to protect the revolution against right-wing agitation and suggested that a failure to do so would imply weakness. (40, 43) It compared the revolutionary disorder favourably to the war, arguing that the revolution developed out of war weariness yet still pursued high moral ideals and was defended by the soldiers. (48, 54f, 63) It depicted the revolution replacing rather than overthrowing the collapsing monarchy, arguing that the republic alone would bring bearable peace terms. (63, 65f) It quickly became disillusioned with the revolution, however, advocating a refusal to celebrate the occasion in 1919. (66)

The *Frankfurter Zeitung* severely criticised the conduct of the crown prince and Wilhelm's failure to abdicate. While suggesting that monarchist propaganda was dangerous to the republic, it maintained that there was no danger of a monarchist restoration. (79, 81) Opposing expropriation, the newspaper emphasized the legal necessity of compensating Wilhelm, reluctantly sanctioning the sum decided upon by the Prussian parliament. (83f) It rejected Hindenburg's bid for the presidency in 1919, suggesting that he lacked political skills and welcoming his resignation while acknowledging the need to recognise his achievements. (93f). It identified Ludendorff as Germany's main strategist, criticising his cowardice in fleeing the country and attacking him for attempting to shift the responsibility for defeat off his own shoulders. (86, 88, 91) The *Frankfurter Zeitung* alleged that the right-wing parties had remained unchanged, and

---

[1562] Kurt Paupié, 'Frankfurter Zeitung (1856-1943)' in Heinz Dietrich Fischer (ed.), *Deutsche Zeitungen des 17. bis 20. Jahrhunderts* (Pullach near Munich, 1972), pp. 241-243.
[1563] Ibid, p. 245.
[1564] Ibid, pp. 246f.
[1565] Asmuss, *Republik ohne Chance?*, pp. 30, 59; Moores, *Presse und Meinungsklima*, pp. 36, 61.
[1566] Modris Eksteins, 'The Frankfurter Zeitung: Mirror of Weimar Democracy' in *Journal of Contemporary History* 6, 4 (1971), pp. 4f.
[1567] Paupié, 'Frankfurter Zeitung in Fischer (ed.), *Deutsche Zeitungen*, pp. 251-255.

noted the danger that the German population could again be deceived by the lies of right-wing propaganda. (96f, 101f) It argued that only those who had advocated a conciliatory peace during the war could represent the republic and stressed that the DDP had excluded compromised individuals. (103f) Although it did not consider Erzberger as discredited because of his wartime policies, the *Frankfurter Zeitung* partly blamed him for the harsh armistice terms. (109) It also criticised the two socialist parties for their unconstructive bickering. (107)

The *Frankfurter Zeitung* quoted Kurt Eisner's speech dissociating the German people from Germany's wartime policies, thus implying that they were deceived, could not have acted differently, and therefore did not deserve to be punished. (119f) Although it criticised his diffident stance towards the SPD, it lauded Eisner's achievements in Berne. Contemporaneously, however, the paper grew increasingly anxious that his publication of Bavarian war guilt documents might harm Germany at the peace negotiations. (123f) The *Frankfurter Zeitung* acknowledged that Germany had committed some political mistakes before and during the war but maintained that war guilt must be investigated as an international issue. (124f) The paper quoted the eminent sociologist Max Weber, who assigned war guilt to Russia, Belgium, and the US and defended the U-Boat campaign, as an expression of their views on the question. (124) While opposing vehement advocates of German war guilt, the publication appealed to the German population to recognise their co-responsibility in tolerating the imperial regime. (128f) The *Frankfurter Zeitung* called for an immediate investigation of Germany's wartime policies to prove that the republic was not responsible for the defeat and criticised the government for not opening the archives early enough. (130f) Dismissing right-wing demagogy as a continuation of war propaganda, which it blamed for the soldiers' wartime disillusionment it argued that the war had been lost militarily, not ideologically, because the OHL had failed to moderate its demands despite recognising that Germany was heading for the abyss. (138-141) It adopted Scheidemann's view of Ludendorff as a gambler who had 'played out all his cards' and was left with nothing when requesting the armistice which in turn demoralised the home front. (141, 146f) The *Frankfurter Zeitung* noted Max von Baden's unsuccessful opposition to the OHL's armistice request, arguing that Ludendorff overestimated the threat of an immediate collapse at the front and misguidedly revealed Germany's inability to continue fighting. (146f) It also suggested that Ludendorff's call for a levee en masse was merely another gamble. (148) Emphasizing that the revolution had only taken place when the terms of the armistice had already been agreed, the *Frankfurter Zeitung* defended the revolution while blaming Erzberger's alleged incompetence for the harsh armistice terms. (148f) It rejected the 'stab in the back' myth by arguing that disillusionment with the war had begun with the soldiers' recognising that victory was impossible while the home front remained ignorant and therefore strong in 1918. (150)

While promoting Erzberger's view that the quick demobilisation warranted a moderation of the armistice terms, the *Frankfurter Zeitung* recognised the need to legitimise the wartime loss of life during demobilisation. (159, 163) It attempted to define the republic as a worthwhile reward for the sacrifice of the fallen by suggesting that the war might have been necessary to recognise the failures of the monarchy. (164) Uncritically glorifying the 'spirit of 1914', the publication predicted that the mood of the returning soldiers would be comparatively sombre and depressed. (165f) The newspaper lauded the soldiers' heroism in defending the German soil in order to lift their spirit, and partially adopted the idea of an undefeated army, which it only occasionally relativized by even more confusing references to 'undefeated victors'. (167, 169f) The *Frankfurter Zeitung* associated the song *Deutschland, Deutschland über Alles* with right-wing excesses, yet regarded the imperial flag as a legitimate sign of support for the soldiers. (173f) While arguing that the republican role in ending the war warranted the soldiers' support, contradictory articles depicted the soldiers' values alternatively as goals to strive for and antiquated ideas that must be overcome. (175f) The *Frankfurter Zeitung* stressed the government's support for German war victims and lauded its achievements in improving their living conditions, comparing it to the right wing's evident lack of compassion for their fate. (180, 185f) Commenting on the return of German prisoners of war, the liberal broadsheet challenged reports that prisoners were forced to undertake reconstruction in France and Belgium as a hoax. (189) It subsequently denounced the Allied refusal to repatriate the prisoners as a continuation of war, emphasising the Allied cruelty in enslaving and mistreating them. (191) Lauding Eisner's efforts to improve the prisoners' situation, the publication emphasized the government's impotence in influencing the prisoners' return in order to dispel right wing rumours that it was not committed to the prisoners' cause. (193, 196) It portrayed the right's refusal to sign the treaty as proof that it was merely exploiting the prisoners' plight and responded to rumours that prisoners were indoctrinated with anti-republican propaganda by expressing concern that their social reintegration could prove difficult. (196f)

During the revolutionary period, the *Frankfurter Zeitung* stressed that only the republican government could achieve a bearable peace. By constructing a vision which dissociated the republic from Germany's wartime policies and reinforced its compliance with Allied demands, the paper sought to justify moderate peace terms. (207, 212f) Recognition that Germany would not be treated as an equal negotiating partner and that the Allies questioned the genuineness of the revolution aroused its criticism and disappointment. The *Frankfurter Zeitung* nevertheless maintained that the Allies could be forced to adhere to Wilson's 14 Points and called for the rejection of any treaty not entirely in accordance with them. (208, 216) It uncritically depicted Germany and Wilson as allies in pursuing a just peace, adopting an overly optimistic interpretation of the President's principles. (216ff) Although it denounced world revolution and invoked the threat of Bolshevism in order to scare the Allies into granting tolerable terms, the paper nevertheless

hoped that the Allied populations would oppose an unbearable peace. (219f) Arguing that the Allied had claimed to fight for democracy, the *Frankfurter Zeitung* insisted that the revolution had fulfilled Allied war aims and that any further demands would destroy their credibility, suggesting that the Allies were blinded by victory and intended to destroy Germany. (221f) It exclusively blamed the Allied sea blockade, which it defined as the most brutal of war crimes, for food shortages and civilian suffering during the war and took up Scheidemann's demand for compensation. (225f) The paper denounced nationalist agitation as counter-productive during the peace negotiations, yet called for national unity against the Versailles settlement. (228) The publication also increasingly limited Germany's promise of reconstructive aid, suggesting that while Belgium deserved compensation, France did not. (231). The *Frankfurter Zeitung* portrayed the draft peace in the bleakest possible terms, simultaneously appealing for a rational assessment and emphasizing its apocalyptic consequences. (236f). It lauded Germany's counter-proposals, arguing that only greed and spite could motivate the Allies to reject them. (238f) The question as to whether the treaty should be accepted or rejected was portrayed as a matter of national survival. (239f) The paper initially maintained that the treaty could not be signed because it could not be fulfilled, but revised this view once it became obvious that rejection was impossible. (240f) Having eventually supported acceptance, the *Frankfurter Zeitung* criticised the DNVP for trying to exploit the government's decision while attacking the USPD for advocating acceptance but refusing to sign. (243f)

The *Frankfurter Zeitung* mentioned that the ministers' signatures had approved the burdens of the peace, shifting the focus of the press coverage to the treaty's likely revision once it had been signed. (254f) Although the paper predicted that the treaty would inevitably self-destruct, it nevertheless noted that its acceptance was an occasion of mourning. (256) It warned that the treaty's acceptance would probably strengthen Germany's right. (257) Alleging that the Allies had imposed impossible demands to justify renewed violence, the *Frankfurter Zeitung* declared that complete fulfilment would kill millions of Germans. (262) Although the newspaper acknowledged that German war criminals existed and should be tried, it upheld the idea that extradition demands were intended solely to humiliate Germany. (266f) The liberal paper therefore welcomed the Allied concessions allowing German war crimes trials. (269) Commenting on republican military policy, the publication initially called for a democratisation of the army while, contemporaneously, demanding the creation of *Freikorps* led by wartime officers to defend Germany's borders. (271) Another article appealed for the *Freikorps* to be abolished in favour of short-term conscription before the paper came full circle by supporting Noske's *Freikorps*. (271) The *Frankfurter Zeitung* recognised the threat of a military uprising against the peace, warning Noske to investigate reactionary threats from within the officer corps. (279) After the Kapp-Lüttwitz putsch, the paper criticised Noske for failing to recognise the threat posed by the reactionary officer corps, yet it did not blame him for the officers' desertion. (921) Blaming the Treaty of

Versailles for the putsch, the *Frankfurter Zeitung* still considered a left-wing response possible, but soon identified the overestimation of the Bolshevik threat as the main danger to the republic. (291)

VORWÄRTS

The various social democratic publications merged in 1876 to form *Vorwärts*, which became the official organ of the *Sozialistische Arbeiterpartei* (Socialist Worker's Party) and aimed to foster unity between the different socialist factions.[1568] Accused of being too theory-heavy, the publication lost almost half of its readership before it was prohibited under Bismarck's anti-socialist laws.[1569] The *Berliner Volksblatt*, which replaced *Vorwärts* when the SPD was prohibited, became its new official organ in 1890 and was renamed *Vorwärts* in 1891.[1570] From 1899, editors were appointed jointly by the executive commission of the SPD and a press commission drawn from the party's Berlin branch which had considerable control over the paper's political position.[1571] *Vorwärts'* editorial staff was changed completely in 1905 as a result of the revisionism debate within the party. The paper defied the main party line by strongly opposing Germany's war tome policies and SPD support for war credits, until the party's executive commission fired most of the editors and appointed Friedrich Stampfer as editor-in-chief in 1916.[1572] Left-wing attempts to occupy the *Vorwärts* failed in December and January 1918/1919 and it remained the SPD's official organ after its reunification with the USPD in 1922.[1573] During the Weimar Republic, the paper explicitly denounced assumptions that it was a government organ in stressing its function as a mouthpiece of the SPD.[1574] Its circulation can be estimated between 300,000 and 440,000 copies in 1918.[1575] While it is safe to assume that the newspaper had a much wider readership than its print runs suggest, its distribution compared poorly with the 11.4 million people who voted SPD in January 1919.[1576] *Vorwärts* printed two daily editions with regular contributions from journalists such as Stampfer, Erich Kuttner, Bernhard Rausch, and Victor Schiff, as well as prominent SPD politicians such as Philipp Scheidemann, Eduard Bernstein, and Artur Zickler.

[1568] Volker Schulze, 'Vorwärts (1876-1933) in Fischer (ed.), *Deutsche Zeitungen*, pp. 329f.
[1569] Ibid, p. 331.
[1570] Ibid, pp. 331-334.
[1571] Ibid, pp. 334f.
[1572] Ibid, pp. 338.
[1573] Ibid, pp. 340f.
[1574] Koszyk, *Deutsche Presse*, pp. 303.
[1575] The numbers provided in the scholarly literature differ. While Burkhard Asmuss argues that the SPD paper had a circulation of 300,000 in 1918, Klaus Prädikow, referring to Kurt Koszyk and Kurt Kaiser-Blüth, estimates its circulation at 440,000 in late 1918, while suggesting that its print run decreased to 300, 000 in 1922/1923. See Asmuss, *Republik ohne Chance?*, pp. 30, 61f; Klaus Prädikow, *Der Weimarer VORWÄRTS.* Der *VORWÄRTS als Beispiel der Sozialdemokratischen Presse der Weimarer Republik* (Essen, 1998), pp. 78f.
[1576] Koszyk, *Deutsche Presse*, pp. 305f; Dussel, *Deutsche Tagespresse*, p. 141.

Vorwärts, along with the party it represented, was ultimately prohibited by the Nazis in May 1933.[1577]

While opposing a continuation of the revolutionary movement, *VW* initially promoted the revolution in enthusiastic yet vague terms, suggesting that it would bring 'peace, freedom, and bread'. (38) The paper emphasized the inclusive nature of the revolution, yet was already noting in November 1918 that it would need to be protected against right-wing attacks, particularly the 'stab in the back' myth. (39f, 61) Defining carnage on the battlefield as the 'embarrassing truth' of the war, *VW* suggested that the right-wing parties had no right to appropriate the spirit of the fallen, because they had really fought for the humanitarian values embodied in the revolution. (46, 52f) The publication argued that even revolutionary disorder was better than the war. It defined the German soldiers as a major revolutionary force, emphasizing their willingness to defend the revolution with their lives. Contemporaneously, officers were stereotyped as the main enemy of the revolution. (54f, 57f) In opposition to SPD election leaflets, *VW* denied that the party had actively prepared for a revolution, depicting it instead as an unstoppable natural force and blaming the old regime for the popular outburst of dissatisfaction against which it failed to defend itself. (62, 64).

The paper provided a platform for the dispute between the *Vorwärts* editor Erich Kuttner and *Die Freiheit* journalist Rudolf Breitscheid. (74) It also printed a number of right-wing allegations against Wilhelm to prove that the former monarch was unwilling to make sacrifices during the war and had failed to learn from the experience. (77ff) Criticising Wilhelm and the crown prince as cowards who had been prepared to turn the army against the revolution, *VW* saw no danger of a revival of the monarchy, yet noted that despite its ridiculous nature monarchist propaganda nevertheless endangered the republic. (79f, 81f) On the compensation issue, the paper was torn between an emotional rejection of the ex-monarch's demands and the need for legal proceedings, ultimately calling for an acceptable compromise. (84f) *Vorwärts* blamed Ludendorff for the armistice and for Germany's failed military strategy, mocking his flight. (87f, 91) Responding to Ludendorff's provocative accusations against the republic, *Vorwärts* argued that he no longer had the right to involve himself in politics and accused him to have profited from the war. (84f, 90) The paper acknowledged Hindenburg's achievements, yet defined him as apolitical and argued that he would be unsuitable as a presidential candidate. (93f) Arguing that the right-wing parties had not changed, *Vorwärts* discredited right-wing propaganda as a continuation of war propaganda. (97f) The SPD organ defined right-wing propagandists as war profiteers and shirkers, suggesting that they would cause a new war if they regained power. (97-100) *Vorwärts* stressed the necessity to defend Germany during the war in response to USPD allegations,

[1577] Ibid, p. 344.

arguing that the Independent Socialists had also supported war credits in 1914, and blaming them for the socialist disunity. (106f)

Having published Walther Rathenau's view that the German people did not deserve to be punished because they could not have opposed Germany's wartime policies, *Vorwärts* initially welcomed Kurt Eisner's publication of Bavarian war guilt documents, suggesting that such revelations could be used as a threat against Germany's former elites. (119, 121f) Once it had adopted the Foreign Office's conviction that admitting to war guilt would harm Germany's chances in the peace negotiations, however, *Vorwärts* denounced Eisner's activities and suspended plans to investigate German war guilt for fear of repercussions. Instead, the paper called for an investigation of international war guilt. (122, 124f) Although *Vorwärts* nevertheless printed an article by Eduard Bernstein which demanded a war guilt investigation to allow the population to assess Germany's wartime conduct, its attacks on Germany's former elites remained very vague before the Treaty of Versailles. (126f, 130) In response to allegations that the SPD had profited from the revolution, its party organ stressed that the SPD was not responsible for the collapse but had only taken power in order to spare the German population complete anarchy. (134) In response to the 'stab in the back' myth, the newspaper emphasised the difficulty of responding to irrational allegations, quoting the wartime works of Hindenburg and Hellfferich to disprove their accusations against the republic. (134-136) Instead, *Vorwärts* blamed Germany's defeat on the OHL's sabotage of a reconciliatory peace and its military misconceptions, in addition to officers' abuse of their position. It thus defined Ludendorff, the pan-Germans, and the officers as the ones who had stabbed Germany in the back. (137ff, 146f, 150ff) It also argued that Ludendorff had overestimated the danger of imminent collapse, asking for an armistice in spite of Max von Baden's warnings. *Vorwärts* further alleged that deceptive war propaganda withholding Germany's desperate situation from the German population had prevented people from recognising the need for a last ditch defence. (146f) With reference to the peace resolution, *Vorwärts* stressed that the SPD's continuous commitment to peace made it worthy to represent the new state. At the same time, it attacked the USPD for withholding Germany's desperate situation from the population and thus obscuring the need for a conciliatory peace. (141) Furthermore, it criticised the radical left for reinforcing the 'stab in the back' myth by claiming to have 'made' the revolution and celebrated the *Kreuzzeitung's* decision to withdraw its allegation that the SPD had financed the revolution.(153f)

Like the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, *Vorwärts* also argued that Germany's quick demobilisation warranted a moderation of the armistice terms and warned that a disordered demobilisation would seriously endanger the republic. (159, 165) Attempting to legitimise the republic, the paper stressed the revolution's central role in ending the war. It depicted the demobilisation as a more joyous occasion than the outbreak of war in 1914, for now the war was over and a democratic state established. (166) Lauding the soldiers'

heroism in defending Germany, the paper appealed for soldierly values to be transferred into the new state. (167, 175f). Commenting on the flowers carried by some in their gun barrels, different articles in *Vorwärts* interpreted them in contradictory terms as symbols of the 'spirit of 1914' and of the social and political change brought by the revolution. (172) In agreement with the *Frankfurter Zeitung,* the paper associated the song *Deutschland, Deutschland über Alles* with reactionary right-wing excesses and propaganda. (174) One article in *Vorwärts* challenged the idea of unity between soldiers and the home front, suggesting that the returning soldiers did not receive the gratitude they deserved. (171) Concerned about the destabilising impact of the war victims' radicalisation, *Vorwärts* denounced left-wing attempts to exploit their concerns while stressing the right wing's lack of compassion for their plight. Contemporaneously, the SPD organ emphasized the government's support for war victims and its achievements in improving their living conditions. (177f, 180f) Unable to provide definite information about the situation of German prisoners of war, the paper noted that this uncertainty increased bitterness and sadness in Germany. It denounced the Allied cruelty evident in the prisoners' enslavement and mistreatment which *Vorwärts* regarded as a continuation of war. (190ff) While admitting that the government was unable to influence Allied policy, *Vorwärts* seriously misrepresented Eisner's efforts on the prisoners' behalf in Berne by claiming that he had betrayed them. (192f, 196) In response to right wing attempts to annex the prisoner question, the SPD organ suggested that German reactionaries would fare no better in securing the prisoners' return. It warned that the prohibition of republican propaganda in Allied camps would embitter the prisoners and leave them more vulnerable to the reactionary alternatives which were being spread there. (194-197) It acknowledged the need to introduce the returnees to the republic, yet also recognised the army's refusal to facilitate such instruction after their return. (197)

Vorwärts claimed that only a republican government could achieve bearable peace terms, thus aiming to dissociate the republic from Germany's wartime policies to justify a moderate peace. (206f) By threatening to reject any treaty not in accordance with Wilson's principles, the SPD publication tried to threaten the Allies into adhering to Germany's overly optimistic interpretation of the 14 points. (208, 216) Although the paper also criticised the French socialists, it expressed hope that the Allied populations would eventually oppose their government's decision to impose harsh peace terms on Germany. Although *Vorwärts* denounced world revolution, it attempted to convince the Allies that lack of provisions would bring Bolshevism to Germany. (219ff) Claiming that the revolution had fulfilled the Allied war aims of democratisation, *Vorwärts* suggested that the Allies were blinded by victory in their attempts to impose an oppressive peace. (221f) It denounced right-wing allegations that the revolution was to blame for the suffering endured by German children, suggesting that the old elites' wartime policies and the Allied blockade were responsible for the (partly irreversible) physical and psychological effects of

malnutrition. (224). Describing the blockade as far worse than any German war crimes, the paper accused Clemenceau and Lloyd George of consciously murdering German children by maintaining the blockade after the armistice.(225f) During the peace negotiations, the SPD paper denounced the allegation that Germany's peace strategy fuelled nationalism, while suggesting that excessively nationalist agitation would harm Germany's interests. (228). *Vorwärts* depicted the consequences of the peace in the bleakest terms, calling for a calm and rational response while justifying the outraged protests it had evoked. (235ff) It lauded Germany's counter-proposal for a draft peace as a generous offer while warning that it was up to those demanding high reparations to see where they could obtain them. (231, 238f) Depicting the decision whether to sign or to reject the treaty as a question of Germany's survival, the paper regarded either option Germany's certain death, for the decision to sign such a 'scrap of paper' would destroy Germany's international reputation. (239f) A number of articles suggested that Germany should provoke the Allies into colonising or occupying the nation in order to prove her moral strength through suffering. (242f) Once it had been decided that the treaty would have to be signed, the paper severely criticised the DNVP for attacking the government. Yet at the same time it scapegoated the USPD for the harsh peace, accusing it of destroying hopes for better terms by disclosing the fact that Germany would have to accept the ones on offer, before refusing to sign the treaty themselves. (243f)

Once the peace was signed, the SPD publication quoted a number of politicians who identified it as a break between two wars. Generally, however, commentary shifted its focus to the revision of the treaty. While Armin T. Wegner's expression of gratitude for the peace which predicted that Germany would meet Allied violence with love, mercy, and compassion, did not reflect the general tenor of coverage in *Vorwärts*, it mirrored its careful optimism that Germany would escape the 'net of death'. (255f) The paper vehemently denounced unpatriotic and counter-productive right-wing agitation against the peace, suggesting that the right-wing parties would have been unable to act differently in the same position. It also stressed the SPD's patriotic sacrifice in signing the treaty, predicting that it would eventually be recognised. (257) *Vorwärts* responded to right-wing protests by stressing that the people had undeniably inherited the peace from the Pan-Germans. (259) While blaming the USPD for the harsh peace terms, *Vorwärts* also published a commentary by Friedrich Wilhelm Foerster which held the government partly responsible. (260) Once it was signed, the paper forcefully stressed the need to fulfil the treaty, yet described Allied extradition demands as more criminal than the Austrian ultimatum to Serbia in 1914. (261ff) Despite this vehement opposition, the SPD paper published the opinion that the extradition demands must be fulfilled as part of the treaty. (264) Calling for the punishment of war criminals, *Vorwärts* denounced right-wing agitation against extradition, yet also printed Gustav Noske's statement that attempts to enforce the Allied demands would lead to murder and military insurrection. (267ff) In

terms of military policy the SPD broadsheet promoted short term conscription and recreational military training, subsequently defending Noske's *Freikorps* and promoting the OHL's view that the military hierarchy was necessary for military efficiency. (271f, 274f) Despite its recognition that the officer corps openly spread reactionary and monarchist propaganda, *Vorwärts* initially upheld Noske's view that it was reliable. (277) Identifying the peace as a signal for counter-revolution, *Vorwärts* acknowledged the danger of a military uprising in the East. The paper nevertheless ridiculed alleged plans for continued warfare revealed in *Die Freiheit*, suggesting that nobody in their right mind would consider returning to war. (278f) *Vorwärts* failed to publish the *Freikorps* leaders' vehement denial of its report that they supported the decision to sign the treaty, only revising view of the officer corps in response to openly threatening monarchist letters. It responded to these by demanding the removal of reactionary elements from the army. (279f) Although it printed Noske's appeal for an apolitical army, *Vorwärts* reported that ideological cleansing resulted merely in the dismissal of left-wing and republican forces and severely criticised Noske's opposition to the *Republikanischer Führerbund*. (284ff) The SPD organ initially denied that German *Freikorps* were involved in a military coup against the democratic government of Latvia, gradually reversing this view. It emphasised the government's impotence in forcing the troops to return and criticised it for allowing the situation to deteriorate to such a degree for letting them run riot on their return to Germany. (286ff) Having initially denounced rumours of the counter-revolutionary putsch in January 1920, *Vorwärts* blamed Noske for allowing the Kapp-Lüttwitz putsch to happen and demanded his resignation. It also blamed the radical left for forcing the government into employing reactionary officers to ensure their security. (290f) In the wake of the putsch, the paper warned that the republican failure to protect soldiers who had resisted their putschist officers would prevent them from defending the republic in the future. (293)

DIE FREIHEIT

The mouthpiece of Germany's Independent Social Democratic Party (USPD) *Die Freiheit* was only founded on 15 November 1918, because wartime censorship had previously prohibited the creation of a USPD party organ.[1578] A daily newspaper, it printed 13 weekly editions with an initial circulation of 30,000 which rose to 225,000 by June 1919.[1579] *Die Freiheit* was initially published by the former *Vorwärts* editor Siegfried

[1578] Eugen Prager, *Geschichte der USPD. Entstehung und Entwicklung der unabhängigen sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands* (Berlin, 1921), pp. 144f, 171, 183; Margot Mayer, *Der „Vorwärts" in der Weimarer Republik und seine Rolle in der innerparteilichen Diskussion* (Magister Dissertation, Ludwig-Maximilian University Munich, 1980), p. 65.
[1579] *Ala Zeitungskatalog* (Berlin, 1920), p. 2; Kurt Koszyk, *Zwischen Kaiserreich und Diktatur. Sie sozialdemokratische Presse von 1914 bis 1933* (Heidelberg, 1958), p. 148.

Nestripke, who was replaced by Alfred Wielepp in December 1918.[1580] Rudolf Hilferding was employed as its editor-in-chief until 27 March, and largely held the paper to the line espoused by the right-wing of the USPD.[1581] *Die Freiheit* was faced with severe financial difficulties from March 1922. It dissolved after the reunification of SPD and USPD in September 1922, and was replaced by *Vorwärts* as the party organ of the reunified Social Democratic Party.[1582] Its contributors in the immediate post-war period included Rudolf Breitscheid, Karl Kautsky, Eugen Prager, Wilhelm Dittmann, and Hugo Haase.

Die Freiheit vehemently denounced attempts of Germany's right-wing parties to appropriate the spirit of the soldiers, suggesting that they had no right to do so. It argued that the troops posed no danger to the republic, as those who attacked red flags had merely been misinformed by the officers, regarded by the paper as the main enemy of the revolution. (52, 56f) The newspaper emphasised the USPD's revolutionary role, yet acknowledged that the war and the policies of the old regime had been instrumental in the outbreak of the revolution. (61f, 64) In order to differentiate the party from the SPD, however, *Die Freiheit* increasingly emphasized its ideological ownership of the revolution. (61). The publication lauded the victims of the revolution. (53)

It published Rudolf Breitscheid's personal accusations against Erich Kuttner and denounced the wartime policies of the SPD jointly responsible for the disastrous outcome of the conflict. (73, 105f) It criticised Wilhelm, alleging that he refused to share the people's burden, had proved to be unreliable, and was prepared to oppose the revolution by force. (78-81). The paper vehemently demanded his expropriation and attacked the political forces who considered compensating him. (83f) It accused Ludendorff of betraying the German population, fleeing at the first sign of trouble and profiting from the war. (87-90) In opposition to the other republican newspapers, *Die Freiheit* also attacked Hindenburg for his solidarity with Ludendorff, suggesting that he was jointly responsible for Germany's failed military strategy and should be neither glorified nor allowed to intervene in republican politics. (93) The paper argued that voting for the DNVP would be suicide, maintaining that the DDP was also discredited by its support for the monarchy's wartime policies. (101f) Claiming that the USPD was the only party not discredited by its conduct during the war, *Die Freiheit* demanded the cleansing of the political sphere. (105) It criticised Erzberger for his wartime annexationism, arguing that the Allies would not trust him, while also denouncing his political strategy regarding the armistice. (108) In the context of the Hellfferich trial, however, the paper warned that Erzberger would be assassinated. (110)

In opposition to *Vorwärts* and the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, *Die Freiheit* explicitly demanded an investigation of German war guilt. The paper argued that it would only

---

[1580] Koszyk, *Zwischen Kaiserreich und Diktatur*, p. 115.
[1581] Ibid.
[1582] Ibid, p. 152; Fischer, *Handbuch der politischen* Presse, p. 246; Dussel, *Deutsche Tagespresse*, p. 141; Kolb, *Weimar Republic*, p. 199.

discredit the old regime rather than the German people, as well as improving Germany's chances in the peace negotiations, and limiting the influence of its former elite. The paper accordingly criticised the government for defining the war guilt question as a German rather than monarchist problem. (121f, 127) Attempting to discredit its closest political rival, *Die Freiheit* alleged that the SPD was jointly responsible for Germany's wartime policies, that it had supported the annexations in Belgium and that some of its representatives were discredited by their wartime conduct. (122f, 151) The USPD organ called for those responsible for the people's suffering to be punished and complained that the archives had not been opened earlier. (130f) It also suggested that the OHL's military strategy and Ludendorff's misconceptions had made Germany's military collapse inevitable and disproved Hindenburg's 'stab in the back' claim by contrasting it with contradictory statements he had made previously. (136f) *Die Freiheit* suggested that disillusionment with Germany's war effort originated at the front when the soldiers recognised that the war could not be won. (150) Although the paper also blamed the officers' conduct for the soldiers' resentment, it maintained that defeat was inevitable, irrespective of this. (152f)

As the only paper upholding the revolutionary interpretation of the war during demobilisation, *Die Freiheit* quoted Hugo Haase's welcome speech to the soldiers defining the war as futile carnage. (163) It was also unique in questioning the traditional symbolism of demobilisation, noting a distinct lack of revolutionary red flags. (172f) Commenting on the war victims concerns, the paper emphasised that the former elites were responsible for expressing the fatherland's gratitude to them, while blaming both the old regime and the republican government for failing to ensure that they were adequately provided for. (181) In this context, *Die Freiheit* compared provision for war invalids' unfavourably to post-war military spending (183) The USPD organ lauded Eisner's achievements in formulating a common declaration to improve conditions for German prisoners of war in Berne. (193) It warned that the right wing was annexing the prisoner question in order to bolster its political agenda, which *Die Freiheit* considered counter-productive for securing their release. (194f). It noted the spread of right-wing propaganda regarding the prisoners, yet stressed that the right-wing refusal to sign the treaty constituted a betrayal of Germany's prisoners of war. (196)

Die Freiheit denounced the notion that rejecting the peace would induce world revolution, appealing instead for a more moderate German approach to the peace negotiations. (200, 233f) For example, the paper suggested that Germany had no moral right to criticise the blockade given the lack of provisions was actually caused by the war's continuation, which was fuelled by the annexationist aims of German warmongers. (226f) The USPD paper took a conciliatory approach regarding reparations and the peace negotiations in general and warned that threats would only worsen Germany's situation. (233f) Although it criticised the draft peace as a violation of Wilson's 14 points, it

reminded its readers that the peace must be regarded as a consequence of the war. (238) It repeatedly warned that Germany could easily be forced into accepting the peace if the government refused to sign and commented that the aggressive attacks against the USPD which followed the acceptance of the peace signified the failure of the German peace strategy. (243)

Die Freiheit justified the USPD refusal to sign the treaty, which it regarded as a yoke for Germany, by arguing that it must be signed by those responsible for it. The publication denounced right-wing agitation against the peace, suggesting that work and belief in the socialist international were more suitable means to achieve a revision of the peace terms. (251, 256, 258) While considering it irresponsible to risk the peace by refusing to fulfil the extradition demands, only one published interview with Hugo Haase explicitly welcomed extradition as punishment for German war criminals. (266) While criticising the government for not preventing such demands by prosecuting German war crimes voluntarily, the USPD party organ explicitly denounced the extradition demands as legally questionable and politically destabilising, eventually admitting that the government was genuinely unable to enforce them. (266, 270) With reference to Germany's military strategy, *Die Freiheit* promoted the dissolution of the *Freikorps* in favour of a people's army and called for the reform of the military hierarchy, an idea rejected by the SPD. (272) The paper repeatedly noted the anti-republican activities of the monarchist officer corps and appealed to the government to gain control of the army. (277f) After Germany's acceptance of the peace, *Die Freiheit* warned that the officer corps was planning a new war and printed the *Freiko*rps leaders' denial of support for the government. (279) It stressed that the German *Freikorps* had helped the Latvian barons in bringing down their democratically elected government and attacked the German government for allowing the situation to deteriorate to such a degree and for losing control over the *Freikorps*. (286ff) Warning that lenience towards the *Freikorps* would encourage counter-revolutionary activity, the newspaper predicted that the Baltic troops would eventually turn against the government. (288) Blaming Noske and the SPD for the Kapp-Putsch, *Die Freiheit* demanded his resignation and reported that the post-Kapp army reform had led to the dismissal of loyal soldiers. (291ff)

DIE WELT AM MONTAG

Edited by Hellmuth von Gerlach from 1898, this weekly Sunday evening newspaper departed from its original social nationalist tendencies and became a leading German pacifist publication. Supportive of the revolutionary ideals of 1848, it severely criticised Prussian militarism, pursuing both moral and political pacifist ideology . The paper was closely linked to the *Bund Neues Vaterland* (New Fatherland League) and the *Deutsche Friedensgesellschaft* (German Peace League). Its contributors included leading pacifist and socialist thinkers such as Eduard Bernstein, Friedrich Wilhelm Foerster, Otto

Lehmann-Russbüldt, Ludwig Quidde and Hans Wehberg.[1583] According to Kurt Koszyk, *Die Welt am Montag* had a weekly circulation of 75 000 while Harry Pross estimated its highest print run in 1931 at 80 000.[1584]

Die Welt am Montag warned from the beginning that post-war conditions would make the republic vulnerable, suggesting that this could lead to a catastrophic disillusionment with the revolution. (39) Although it initially defined the values of the revolution as humanitarian, emphasizing opposition to violence as its most important principle, it soon became disillusioned with their implementation. (49) The pacifist newspaper was already complaining that the revolution had been motivated solely by war-weariness and the monarchy's collapse in 1919. (66) It severely criticised official German war propaganda and commented on the devastating psychological consequences of the war. (37) Emphasizing the soldiers' horrific living conditions and the bloody carnage at the front, *Die Welt am Montag* also focused on the troops' rejection of the war. (45, 51) In general, it promoted a very negative image of the officer corps, detailing a number of cases of the abuse of the soldiers. (57)

Von Gerlach's weekly newspaper suggested that there was no danger of a monarchist revival, claiming that the deposed leader's flight had left him politically dead. It consequently appealed for a recognition that the representatives of the old regime would only benefit from vengeful persecution which would turn them into martyrs. (91) It argued that Hindenburg was apolitical and therefore less dangerous than Ludendorff, yet rejected his candidature for Reich President for the same reason. (93f) Reinforcing the idea that soldiers had rejected official war propaganda because it did not reflect wartime reality, *Die Welt am Montag* suggested that those calling for popular sacrifice were not prepared to heed their own appeal. (98f) It criticised the fact that individuals considered discredited by the Entente, like Philip Scheidemann and Matthias Erzberger, were still representing the German nation. (108) *Die Welt am Montag* was the only one of the publications analysed to defend Matthias Erzberger unreservedly against right-wing allegations. (109)

While defining the new government's failure to distance itself from the old regime as a grave miscalculation, the publication considered a thorough investigation of Germany's wartime policies as a prerequisite for a suitable reaction to the peace. It emphasized the futility of attempting to deceive the Allies about German war guilt. (121, 127) The newspaper criticised the failed objectivity of the Parliamentary Commission as an insult to the republic. (137) While sharing the USPD's conviction that an admission of German war guilt was necessary, *Die Welt am Montag* also lauded the party's achievements in laying the foundations for the League of Nations at the Socialist Conference in Berne. (127) Although it lauded the soldiers' heroism, *Die Welt am Montag* shared the minority view of *Die Weltbühne* that Germany's defeat must be addressed in

---

[1583] Harry Pross, 'Die Welt am Montag' in Donat and Holl. *Die Friedensbewegung*, pp. 417f.
[1584] Ibid, p. 417; Koszyk, *Deutsche Presse*, p. 285.

welcoming them home. (170) Criticising Germany's self-righteous propaganda regarding prisoners of war, the newspaper called for an acknowledgement of the Allied suffering and a less accusatory tone in the light of Germany's own wartime failures. (192) It argued accordingly that aggressive, threatening rhetoric harmed the prisoners' interests, suggesting that only pacifists and internationalists had the right to demand their release rather than those discredited by their own wartime conduct. (193f)

Commenting on the armistice, the newspaper argued that it did not necessarily set the tone for the peace. Rather, it suggested that the severity of the conditions arose merely from an Allied desire to prevent a resumption of warfare. It also maintained that the Allies had not interest in imposing suffocating peace terms. (207, 212) The paper also hoped that the Allied workers would oppose their chauvinist politicians. (219f) *Die Welt am Montag* denounced right-wing flirtations with National Bolshevism as dangerous and criticised Germany's chauvinist approach to the peace as counter-productive. (221, 228) He lauded Germany's proposed amendments to the peace treaty as rational, while doubting that Allied fears of Germany's military revival would allow the Entente to accept them. (238) The paper warned that threats to reject the treaty were a dangerous bluff, fanning nationalism in Germany without fooling the Allies. (241) *Die Welt am Montag* argued strongly that Germany would have to sign the peace treaty, because the consequences of rejection would be unbearable. (241, 243)

Once Germany had signed the treaty of Versailles, *Die Welt am Montag* stressed that extradition demands were amongst the conditions agreed to and must be fulfilled. (264) While criticising the demands as legally questionable, the paper suggested that the government's failure to prosecute war criminals was to blame for their inclusion into the peace treaty. (264) It also rejected the extradition of Wilhelm II as it would merely restore his destroyed reputation, making him a martyr and a useful propaganda tool for the right-wing parties. In order to silence monarchist agitation, *Die Welt am Montag* suggested that Wilhelm was politically dead and that any public support for him would harm his interests. (268) The paper supported a thorough reform of the military hierarchy and warned that the OHL was vetting public opinion for the continuation of warfare without governmental consent. (274f, 280) It acknowledged in the autumn of 1919 that the army's dissatisfaction with the peace was a probably danger to public order and the republican government. (289) The newspaper severely criticised the government in the aftermath of the Kapp-Lüttwitz putsch for prioritising demands for a larger army while failing to deal appropriately with the military putsch and its legacy. (293)

DIE WELTBÜHNE

First published as *Die Schaubühne* by the theatre critic Siegfried Jacobsohn in 1905, this weekly journal increasingly extended its focus from theatre, concert, and book reviews to political, economic, and social commentary, becoming a major organ for Germany's

left-wing intelligentsia. Having voiced cautious opposition to the monarchy's wartime policies from 1915, the publication renamed itself *Die Weltbühne* in 1918 and perceived itself as a guardian of democratic, pacifist revolutionary ideals. The most prominent contributors to *Die Weltbühne*, which published a weekly edition of 10,000 in 1925 and had a print run of 15,000 in 1930, included leading journalists, artists, intellectuals and political thinkers such as Ernst Bloch, Hans Delbrück, Alfred Döblin, Lion Feuchtwanger, Erich Mühsam, Ludwig Quidde, Heinrich and Thomas Mann, Ringelnatz, Ernst Toller, Kurt Tucholsky and Carl von Ossietzky. Upon Jacobsohn's death, the journal was briefly edited by Kurt Tucholsky until Ossietzky took over as editor-in-chief. It was prohibited by the Nazis in 1933.[1585]

Die Weltbühne warned that an overly enthusiastic depiction of the revolution could lead to disillusionment, stressing that it was a consequence of defeat to defend it against right-wing allegations. (33) It criticised the fact that wartime public opinion was merely a product of the propaganda office which did not allow the population to assess the war realistically. (37) The journal rejected the idea of war as a cathartic force. Instead, it focused on the inequality of the military hierarchy, the soldiers' suffering, and the horrific nature of the war experience. (44ff) Like the other republican publications, it suggested that the soldiers had opposed the war and the official doctrine they were allegedly fighting for while emphasizing officers' abuse of their power. (51, 57) In contrast, the revolution was defined with reference to its opposition to violence, leading the journal to suggest that even the adverse post-war conditions were preferable to the war experience. (48) *Die Weltbühne* began to criticise the revolution and the government's employment of force against the radical left from 1919, suggesting that only war weariness and the monarchy's collapse were responsible for it. (66).

Attempting to discredit Wilhelm II, Siegfried Jacobsohn's journal stressed that he was probably the only father in Germany not to lose children and criticised the Crown Prince for leaving his troops. (77, 79) *Die Weltbühne* furthermore criticised Wilhelm as a megalomaniac but incompetent deserter. (80) It thus vehemently rejected the idea of compensating Wilhelm for the loss of his property. (83f) With reference to the failure to negotiate peace in 1917, the publication mainly blamed Ludendorff, as well as Michaelis and Hellfferich, for Germany's defeat. It severely criticised Ludendorff's military strategy and ridiculed his cowardly flight from Germany. (86f, 89) Suggesting that the soldiers at the front had rejected deceptive official war propaganda, *Die Weltbühne* stressed that those demanding that the people make sacrifices for the war effort were unprepared to do so themselves, simultaneously emphasizing the dangers of right-wing propaganda. (98ff) *Die Weltbühne* expressed concern that the German people would continue to believe in right-wing propaganda and stressed that only those not discredited by their wartime

[1585] Fritz Schlawe, *Literarische Zeitschriften 1910-1933* (2, Stuttgart, 1973), pp. 79ff.

conduct could represent the new state. (102f). It commented neutrally on Eisner's allegations against Philipp Scheidemann, Friedrich Ebert, Eduard David, Wilhelm Solf and Matthias Erzberger, while adding another list of delegates to the National Assembly who should be regarded as discredited. (108f)

Advocating an informed popular participation in German politics, *Die Weltbühne* warned that hiding German war guilt for fear of repercussions regarding the peace would be counter-productive. It suggested that only a thorough investigation of war guilt would be perceived as a sign of genuine ideological change. (121, 124) Although it printed Robert Breuer's view that war guilt should be attributed to Russia, Great Britain, France and the US as well as to Germany, the journal generally called for an investigation of German war guilt so that the population's political views might be based on facts rather than unrealistic beliefs and those responsible might be prevented from shifting responsibility to the government. (125, 128, 138) While calling for punishment of those responsible for Germany's failed wartime policies, the publication criticised the Second Parliamentary Commission set up to investigate Germany's pre-war and wartime conduct as a farce discrediting the republic. (130ff) Commenting on Germany's defeat, *Die Weltbühne* argued that the OHL's and the Pan German's failed military strategy made the collapse inevitable, suggesting that the soldiers could not have continued fighting because they were completely exhausted. The journal also maintained that military propaganda and the inequalities of the military hierarchy, not socialist agitation, had demoralised the soldiers. (137, 143f, 150f) It stressed with reference to the Hiller case that the officers' misconduct and abuse had stabbed the soldiers in the back. (151f)

In the context of demobilisation, *Die Weltbühne* explicitly defined attempts to obfuscate defeat as factually wrong and counterproductive. (170) It severely criticised the fact that *Freikorps* members received twice the provisions of war invalids, even so they could find other work. (183) Commenting on the return of Germany's prisoners of war, the journal warned that the temporary army camps that they passed through were a hotbed of reactionary agitation. (199)

With reference to the envisaged peace, *Die Weltbühne* printed an article arguing that the imposition of harsh peace terms would betray the German people, because the Allies had claimed to be fighting the monarchy and not the people. (221) The publication severely criticised the German peace strategy, suggesting that it was illusory to assume that the peace terms would not reflect the horrific suffering that the war had caused the Allied countries. It therefore promoted a more conciliatory approach which took Allied suffering into account. (233f)

In response to Germany's acceptance of the Treaty of Versailles, *Die Weltbühne* suggested that nationalist outrage and propaganda would merely revive Allied chauvinism rather than securing revision of the treaty. (258, 260) It partly held the republican government partly responsible for the peace, as it had not broken with the former regime's

violence and militarism, thus failing to convince the Allies that Germany's ideological change had been genuine. (260) *Die Weltbühne* recognised that the treaty needed to be revised because Germany would prove unable to fulfil some of its terms. It regarded the extradition demands as particularly dangerous, for they would turn war criminals into martyrs and could not be carried out against the army's opposition. (265, 270) It argued nevertheless that the peace must not be endangered by refusing the Allied extradition demands. (266) Commenting on the nature of Germany's future army, one article promoted complete disarmament while another argued that a volunteer army was more suitable to defend the republic than conscription, also stressing the need to reform the traditional military hierarchy. (272, 275) Defining the government's employment of military violence against the German population as a breach of faith, *Die Weltbühne* also criticised the republican government for failing to control the *Freikorps* in the Baltic States. (276, 287f). It blamed Noske for the Kapp-Lüttwitz putsch and insisted that the disarmament of the putschist troops and the punishment of their officers were vital to the republic's survival. (292)

DAS TAGE-BUCH

Das Tage-Buch, founded by the theatre critic Stefan Grossmann and the publisher Ernst Rowohlt in 1919, was the rival publication to Siegfried Jacobsohn's *Die Weltbühne.* It drew its contributors from the same intellectual liberal and left wing circles as *Die Weltbühne* and *Die Welt am Montag.* Initially the journal was published by Grossmann and Leopold Schwarzschild, who became the journal's sole publisher in 1922 and appointed Carl von Ossietzky as editor-in-chief in 1924. Ossietzky defected to become editor-in-chief of *Die Weltbühne* in 1926, because Schwarzschild refused to publish news of the *Reichswehr's* secret rearmament. The journal published a maximum print run of 15,000 copies in Berlin in 1920-1932, in Munich in 1932-33. The publication continued to exist as an émigré journal *Das neue Tage-Buch* in Paris.[1586]

Descriptions of the soldiers' war experience in *Das Tage-Buch* portrayed carnage and the destruction of human life as its main feature, describing in detail how it destroyed the soldiers' sanity. (44ff) It also published an extensive article commenting on the fate of the officer Carl Vieweg, who had been beaten and dismissed for revealing his fellow officers' reactionary agitation, condemning his ordeal as a victim of the military justice system. (286)

DER WAHRE JACOB

[1586] Harry Pross, 'Das Tage-Buch' in Donat and Holl. *Die Friedensbewegung*, p. 383.

On average, this biweekly SPD journal sold more copies than bourgeois satirical publications such as *Simplicissimus* and *Kladdaradatsch*.[1587] It had an edition of 380500 in July 1912, which declined during the war before reaching 206000 copies again in Mai 1919.[1588] The journal was first published by Johann Heinrich Wilhelm Dietz after the implementation of Bismarck's anti-socialist laws in 1878, but was prohibited in March 1881, its chief editor already having been expelled from Hamburg in October 1880.[1589] Dietz re-founded the publication, an SPD party organ, in Stuttgart in 1884. Throughout the revisionism debate within the SPD, during the war and after the revolution *Der wahre Jacob* represented the dominant party line in rejecting revolutionary activity within Germany, defending the war effort, and opposing USPD policies after the war.[1590] Although its criticism mellowed after the conflict, *Der wahre Jacob* remained more radical than bourgeois satire journals.[1591] Its contributors in the post-war period included Oscar Maria Graf, Karl Schnog, Erich Weinert, Willibald Krain, and Karl Holtz.[1592] *Der wahre Jacob* was forced to cease publication due to inflation in 1923 and was replaced by *Lachen Links* in January 1924.[1593] Konrad Ege estimates that its circulation could be estimated as up to ten times higher than its print run.[1594]

Der wahre Jacob focused on the human suffering and the human and topographical destruction caused by the war , suggesting that the war dead were rising from their graves in support of the revolution. (52, 71) It severely criticised officers' corruption and decadence (57) Ridiculing the right-wing reliance on the 'stab-in-the-back' myth, the SPD journal depicted DNVP chairman Oskar Hergt as a bull digesting 'stab-in-the-back' fodder to provide his party comrades with shit to re-use for the thousandth time. (135, 157) Fictionalising the soldiers' return, *Der wahre Jacob* stressed that demobilisation was overshadowed by the suffering of those who had been mutilated or would never return. (162) The socialist publication depicted the allegedly just peace as a steamroller being driven towards a crowd of German children and their parents by the Allies as they tried to escape. (223, 246) Alternatively, it suggested that Clemenceau and Lloyd George were torturing Germany to squeeze the nation dry before Wilson would put a stop to their cruelty. (223, 247) Commenting on the Allied blockade, a cartoon in *Der wahre Jacob* implied that Germany's suffering during the war was worse than France's, suggesting that the devastated territory could be reconstructed but victims of the blockade

---

[1587] Schütz (ed.), *Der wahre Jacob*, p. VII-X; Konrad Ege, *Karikatur und Bildsatire im Deutschen Reich: der „Wahre Jakob"* (Kassel, 1990), pp. 221f; Ann Robertson, *Karikatur im Kontext. Zur Entwicklung der sozialdemokratischen Illustrierten satirischen Zeitschrift Der wahre Jacob zwischen Kaiserreich und Republik* (Frankfurt, Bern, New York, Paris, 1992), pp. 137f.
[1588] Ege, *Karikatur und Bildsatire*, p. 221.
[1589] Schütz (ed.) *Der wahre Jacob*, p. VII.
[1590] Ibid, p. X.
[1591] Ibid. p. XI.
[1592] Ibid.
[1593] Ibid, p. Xf.
[1594] Ege, *Karikatur und Bildsatire*, p. 223.

could not be revived. (226, 248) It accordingly argued that Lloyd George intended to starve German women and children by upholding the blockade. (226) It ridiculed the Entente reparation demands as far too excessive, suggesting that Germany would be forced to pay for the production of dum-dum bullets and the wage of Parisian whores. (231) While implying that the peace terms aimed to destroy Austrian and German women and children, the satirical journal suggested that the peace terms might be amended when the Allies felt the consequence of their destructive intentions. (256, 297)

ULK

The publisher Rudolf Mosse began to circulate the weekly satire magazine *Ulk* as a supplement to his liberal daily newspaper the *Berliner Tageblatt* in April 1872. The journal could be purchased separately and outsold its parent publication in the first year of production.[1595] Kurt Tucholsky's biographer Michael Hepp claims that *Ulk* was also published as a supplement of Mosse's left-wing liberal *Berliner Volkszeitung* and had an edition of roughly 600,000 in the post-war period.[1596] *Ulk's* conformist war enthusiasm had mellowed its satirical quality during the conflict and Kurt Tucholsky replaced its wartime editor-in-chief Fritz Engel on his return to Germany in early December 1918.[1597] Tucholsky resigned from his position in early 1920, unhappy with the fact that *Ulk's* readership demanded moderate, rather than cutting satire.[1598]

The journal depicted war as the destroyer of human development, suggesting that it destroyed the process of civilisation. (42, 69) In 1919 it suggested that the miners' general strike was a monster that must be restrained. (43) *Ulk* adopted Philipp Scheidemann's accusation against Ludendorff, depicting him as a 'genius gambler' who had played his last card and was planning hide this from German people. (88, 114) It catalogued the sins of the right-wing parties during and after the war in order to gain electoral support for the DDP and blamed right-wing agitation for the Treaty of Versailles, arguing that the former elite had no right to continue their demagogy against the republic. (96f, 115) Its welcome address for the returning German soldiers obscured the boundaries between victory and defeat, depicting the winning of freedom as a victory even if the enemy was undefeated. (169) The same poem called upon the returning soldiers to support the republic, defining work as everybody's duty. (175) *Ulk* held the former elites responsible for war victims' suffering , blaming the professors who had send them to war for their injuries. It took a more nationalist stance on prisoners of war by depicting Wilson as unconcerned with the suffering of gaunt and humiliated German prisoners, it suggested that his commitment to a just peace could not be genuine. (186, 191, 205) With reference to the peace, the liberal

---

[1595] Kurt Koszyk, *Deutsche Presse im 19. Jahrhundert. Geschichte der deutschen Presse, Teil II* (Berlin, 1966), p. 281.
[1596] See *Kurt Tucholsky. Biographische Annäherungen* (Reinbek near Hamburg, 1993), pp. 162.
[1597] Ibid, pp. 162.
[1598] Ibid, p. 163f. 191.

publication accused the Allies of waiting like vultures for the wounded German lion to die. (236, 249) Once Germany had been forced to sign the peace, *Ulk* depicted the Allies as a barbarian farmer 'cultivating the world' with a crop of skulls. (255, 296) It also depicted the Pan-Germans as a horde of cavemen, commanding them to cease disturbing the negotiations for a peace they were responsible for. (96, 259) Drawing up the 'balance sheet' of the war, it repeatedly concluded that Germany's wartime policies resulted in a massive loss. (Title Page, 299f)