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DIVIDED NEUTRALITY 1914-1918

THE IMPACT OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR ON SWISS
FRANCOPHONE AND SWISS GERMANOPHONE
OPINION

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE
OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

CAOIMHE GALLAGHER
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
TRINITY COLLEGE
UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN

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PhD in History
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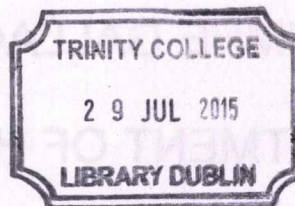
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Summary:

This thesis has shown that while neutral Switzerland had its own experience of the First World War, simply opting out of the maelstrom that swept Europe as a whole was not a possibility. Despite neutrality, the war was refracted into Swiss opinion from every angle. Nuanced affinity but not division defined Franco-German allegiance in the pre-war period.

The traditional multiplicity of allegiances (primarily linguistic and religious) in Switzerland prevented the development of a clear cut division of public opinion. Initially at the outbreak of the war the dominance of Germany's influence in Swiss trade, banking and migration informed a logical preference for German victory. However, unlike the outbreak of the war, the invasion of Belgium provoked deep division between the francophone and germanophone communities during August 1914. This change found expression within the Swiss press. Francophone response was defined by its condemnation of German atrocities and sympathy for neutral Belgium's plight. It was point of principle which the germanophone community had refused to acknowledge.

Despite public declarations of Swiss unity by members of the Swiss Federal Council, political unity was beset by divisions, owing to the lack of proportional representation, the rise of support for socialist and Christian right parties, the dominance of the Radical Party and the deepening linguistic divide. At the Swiss Party Congress, 1914, Germanophone Swiss socialists were supportive of the German Social Democrats' decision to abide by the *Burgfrieden* political truce and support the war, but the francophone Swiss objected. Yet, when a referendum on the introduction of Swiss war tax, was held June 1915, the overwhelming majority of citizens voted in support. While the linguistic division could be described as a Swiss experience of the divisions of the war by proxy this suggests that Swiss politics experienced a *union sacrée*/*Burgfrieden* by proxy too. For the rising political parties of the right and left; "the war between nations has quietened the class war between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat". For the Christian right the unanimous vote was an example of a "godly peace" in Swiss politics.¹

However the germanophone military spying scandal in 1916 was met with francophone outrage which once again exposed the fragility of the image of unity of the Swiss *union sacrée*. The germanophone high command's handling of the affair and their reluctance to prosecute the colonels involved displayed the sense of exceptionalism that had developed in the Swiss military. Senior press and political figures from the francophone community viewed the germanophone officials' response as corrupt, and evidence of the "morally corrupt response of germanophone officials towards the

¹"Der Krieg zwischen den Nationen hatte den Klassenkampf zwischen Bourgeoisie und Proletariat allenthalben zum Stillstand gebracht." Hans Erb, "Zur Vorgeschichte des Landesgeneralstreiks 1918 in der Schweiz: II Teil: die internationale Zimmerwalder Bewegung/ III Teil: die Radikalisierung der sozialdemokratischen Partei der Schweiz", *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Geschichte*, (Verlag Schweizerische Gesellschaft für Geschichte, 1961). Vol. 11, p. 434.

violation of Belgian neutrality.² As with Swiss coverage of the invasion of Belgium there was a wide disparity between both francophone coverage, which was extensive, and germanophone coverage which was reluctant to cover the affair. The affair ushered in a new phase in reaction to the war. It reaffirmed the unity of the francophone community, which ultimately further exacerbated the linguistic divide.

The impact of Swiss neutrality and linguistic identity on the Swiss economy was significant. The symbolic capital of Swiss neutrality was a crucial factor in the development of the burgeoning Swiss banking industry, while the manipulation of linguistic identity was key to the maintenance and development of Swiss global trade. Without access to the sea, Switzerland had to exploit its linguistic connections particularly with Germany and France to gain access to global markets. What in the pre-war period was a germanophone Swiss company became a francophone one. The manipulation of company identity also developed back in Switzerland. For example, Zurich's largest bank was known as the *Schweizerische Kreditanstalt* but became known as *Crédit Suisse* during the war. The French name for the germanophone bank remains to this day. The symbolic capital of Swiss humanitarianism and the Geneva based Red Cross helped ensure Swiss independence during the war, encounters with foreign civilian and military prisoners of war, however, further emphasised the division between the two main linguistic communities. During the final two years of the war, xenophobia increased dramatically.

Ultimately, this thesis argues that the defining division among the Swiss public reaction was not political but linguistic. New political movements like the socialist failed to unify both sides. Despite agitation for change and the proposed social upheaval, the general strike failed to instil a real change in public attitudes regarding class and socialist internationalism. As Switzerland's proxy experience of the war concluded the francophone community's sense of triumph was contrasted by the germanophone community's proxy "culture of defeat" which began to look to the phantom menace of socialist revolution as an outlet for its sense of disillusionment. The germanophone *Tagesanzeiger* greeted the news of the armistice not with jubilation but with great foreboding. The front page headline of 11 November 1918 read "from world war to world revolution".³

² Marcel Guinand, *Un procès militaire. L'affaire des deux colonels*, (Georg, Genève, 1916).

³ *Tagesanzeiger* 11th November 1918 "Vom Weltkrieg zur Weltrevolution".

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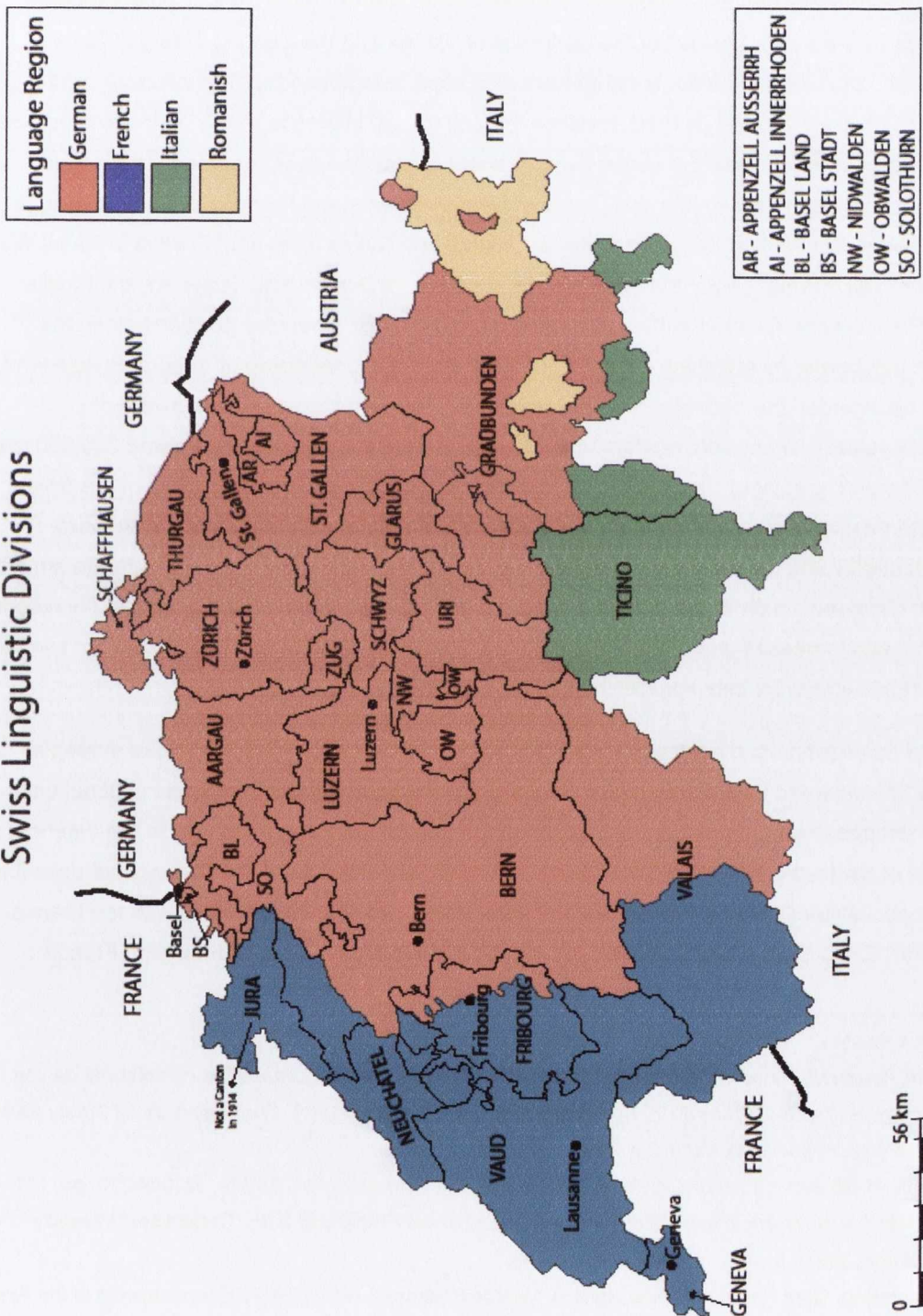
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Swiss Linguistic Divisions



INTRODUCTION

"Are there two Switzerlands?"

Georges Rigassi, *Gazette de Lausanne*, 11 October 1914.¹

When war broke out in August 1914, Switzerland proclaimed its neutrality as it had done throughout the wars of the previous century. Neutrality, the constitutive feature of the Swiss Confederation, became positive law by the final act of the Congress of Vienna and the Second Treaty of Paris in 1815. Through both treaties the dominant powers of Europe recognised that "the neutrality and inviolability of Switzerland, and its independence from all foreign influence, [were] in the true political interests of all of Europe"²; thus the country's permanent neutrality was guaranteed. The Hague Convention V, respecting the Rights and Duties of Neutral Powers and Persons in Case of War on Land, and Hague Convention XIII, concerning the Rights and Duties of Neutral Powers in Naval War, of 18 October 1907 further cemented the legal status of neutral Switzerland. However, the Moltke Schlieffen Plan foresaw German armies circumventing the French defensive positions along the Franco-German border by marching either through Belgium and Luxemburg or through Switzerland, a plan which disregarded the neutrality of these countries.³ The Swiss government, aware of Switzerland's vulnerable position, reaffirmed the country's neutrality by mobilizing some 200,000 men, 3 August 1914 and appointed Ulrich Wille, by parliamentary vote, commander in chief of the Swiss military. "The traditional pillars of the state's self-conception and territorial defences alike were perpetual neutrality and the readiness to defend that neutrality militarily by means of a militia army."⁴ Switzerland deployed six divisions along the northern and western frontiers and occupied the recently fortified mountain fortresses guarding the St. Gotthard Pass and at St. Maurice Canyon - the two most significant alpine crossings between Germany, Italy and France.

While Swiss mobilisation and neutrality were significant defensive strategies, they were strategies which were implemented by a citizen militia. Therefore, it could be argued that Swiss national unity and the adherence to (or at least a perception of adherence to) neutrality were vital to the defence and survival of Switzerland. For the Swiss press, however, the outbreak of the war was not described as an international conflict but a Franco-German war, which had possible parallels with the Franco-Prussian War. Since Switzerland's two largest linguistic communities were German and French

¹ "Y a-t-il deux Suisses?" Georges Rigassi, *Gazette de Lausanne*, 11 October 1914, p. 1.

² "Acte portant Reconnaissance et Garantie de la neutralité perpétuelle de la Suisse et de l'inviolabilité de son territoire, Annexe au Traité de Paris du 20 novembre 1815", in Clive Parry (ed.), *The Consolidated Treaty Series*, (Oceana, New York, 1969-1981), Vol. 65, p. 299.

³ Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv, Freiburg, Wilhelm Dieckmann, *Der Schlieffenplan*, BA-MA, W10/50220, pp. 121-122; Annika Mombauer, *Helmuth von Moltke and the Origins of the First World War*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001), p. 76.

⁴ Gerhard Hirschfeld, Gerd Krumerich, Irina Renz, & Marcus Pohlmann, (eds.), *Brill's Encyclopaedia of the First World War*, (Brill, Leiden, Boston, 2012) Volume II, p. 943.

speaking (approximately 60% and 20% of the population respectively), there was a real danger that the country might be divided by identification with the warring camps, which would undermine its neutrality. Something of the kind had happened during the Franco-Prussian War.⁵ Since strong nationalism had become the norm in Europe, and drove the ideological and cultural mobilization of societies behind their respective war efforts, the question was whether even as a country standing back from the conflict, Switzerland would be able to avoid this pressure. The war's length and tendency to involve more and more aspects of the warring societies, including their economies, had implications for the society and economy of multi-lingual Switzerland. The question that I shall answer in this thesis is this: Could Switzerland, which, with Italian entry into the war in May 1915, would be completely surrounded by four of the major belligerent powers, stand apart from the ideological and political force-field of a European war?

i.i Pre-War Switzerland

In order to examine the Switzerland that confronted the war it is necessary to understand the pre-war background. The Congress of Vienna "crystallis[ed] in diplomatic and lasting form a political condition which had [...] characterised the country during nearly three centuries."⁶ However, in 1815, Switzerland did not exist as the united federal state that we know today. Exploring how the French and German language communities responded to the challenge of the war requires a brief understanding of the recent history of the country in political, social and economic terms. Federal Switzerland originated only after the confederate victory during the Swiss Civil War/*Sonderbundkrieg* of 1847 and the resulting federal constitution of 1848. Switzerland of 1815, subject of the Congress of Vienna treaty, existed as a collection of autonomous cantons, which were bound by treaty. Each canton's religious, linguistic, demographic and historic differences defined its identity. Some cantons, for example, had their own individual traditions of neutrality. The cantons of Appenzell-Outer-Rhoden and Neuchâtel were officially neutral during the Swiss Civil War. While each canton's political system was different, some were more unusual than others; the canton of Neuchâtel was a Prussian principality of Frederick William III. Geneva had historically formed an alliance with some cantons (Bern and Fribourg) but not all. Thus the American international lawyer, Gordon Sherman, was right to conclude in 1918 that the key motivation for official and international recognition of Swiss neutrality was "also [to] conserve a unitary and harmonious federal administration within the Swiss boundaries."⁷ Indeed, there were many reasons for thinking that Switzerland would not be able to maintain its neutrality. In the words of Ernest Renan, language was an invitation to union not necessarily a compulsion to it.⁸ Within this new federal administration, Swiss cantonal autonomy

⁵ Ernest Gellner, *Nationalismus und Moderne*, (Rotbuch, Berlin, 1991), p. 69; Hans Maier, "Die vielen Sprachen und die Eine Welt," in: Günter Lottes (ed.), *Region, Nation, Europa, Historische Determinanten der Neugliederung eines Kontinents*, (Physica, Heidelberg, 1992), pp. 45-55.

⁶ Gordon E. Sherman, "The Neutrality of Switzerland", *The American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 12, No. 3, (July 1918), p. 462.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ernest Renan, *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?*, 1882, (Imprimerie nationale, Paris, 1996).

remained strong and this hampered the development of pan-linguistic identity in the Swiss public sphere. As a *Willensnation* (a nation created by its own will), Swiss nationhood was determined politically rather than culturally. Thus the linguistic community traditionally was subordinate to Swiss and cantonal society.

Before the First World War, the stability of the twenty-four French and German Swiss cantons was based on the complex interweaving of religious and linguistic oppositions. Of the twenty predominantly Swiss German cantons and half-cantons eleven were Protestant and nine were Catholic. Of the four predominantly French Swiss cantons three were Protestant and one was Catholic. Four cantons; Bern, Fribourg, Grisons and Valais were classed as multilingual. The germanophone Swiss community was the dominant linguistic group. It could be argued the community's comfortable majority of 60% allowed the germanophone Swiss to feel more secure in their Swiss identity and therefore more likely to rigidly adhere to the State policy of neutrality. However, within the pre-war context, such identification as one linguistic community was in fact atypical for Switzerland. According to the Swiss historian Herbert Lüthy this interweaving of multiple identities "create[d] loyalties and affinities which counterbalance[d] the linguistic interrelationship"⁹ This plurality of opinion and allegiance perhaps functioned like the defence strategy of lines of contravallation in siege warfare. The push and pull of conflicting allegiances would seem to have hitherto prevented a strong ethnically defined division from emerging. Multiple identities were inherent in Swiss nationhood and thus Swiss unity – perhaps even the lynchpin of Swiss neutral defence. Yet Swiss identity and neutrality have been often presented in Swiss historiography as an unmediated constant.¹⁰ Markus Furrer's analysis of the discourse of the Swiss nation, as presented in the Swiss curriculum, argued that Swiss identity along with Swiss neutrality could be perceived as a historic construction. According to Furrer, from the birth of the nation - the *Rütlichschwur*¹¹ - Swiss historical myths have been instrumental in the creation of a coherent Swiss national narrative, which viewed itself as exceptional.¹²

The victory of the centralists in the Swiss civil war meant that Switzerland would become a unified federal state. This decisive victory also led to the homogenisation of the Swiss political landscape, which clustered around the political manifesto of the Radical Party. It dominated Swiss politics from 1848 to 1918. For example from 1848-1891 every member of the seven-member Federal Council, which was elected by both democratically elected chambers of the Federal Assembly, was from the Radical Party. However, it would appear that a gradual diversification of the political landscape had begun shortly before the war. From 1891 to 1917, six of the seven-member council were members of

⁹ Stein Rokkan, *State Formation, Nation-Building and Mass Politics*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999), p. 321.

¹⁰ Markus Furrer, *Die Nation im Schulbuch – zwischen Überhöhung und Verdrängung. Leitbilder der Schweizer Nationalgeschichte in Schweizer Geschichtslehrmitteln der Nachkriegszeit und Gegenwart*, (Hannover, 2004).

¹¹ Rütlichschwur - Swiss founding myth. The legendary oath said to have been taken by Werner Stauffacher, Walter Fürst and Arnold of Melchtal on the Rütli meadow above lake Luzern, which founded the Old Swiss Confederacy.

¹² Furrer, *Die Nation im Schulbuch*, 2004.

the Radical Party. While this one seat may initially appear an insignificant threat to the party's monopoly of government, it must be taken into account that as a result of the single member majority vote system for every 34,000 votes in the election of 1908, which elected members to both chambers of the Federal Assembly, the Radical Party secured eight seats while the Socialists required the same number to win just two seats.¹³ For Masnata and Rubattel¹⁴ Swiss political consensus did not necessarily mean the absence of conflicts:

The overlap between political, economic, military and cultural elites [gave] priority to politics that [were] oriented towards the continuation of economic and social policies [which favoured] these same elites. Consensus [was] thus established, but at the detriment of specific social groups: the lower classes, but also foreigners and women.¹⁵

While the dominance of one party may have implied national cohesion, the Swiss electoral system may have masked changes and tensions which may have existed on the ground.

The Swiss industrial sector employed less than half the work force. This would initially seem to indicate that Switzerland had the potential to develop a strong socialist movement. However, societal divisions – urban versus rural, class and citizen versus foreigner, seem not to have been particularly strong. This was due, in part, to the nature of Swiss industrial development. Described by Swiss historian Urs Altermatt as the “quiet revolution”¹⁶ Swiss industrialisation was shaped by geographically delocalised manufacturing industries and a lack of large centralised industrial agglomerations.¹⁷ The sector was characterised by the processing and production of high-quality luxury goods aimed for foreign markets. The domestic/workshop system integrated and increased interaction between the urban and rural work force. The majority employed in the industrial sector were not factory workers but defined themselves as employed in the areas of home industry, craft and construction.¹⁸ This meant the majority of workers in all three main Swiss industries, textile, engineering, clock/watch making, were defined as highly skilled. This led one contemporary analysis to conclude that the

¹³ Erich Gruner, *Die Parteien in der Schweiz*, (Bern 1969), pp. 183 -185.

¹⁴ François Masnata & Claire Rubattel, *Le pouvoir suisse. Séduction démocratique et répression suave*, (Editions de l'Aire, Vevey, 1995).

¹⁵ Nora Natchkova, *Swiss Consensus and Domination: Areas of Gender Inequality in Switzerland. Comparative Perspective with Sweden, Netherlands, Finland, Denmark and Austria*, (University of Lausanne, 5 September 2012), Council for European Studies, (<http://councilforeuropeanstudies.org/files/papers/Natchkova.pdf>) [accessed: 27 September 2013], p. 5.

¹⁶ Urs Altermatt, “Conservatism in Switzerland: A Study in Antimodernism”, *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol.14, No. 4, (October 1979), p. 587.

¹⁷ Appendix 1, Bundesarchiv, Bern, *Statistische Jahrbuch der Schweiz; Handbuch der Schweizerischen Volkswirtschaft*, (Bern 1911).

¹⁸ Ibid.

"Swiss working class never formed a proletariat analogous to that of other countries."¹⁹ Nevertheless, while all sectors of the Swiss population seemed to have benefitted from this "quiet revolution" according to Urs Altermatt,

not all segments of the Swiss population benefited equally from these economic developments. [...] The Alpine districts were worse off than the Mittelland and the Basel region; [...] The Catholic cantons fared less well than the Protestant, as did the Romance-language areas in comparison with the German-speaking parts.²⁰

The burgeoning resentment in which this resulted was compounded by the political divisions left in the wake of the Swiss Civil War, where in 1847 eight Catholic cantons formed a special alliance to fight against federalisation supported by confederate affiliated cantons. By the eve of the war, however, Swiss Catholic Conservatism had begun to be redefined as a multi-denominational Christian party. While the *Konservative Volkspartei* (Conservative People's Party) of 1912 mainly represented Swiss Catholic conservatives, according to Altermatt, the increased "permeation of politics by economics" before 1914 encouraged debate among Swiss conservatives which "revolve[d] around [the] new issue [of] the welfare state"²¹ which would prove to be a more inclusive political agenda.

Unlike the Swiss Socialist movement, the influence of the conservative movement extended from a network of small parties, associations and trade unions²² to schools and affiliated educational institutions. This meant that the conservative politics had a more diverse and extensive pre-war support base. Both the Catholic conservative party and Swiss socialists jointly supported two pre-war popular initiatives, in 1900 and 1910, which proposed the introduction of proportional representation. However, on both occasions, the Swiss electorate rejected the proposal. The final and third popular initiative, which was passed after the armistice and elections a year later in 1919, revealed the real extent of the Radical Party's demise. In October 1919, the Radical Party lost 46 out of 104 seats, while the Socialists gained seats, from 19 to 41.²³ The previous such election was in 1914 and so this made it difficult to assess the change in voter allegiance during the war. Thus, this decline in support for the Radical's and the overwhelming support for the socialist and conservative backed proportional representation referendum after the armistice suggested that during the war, the Swiss electorate may have changed in their political allegiance and increased their support for alternative political manifestos. This makes it all the more important to study public opinion to understand the underlying

¹⁹ Reto Schumacher & Luigi Lorenzetti, "'We have no proletariat': Social Stratification and Occupational Homogeneity in Industrial Switzerland, Winterthur 1909/10-1928", *Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis*, No. 50, (2005), p. 67.

²⁰ Altermatt, "Conservatism in Switzerland". p. 585

²¹ *Ibid.* p. 596.

²² Roland Ruffieux, "Die katholische Arbeiterbewegung in der Schweiz" in S. Herman Scholl, *Katholische Arbeiterbewegung in Westeuropa*, (Bonn 1966), pp. 357-92; Herman Scholl, *Le mouvement chrétien-social en Suisse romande 1891-1949*, (Fribourg, 1969).

²³ *Ibid.*

reasons for the increased support for what were previously minority parties, and whether reaction to the war influenced the Swiss public's political affiliations.

i.ii Pre-War Demography

It has been often asserted that some 600,000 foreigners (*Ausländer* or *Fremde*) lived in Switzerland on the eve of the First World War.²⁴ However, the outbreak of war disrupted this demographic balance as many German, French and Austrian citizens, resident in Switzerland, were called to serve in the armies of their respective countries. The high rate of immigration often quoted for 1914 was not a surge as is often depicted but the result of a steady increase which stemmed from earlier events.²⁵ Pre-war migration patterns shaped Swiss society and the social character of Swiss industrialisation. This was commented upon by Wilhelm Liebknecht "We often hear the Swiss declare [...] we don't have a proletariat! Switzerland has a proletariat, but it sends it abroad."²⁶ Rapid population growth, combined with the effects of three major famines during the nineteenth century corresponded with the three waves of Swiss emigration: 1816-7, 1845-55 and 1880-85. This trend of Swiss emigration was offset by a sharp rise in political and economic migration into major Swiss towns and, in particular border towns like Basel and Geneva. Swiss industrialisation, and the relative prosperity it encouraged, increased migration. Between 1880 and 1910 the percentage of foreigners residing in Switzerland went from 3% to 14.7%, making it the country with the highest proportion of foreign residents in Europe.²⁷

Exceptional as this may seem, the vast majority (96%) of migrants came from border countries which shared a common language with Switzerland; Germany, Italy, France and Austria.²⁸ Additionally, there was a small but prominent number of foreign residents; artists, intellectuals and political refugees who had sought asylum in the relatively congenial setting of Switzerland, and they had more diverse origins. For example, a large percentage of those seeking asylum were political refugees fleeing the reactionary persecution in the Russian Empire. Crucially, however, both the germanophone and francophone Swiss public's traditional response to the people behind the statistics was accepting and welcoming. There was a desperate need for cheap labour, particularly in rural areas which contributed to the relative ease with which the vast majority of particularly economic

²⁴ Willi Wottreng, *Ein einzig Volk von Immigranten. Die Geschichte der Einwanderung in die Schweiz*, (Orell Füssli Verlag, Zürich, 2001).

²⁵ Bundesamt für Statistik, Neuchâtel, "Foreigners from the European continental area according to country of origin 1900-2003", in *Ausländerinnen und Ausländer in der Schweiz*, Swiss Federal Statistics Office, 2004.

²⁶ Trans. On entend souvent les Suisses déclarer, [...] nous n'avons pas de prolétariat! Même la Suisse a un prolétariat, mais elle l'envoie à l'étranger. Philippe Kaenel, "L'histoire et les images. La figure de l'ouvrier en Suisse", *Revue Suisse d'Histoire*, No. 54, (2004), p. 20.

²⁷ G. Arlettaz & S. Burkart, "Les effets de la première guerre mondiale sur l'intégration des étrangers en Suisse" in *Relations internationales*, 54, (1988), pp. 161-179; Schweizerisches Sozialarchiv, Zürich, *Kleine Geschichte der Einwanderung in der Schweiz in 20. Jahrhundert*, (Zürich, 2003). Wottreng, *Ein einzig Volk von Immigranten*. (2001).

²⁸ Appendix 2.

migrants were integrated into, and accepted by, the general Swiss public.²⁹ Even political refugees were well integrated, particularly within Swiss universities. For example, in the winter semester 1911/12, 659 students entered the medical faculty of Geneva University. 13% were Swiss citizens, 62% of students enrolled registered as Russian, three quarters of whom were Russian women.³⁰ For Arlettaz, the key motivation for this pre-war culture of acceptance and integration was the fact that the rise in immigration was countered by an increase in Swiss emigration.³¹ The outbreak of the war had the potential to disrupt this migratory balance, by curbing emigration and the reversing the flow of immigration. Later in the war, however, a variety of foreigners sought refuge in Switzerland and found themselves trapped there by the fractures of war. This interlude of imposed homogeneity followed by a sharp influx of unassimilated refugee migration in the course of the war had the potential to encourage the rise of ethnocentric Swiss exceptionalism and xenophobia. Both arguments will be examined in chapters four and five of the thesis.

i.iii Swiss Exceptionalism

The self-perception of the Swiss that their national history was exceptional in Europe coincided with the creation of the Swiss state. For Machiavelli, the Swiss citizen militia model was a unique and essential civic structure, illustrative of the freedom of the Swiss state: "armatissimi e liberissimi"³². For Abraham Stanyan, British envoy to Switzerland 1705 -1714, it was Switzerland's historical origins - the old confederacy - that made it a country "unlike others."³³ Unlike external definition, which was rooted in concrete political difference and secular tone of analysis, the Swiss internal perception generally situated such concrete structural difference within a more ideological context. A prime example of this was Swiss anatomist and poet Albrecht von Haller's seminal poem *Die Alpen*. Published in 1732, Von Haller's style evoked a typical Germanophone romanticism, which defined Switzerland's distinctness in terms of its geography. Unlike external commentators, like Machievelli and Stanyan, who saw Switzerland in terms of prophetic notions of destiny, rooted in age old historical happenings; the Swiss "Exalted [Swiss] world,"³⁴ was not dictated by fate alone "Destiny hath here no time ascribed"³⁵ but shaped by the Swiss individuals themselves – their reactions to that

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Natalia Tikhonov, "Les étudiantes russes dans les universités suisses à la fin XIXe siècle et au début du XXe siècle - les raisons d'un choix" in *Les femmes dans la société européenne*, 8e Congrès des historiennes suisses. SHAG, (Genève, 2000), pp. 91-103 ; "Les universités suisses, pionnières de l'introduction de la mixité dans l'enseignement supérieur" in *Ecole et mixité*. (Presses universitaires de Lyon, Lyon, 2001), pp. 27-35.

³¹ G. Arlettaz, « Démographie et identité nationale (1850-1914). "La Suisse et la "question des étrangers" », in *Études et sources*. Revue des Archives fédérales suisses, 11, (Berne, 1985), pp. 83-180.

³² Trans. Most armed and most free. Nicollò Machiavelli, *Il Principe*, (Grandi Classici, Rusconi Libri, 2005), Chapter XII I.

³³ "Pas comme les autres". Abraham Stanyan, *An Account of Switzerland: Written in the Year 1714*, (Hamilton, Balfour and Neill, Edinburgh, 1756)

³⁴ "Erhabnern Welt", Albrecht von Haller, *Die Alpen und andere Gedichte*, (Reclam, Stuttgart, 1968), Line 312.

³⁵ "Das Schicksal hat euch hier kein Tempe zugesprochen" Ibid.

which surrounded them, be it rocky cliffs or political events. The harsh geographic isolation and detachment from external political engagement had in fact benefitted the nation according to von Haller: "The long winter shortens the spring's late weeks [...] but your moral value is the better of it."³⁶ The long icy winters and isolation incurred had, according to von Haller, improved "Swiss morals", what could have been perceived as precarious political detachment had become the key element of national defence – Swiss neutrality.

By the 19th and early 20th century, such views came to be described in the germanophone lexicon as *Sonderfalldenken*³⁷ – the development of an internal discourse which saw Switzerland as an exceptional case. Before 1914, this was seen as distinct from the German *Sonderweg* or exceptional path, with its allusion to destiny.³⁸ As a theme of twentieth century discourse, the Swiss *Sonderfall* has been predominantly debated within the general context of Swiss political structure and historical tradition. For De Reynold, *Contes et Légendes de la Suisse héroïque*, 1913,³⁹ Lüthy, *Die Schweiz als antithese* 1963⁴⁰ and Chevallaz, *Die Schweiz in Europa*, 1995,⁴¹ Switzerland was the antithesis of western political development, while for Daniel Judah Elazar it was the Swiss communal tradition which set it apart from other countries.⁴² For Austrian historian Gerhard Lehmbuch, exceptionalism lay in Switzerland's economic structure - liberal corporatism.⁴³ For Steinberg, the Swiss *Sonderfall* was also a consistent narrative, whose origins lay with the plurality of influence exerted on its development.⁴⁴ Steinberg cited the influence of Swiss communal traditions, the tradition of micro-economies, the development of urban wealth, physique of the Swiss rural mountaineers, among a myriad of other factors.⁴⁵

The Swiss *Sonderfall* was presented, in such discourse, as a homogeneous term. However, while the germanophone community had one distinct word to describe Swiss exceptionalism, the francophone and italophone communities did not. Sometimes the German word *Sonderfall* was imported but more

³⁶ "Der lange Winter kürzt des Frühlings späte Wochen [...] Doch eurer Sitten Wert hat alles das verbessert" Ibid.

³⁷ Trans. Special-way-thought

³⁸ The *weg* in *Sonderweg* (special way or path) alluded to a progressive notion of destiny, while the Swiss *Sonderfall* (special case) alluded to something more rooted, totemic and constant.

³⁹ Trans. Myths and legends of heroic Switzerland. Gonzague de Reynold, *Contes et Légendes de la Suisse héroïque*, (Payot, Lausanne, 1913).

⁴⁰ Herbert Lüthy, "Die Schweiz als Antithese", in *Essays I: 1949-1963, Gesammelte Werke*, Vol. 3, (Arche, Zürich, 2003), pp. 410-430.

⁴¹ Georges-André Chevallaz, *Die Schweiz in Europa*, (Novalis-Verlag, Schaffhausen, 1995).

⁴² Daniel Judah Elazar, *Commonwealth: The other road to Democracy – The Swiss Model of Democratic Self-Government*, (Lexington Books, Lanham, Maryland, 2001).

⁴³ Gerhard Lehmbuch, *Proporzdemokratie: politisches System und politische Kultur in der Schweiz und in Österreich*, (Tübingen, Mohr, 1967); "A Non-Competitive Pattern of conflict management in liberal democracies: The case of Switzerland, Austria and Lebanon", in Kenneth McRae (ed.) *Consociational Democracy: Political Accommodation in Segmented Societies*, (McClelland and Stewart, Toronto, 1974), pp. 90-97.

⁴⁴ Jonathan Steinberg, *Why Switzerland?* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1976).

⁴⁵ Ibid.

often Swiss exceptionalism was referred to in francophone Switzerland as the *modèle Suisse*⁴⁶, *cas particulier*⁴⁷, *cas à part*⁴⁸, *une espèce à part*⁴⁹, *une Suisse à contre courant*⁵⁰ or *le cavalier seul*⁵¹. This did not necessarily mean that francophone perception of Swiss exceptionalism did not concur with the germanophone perception. The lack of congruity in terminology suggests rather less unity than either community implied. Certainly, the remarkable multi-lingual, multi-confessional plurality which was accommodated by the state structure was something of an exception in the Europe of the First World War. Paradoxically, this meant that there were different interpretations of the exceptionalism that supposedly made the Swiss so singular. It would seem that the francophone communities' multiple terms for Swiss exceptionalism was perhaps more typically Swiss than the germanophone community, and contemporary analysis, would have cared to acknowledge. A historiographical trend has emerged which seems to revert to the narrative of the eighteenth century. Similar to the analysis of Stanyan in 1714⁵² in 2007 the roots of Imhof's *Sonderfall Schweiz* lay in Switzerland's distant past and it was this past which had conditioned later developments.⁵³ However, Imhoff particularly has raised the narrative of traditional Swiss resistance which underpinned the Swiss *Sonderfall*.⁵⁴ However, this in turn raised an interesting dilemma – If resistance had become so central to Swiss civil and political identity, would it not then be equally bound to a seemingly perpetual need for an external threat or enemy?

In recent years, Swiss scholarship has also begun to challenge Swiss exceptionalist discourse by attempting to integrate it within a wider European context. Thomas Riklin's dissertation argued that while ethnicity, language and/or cultural affinity may have defined German and French national identity, as a historical construct, Swiss identity has relied on the maintenance of historical myths.⁵⁵ Perhaps, then, the perception of a homogeneous, neutral, Swiss response to the First World War has become one of these myths – a kind of constructed Halbwachsian collective memory⁵⁶ - which has been shaped by concerns of the present. Recent research by Swiss military historian, Michel Olsansky, argued that during the interwar period "the Swiss army was confronted with the same

⁴⁶ Trans. The Swiss model.

⁴⁷ Trans. Particular case.

⁴⁸ Trans. Special case.

⁴⁹ Trans. A breed apart.

⁵⁰ Trans. A Switzerland against the grain.

⁵¹ Trans. The lone rider.

⁵² Abraham Stanyan *An Account of Switzerland*, (Hamilton, Balfour & Neill, Edinburgh, 1756).

⁵³ Thomas S. Eberle and Kurt Imhof (eds.) *Sonderfall Schweiz*, (Seismo Verlag, Zurich, 2007).

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Thomas Riklin, *Worin unterscheidet sich die schweizerische "Nation" von der Französischen bzw. Deutschen "Nation"?* Probearbeit im Fach allgemeine Staatslehre. Rechtswissenschaftliche Fakultät der Universität Freiburg, Schweiz bei Prof. Thomas Fleiner, 2005. <http://www.thomasfleiner.ch/files/documents/Nation.pdf>

⁵⁶ Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*. (University of Chicago Press, London, 1992).

questions as the combat-proven armed forces of neighbouring countries".⁵⁷ Could it be argued, then that this military experience of warfare by proxy existed earlier, during the First World War too? Matthieu Leimgruber's economic analysis of the Swiss welfare state in 2008 offers a rare acknowledgement of the internal divisions within Switzerland, which ran contrary to the general image of unity.⁵⁸ For Leimgruber, the alienation of Swiss Catholics and the Swiss working class from the Radical Party was the major division within the public and political sphere.⁵⁹ However, the exclusion of Swiss women from the political sphere and the linguistic divide were arguably two other major agents of disunity. The long denial of the vote to women has historically, and historiographically, drawn much more attention than the differences between the French and German language communities. Despite these developments within Swiss discourse, there is a resurgent trend in historical writing, coinciding with the surge in support for the right-wing politics of the Zurich wing of the Swiss People's Party in the 1990's and 2000's, which remains steadfast in its allegiance to the *Sonderfall* narrative of Swiss exceptionalism. This makes it all the more relevant to look at the impact of the First World War on Switzerland, to see whether an event that had such a major effect in reshaping many countries in Europe and beyond did not also have that effect on Switzerland, its neutrality notwithstanding.

i.iv Swiss Humanitarianism

One consequence of the early 20th century narrative of Swiss exceptionalism was the tradition of Swiss humanitarian intervention. Pre-war Swiss intellectuals, like germanophone Carl Spitteler, saw the Swiss political system as the embodiment of the ideals of shared humanity - a special case, which Swiss citizens had a moral mission to protect and promote abroad.⁶⁰ Spitteler's interpretation of this moral mission would appear to identify with the continuity between humanity and nationhood, expressed in the liberal democratic tradition of French Republicanism. Therefore, was it potentially possible that Swiss affinity might identify with French political culture and tradition as it was to split along linguistic lines?⁶¹

Traditionally the focus of Swiss humanitarianism was not defined by any particular external or interventionist role, and instead centred on the practice of asylum, which was offered to persecuted minorities like the Huguenots in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and political outcasts like French royalists after 1792. However, the advent of humanitarian politics in Europe during the

⁵⁷ M. M. Olsansky, "The Development of the Swiss Army's Combat Methods After the First World War", in Herman Amersfoort, Wim Klinkert (eds.) *Small Powers in the age of total war, 1900-1940* (Brill, Leiden, 2011), p. 307.

⁵⁸ Matthieu Leimgruber, *Solidarity without the State? Business and the Shaping of the Swiss Welfare State, 1890-2000*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2008).

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Carl Spitteler, *Unser Schweizer Standpunkt*, (von Rasher, Zurich, 1915), p. 22.

⁶¹ Jules Michelet, *Le Peuple*, (Éditions Paulin, Paris, 1846), p. 281; Antoine Prost, (translated by Jay Winter and Helen McPhail), *Republican identities in war and peace: representations of France in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries*, (Berg, Oxford, 2002).

nineteenth century made the human dimension of conflict abroad a concern for European governments and prominent individuals, of which Swiss citizen, Jean-Henri Dunant, was a shining example. Dunant's vision, following his experience of the Battle of Solferino 1859, laid down a set of principles implemented by Gustave Moynier and the International Committee of the Red Cross. The committee would provide for the treatment of wounded soldiers and the creation of nationally based but neutral societies of medical volunteers who would spring to action in the event of war, no matter where it occurred. As the "watershed in the history of the relationship between war and charity,"⁶² the Red Cross and Swiss experience of the Franco-Prussian war defined its new international humanitarian role, in particular its treatment and repatriation of the 80,000 soldiers of General Bourbaki's *Armée de l'Est*. Despite the avocation of nationally based societies, the International Committee of the Red Cross was not Swiss but Genevan. The committee itself was made up exclusively of Genevan citizens from the upper echelons of the Protestant, patrician élite of Geneva and thus exclusively francophone.

Yet the ethos and aims of the organisation seem to have been considerably influenced by the Swiss military tradition of the perpetually mobilised citizen militia. For example, Gustave Moynier's published essay on the Geneva Convention,⁶³ published in 1870, the Swiss humanitarian *mission civilatrice*, was proposed within the context of Swiss military tradition. Moynier quoted extensively from Swiss General Dufour's general order to his troops on the 5 November 1847 in which Dufour outlined the humanitarian parameters of the impending battle between his fellow countrymen: "A warrior can deserve as many laurels for his clemency as for his [military] exploits". In a declaration of Swiss military exceptionalism, the general defined Swiss war as different: "the whole world will know that this is not a meeting of barbarians".⁶⁴ Dufour's decision to outmanoeuvre rather than outfight his opponents, during the Swiss Civil War, was presented as a conscious decision to minimise violence. Neuchâtel and Appenzell-Innerrhoden's neutral status was adhered to, and provisions were made for wounded of both sides. Despite the large forces engaged in battle, 178,000 in total, the three-week civil war saw a total of 86 deaths. The reality that the war was not particularly remembered outside Switzerland did not prevent Moynier from situating his analysis of the Geneva Convention within this Swiss context, at the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian war. However, this military influence focused the Committee's work almost exclusively on combatants and this neglected other victims of war, namely civilian non-combatants. An early example of the committee's failure in this regard was the absence of a code of conduct which covered civilian casualties of war in the Genevan conventions. The early effect of this lack of foresight was witnessed during the Boer war where 26,000 Boer civilians died in British internment camps. Though there were germanophone Swiss citizens who

⁶² John F. Hutchinson, *Champions of Charity - War and the Rise of the Red Cross*, (Westview Press, Colorado, 1996), p. 105.

⁶³ Gustave Moynier, *Étude sur la convention de Genève pour l'amélioration du sort des militaires blessés dans l'armée en campagne 1864 et 1868*, (droit de gens, Paris Cherbuliez, 1870), pp. 14-18.

⁶⁴ General Dufour, *Order of the Day of 5 November, 1847* in Joachim Remak, *A Very Civil War. The Swiss Sonderbund War of 1847*, (Westview Press, Oxford, 1993), pp. 94-96.

engaged in the work of the Swiss Red Cross, the movement was generally perceived among the wider Swiss public as a Genevan rather than a Swiss organisation. While there were other germanophone and francophone Christian organisations which offered aid to civilians fleeing war or persecution, the issue of civilians in warfare did not exert a presence in general Swiss public opinion.

Nevertheless, following the Boer War there were calls from prominent Swiss individuals to address the issue of civilians in warfare. Autumn 1913, in an article in the *Berner Tagblatt*, Swiss francophone journalist Louis de Tscharner first mentioned the possible role Switzerland could play in international internment and repatriation of combatants and non-combatants in the event of a possible Franco-German conflict.⁶⁵ It is of note that, once again, calls to protect civilian non-combatants came exclusively from the francophone community. De Tscharner's idea was referred to and elaborated upon by Dr. F. Ferrière (founding member of the ICRC) in a 1914 Red Cross Bulletin.⁶⁶ However, unlike germanophone commentators, who tended to focus on internment and repatriation of military prisoners of war, the main focus of Dr. Ferrière's analysis was the treatment of civilian migrants in war. Following the outbreak of war, August 1914, Ferrière founded the civilian section of the *Agence internationale des prisonniers de guerre* (AIPG). The overwhelmingly francophone involvement in Swiss humanitarianism suggests perhaps francophone identity played an exclusive role in defining the continuity between Swiss nationhood and humanity, an aspect that did not seem to concern pre-war germanophone public opinion to the same extent. While germanophone intellectuals like Carl Spitteler spoke of a Swiss moral mission to be promoted abroad, germanophone pre-war foreign policy would appear to have focused on neutral arbitration rather than francophone humanitarian intervention. It was a pre-war linguistically defined divide, which had the potential to define Swiss engagement and reaction during the First World War, which will be the subject of chapter five of this thesis.

i.v Union Sacrée Suisse or Burgfrieden Schweiz?

The war instigated an internal political truce in both neutral and belligerent states. The *Burgfrieden*, as it was known in Germany, was the agreement of all political parties to maintain a political truce while their country was at war. In France, the political truce between the left, centre, right and extreme right under René Viviani's government was known as the *Union Sacrée*. However, the French political truce carried with it an ideological dimension, which encouraged its home front to view national unity as both traditional and unique to French history and identity. For Michel Winock, the *Union Sacrée* encouraged the integration of Catholic conservatism into the Republic.⁶⁷ The political isolation in Switzerland of Catholic conservatism after the Swiss Civil War was somewhat comparable with that of French Catholic conservatives. Whether in neutral but surrounded Switzerland there was the

⁶⁵ *Berner Tagblatt*, 1913.

⁶⁶ Dr. F. Ferrière, "Neutralité suisse et blessés de guerre", in *Bulletin international des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge*, (1914), p. 93.

⁶⁷ Michel Winock, *La Fièvre hexagonale. Les Grandes crises politiques 1871-1968*, (Paris, 1968), pp.198 -201.

equivalent of these political truces experienced in the belligerent states, is a central question of this thesis.

The experience of neutral Dutch politics seems to have been quite different. Ivo Kuypers argued that political unity in the Netherlands, during the war, increased co-operation and encouraged constructive dialogue, which forced the government to consult with trade unions and to recognise their own responsibilities to their citizens.⁶⁸ Could the same be said of neutral Switzerland? According to Kuypers and more recent research by Samuël Kruizinga, despite divisions among Dutch public opinion, Dutch political unity during the First World War was a constructive force for change which laid the foundations of the Dutch *overlegeconomie* (consultation economy) and welfare state.⁶⁹ The *levée en masse* character of Swiss militarized unity - the Swiss citizen militia - suggests that the Swiss case may have been more comparable with the coerced unity which developed in the French *union sacrée* and German *Burgfrieden*. Chapter's two and five will seek to answer whether Swiss political unity increased co-operation and political dialogue in a similar way to the Netherlands. Or, could Swiss unity be described as a *Burgfrieden/Union Sacrée*, which weakened and undermined the civic sphere's ability to resolve the linguistic divide through reasoned public debate and allowing it to fester and divide Swiss reactions to the war despite the prevailing image of national unity? The political shift from the dominance of one party to multiple party allegiances, by 1918, would seem to indicate there was some form of tension within the Swiss public sphere. Determining whether or not a linguistic division played a role in this political shift will be the key question of Chapter two of the thesis, which will analyse expressions of Swiss linguistic identity and the Swiss political affinity during the war. The chapters two and three of the thesis will examine the rise, during the war of these minority parties and the final chapter of the thesis will examine their role in the Swiss General Strike, November 1918.

i.vi Economic Mobilisation

Before the war, the famous Dutch legal scholar Cornelis van Vollenhoven outlined the extra-legal elements which ensured the credibility of a country's neutrality and its independence. In the case of the Netherlands he argued that "every prize for Dutch manufacture, [...] every award for a Dutch orchestra, every little Dutch tube of liquid helium" were agents of this process of legitimisation.⁷⁰ They possessed what sociologist Pierre Bourdieu would later describe as symbolic capital.⁷¹ As an extension of Max Weber's analysis of status,⁷² Bourdieu's term, symbolic capital, derives its power

⁶⁸ Ivo Kuypers, *In de Schaduw van de Grote Oorlog. De Nederlandse arbeidersbeweging en de overheid, 1914-1920*, (Aksant, Amsterdam, 2002).

⁶⁹ Samuël Kruizinga, *Economische politiek: de Nederlandsche Overzee Trustmaatschappij (1914 -1919) en de Eerste Wereldoorlog*, PhD dissertation, Instituut voor Cultuur en Geschiedenis, Universiteit van Amsterdam, oai:ARNO:391047, (Digital Academic Repository, Amsterdam, 2011), p. 496.

⁷⁰ Cornelis van Vollenhoven, *Roeping van Holland*, (Gravenhage & Nijhoff, Den Haag, 1913), pp. 185-204

⁷¹ Pierre Bourdieu, *La Distinction. Critique sociale du jugement*, (Les Editions de Minuit, Paris, 1979).

⁷² Max Weber, "Class, Status, Party", in H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (eds.), *Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, (Oxford University Press, New York, 1946), pp. 180-195.

from an ability to name and make distinctions, which crucially must be recognised by others. Within the power dynamic of belligerent and neutral forces in war time, the position of a neutral country like Switzerland must rely not solely on a declaration of neutrality per se but on its recognition abroad. An extension of Bourdieu's theory of symbolic capital seems directly applicable to such a country, where its ability to be perceived as distinct, not worth invading, was crucial to its survival. Paul Forman,⁷³ Daniel Kevles⁷⁴ and Brigitte Schroeder-Gudehus⁷⁵ have examined symbolic capital of intellectuals in belligerent states, in particular the role of science and scientists as a proxy political power, in a proxy *Krieg der Geister* (artistic, spiritual and intellectual war). However, there has been no real examination of the symbolic capital of neutrality itself, during the war. Given Switzerland's multilingual identity, the strength of foreign direct investment in the country and its trade abroad, its neutrality had the potential to become symbolic capital in its own right, in the event of international war.

The containment of dissent and division, during the war, depended to large extent on relative Swiss economic stability but equally the stability of the economy relied on the cooperation of the Swiss public, the containment of the linguistic division and the symbolic capital of Swiss neutrality. Without referring to symbolic capital directly, the Swiss Trade and Industry Association alludes to this by citing *Maklerdienste* (middle-men services) as key to the development of Swiss economy during the Franco-Prussian War.⁷⁶ However, it would appear financial difficulties before the war threatened to undermine this economic mobilisation before it had even begun. On the eve of the war, Swiss external investments totalled 6.3 billion CHF and were held in 40 different foreign countries.⁷⁷ While this could prove advantageous, in the event of global war access to these investments could prove problematic. Also, Switzerland was not self-sufficient. Poor availability of arable land made Switzerland reliant on imports to feed its population. Switzerland's real wealth before the war depended on importing low value commodities which, following Swiss manufacture and processing, were exported as higher value goods. However, by 1913 Switzerland had imported 2 billion CHF worth of commodities and exported 1.3 billion CHF.⁷⁸ The pre-war Swiss economy, therefore, had been running a deficit in the balance of trade which amounted to approximately 700 million CHF which indicated that this traditional source of real wealth had already become insufficient on the eve of the war. As will be discussed further in Chapter Four the local and regional banking sector has suffered significant losses from 1910-1913.

⁷³ Paul Forman, "Scientific Internationalism and the Weimar Physicists: The Ideology and its manipulation after World War I", *Isis* 64, 2, (1973), pp. 151-180.

⁷⁴ Daniel Kevles, "Into Hostile Political Camps, The Reorganization of International Science in World War I", *Isis* 62, (1971), pp. 47-60.

⁷⁵ Brigitte Schroeder-Gudehus, *Deutsche Wissenschaft und Internationale Zusammenarbeit, 1914-1928: Ein Beitrag zum Studium Kultureller Beziehungen in Politischen Krisenzeiten*, (Dumaret & Golay, Genève, 1966).

⁷⁶ Dr. V. Furlan, *Schweizerische Blätter für Handel und Industrie*, Nr.21 & 22 15 November 1914.

⁷⁷ Hans Bauer & Warren J. Blackman, *Swiss Banking: An Analytical History*, (MacMillian Press, London, 1998), p.184.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

Switzerland was one of the last industrialised European states to have centralised its monetary policy. It was not until 1907 that the Swiss National Bank was founded but its location was still split over a hundred kilometres, between Bern, which took charge of all legal affairs, and Zurich, which took control of administrative affairs. At the outbreak of the war “financial activities [...] were shared among Basel, Geneva and Zurich.”⁷⁹ The war according to Cassis offered the opportunity for a “certain division of labour [to be] established between the three main financial centres”⁸⁰. Public confidence abroad was based on a perception of the strength, stability and symbolic capital of Swiss neutrality but to what extent did the Swiss public recognise the significance of the symbolic capital of Swiss neutrality abroad during wartime? If it was recognised, did it contribute to self-censorship and a grudging acceptance of limitations it imposed on public debate and campaigns for reform?

Intriguingly, new emergent areas of economic development would seem to have been poised to benefit from the war and any prospective linguistic divide. Swiss ethno-linguistic affinity and allegiance before the war contradicted liberal economist Henry Mussey’s analysis of international commerce, published December 1914. For Mussey and other economic liberals, the sudden emergence of “nationalistic ideas of commerce”⁸¹ destroyed a supposed transnational equilibrium of the free-market. However, during the height of laissez-faire global capitalism, it was paradoxically Swiss de-ethnicising of its global economic dealings that carved its niche of dominance and not purely the whims of market and profit during this period of supposed cosmopolitan economics. Without access to the sea, Switzerland had to exploit its linguistic affinity with Germany and France to gain access to global markets. When viewed as part of a neutral block, the combined might of Belgium, the Netherlands and Switzerland ranked fourth on the eve of the war in terms of stock of capital invested abroad.⁸² At a total of \$5.5 billion, this almost equalled the amount invested abroad by Germany before the war.⁸³ It could be argued that, during the height of nationalistically defined divisions of World War, Switzerland’s neutral status and exceptionalism became symbolic capital in its own right – the key to success within the global economic trade which would prop up the country’s finances, and thus ensured relative Swiss independence.

Neutrality’s symbolic capital in multi-lingual states like Switzerland especially meant, according to Serge Paquier: “national partnerships, which would have been inconceivable elsewhere (particularly those involving French and German groups)”⁸⁴ were feasible in the realm of Swiss finance both at

⁷⁹ Youssef Cassis, *Capitals of Capital – The Rise and Fall of International Financial Centres 1780-2009*, (Cambridge University Press, New York, 2010), p. 127.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Henry Raymond Mussey, “The New Freedom in Commerce”, *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 29, No. 4, (December 1914).

⁸² Appendix 3: Stock of Foreign Investment.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Serge Paquier, “Swiss holding companies from the mid-nineteenth century to the early 1930s: the forerunners and subsequent waves of creations”, *Financial History Review*, Vol. 8, part 2, (Cambridge University Press, October 2001), p. 166.

home and abroad. Therefore strong division among Swiss public opinion was a credible threat to destabilise Switzerland's key asset – neutrality.

Geoffrey Jones has argued that nationalising or giving the perception of a national identity to what were in effect often multi-national companies operating on a global scale was often impossible.⁸⁵ Many such multi-nationals chose to legitimise their new found national identity through head-quarters based in neutral countries, the majority of which were stationed in the Netherlands or Switzerland. While in 1914 Great Britain, the US and The Netherlands accounted for between two-thirds and three-quarters of the total global foreign direct investment, throughout the war “the Swiss and the Swedes were also persistently large outward multinational investors⁸⁶”. As a bloc, neutral countries not only grew in terms of foreign direct investment during the war but also held a larger stake of the global economy than many belligerent powers. While macro-analysis analysed this phenomenon in terms of numbers of goods and services sold, decisions to deal with submarine warfare and naval blockade; micro-analysis provided the tools necessary to understand the embeddedness of the particular companies in their political, social and cultural environment. This approach was more effective in analysing the extent to which the *röstigraben*⁸⁷ (linguistic divide as it would come to be known as) influenced public identity within global business and trading. The final argument of the thesis will examine the impact of the linguistic divide on social cohesion and the Swiss economy. Its effects would seem to have culminated in the strikes of November 1918. It will seek to determine whether the economic and social strains of the war had encouraged the language of class to have displaced other wartime discourses or was it rather the rhetoric of insular nationalism which had displaced the wartime discourse.

i.vii Military Mobilisation

To a certain extent, public fear during the First World War was driven by the possibility that what happened to neutral Belgium could happen to Switzerland. However, during the pre-war years, unlike their Belgian counterparts, the Swiss authorities seemed quick to recognise that the perception of Swiss military might, neutrality and public unity abroad was a more effective form of defence than internal reform. The last time Switzerland had been invaded was in 1798, when the French Revolutionary army took advantage of the deep sectarian, social and linguistic divisions which had developed in Switzerland. A French propaganda campaign was launched, which deemed the lack of central unity within the Swiss state to be feudal. This appeared to have curried favour among minority areas in Switzerland, in particular, among the francophone cantons. For example, the Napoleonic

⁸⁵ Geoffrey Jones, *Nationality and Multinationals in Historical Perspective*, Working Paper for Harvard Business School, (2005), p. 8.

⁸⁶ Geoffrey Jones, *Multinationals and Global Capitalism. From the Nineteenth to the Twenty First Century*, (Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 7-8.

⁸⁷ The term *Röstigraben* (*Rösti* - A germanophone Swiss dish of shredded fried potato. *Graben* – trench) originated during the First World War. It is used today to describe the dividing line between germanophone and francophone Switzerland.

proposal for the creation of the predominantly francophone *République rhodanienne* was widely supported within francophone Switzerland. January 1798, Lausanne fell to the French without resistance and Vaud was taken without a shot being fired. The francophone cantons of Vaud, Valais and Fribourg were incorporated within the new *République rhodanienne*, while Geneva was annexed by France. The Franco-Prussian war witnessed the first complete mobilisation of the new *Bundesheer* or Federal army, which was the consolidation of the individual cantonal armies following the victory of the centrist forces during the Swiss Civil War 1847 and institution of the Swiss constitution of 1848. However, new found inter-linguistic unity displayed during the Civil War and in its aftermath may have been a reason why Switzerland was not invaded on this occasion.

1912 was a key year for both Belgian and Swiss military defence preparations. The Belgian response to increased tensions among the European powers was the government's authorisation to begin the reorganisation of the Belgian army. In Switzerland, the need for reform and reorganisation was highlighted in the issues of the *Allgemeine Schweizerische Militärzeitung*⁸⁸, *Revue Militaire Suisse*⁸⁹ and the French *Revue Militaire Générale*⁹⁰. Three hundred thousand new rifles, the Schmidt-Rubin Infantry Rifle and Karabiner Model rifle, were distributed in 1911. However, the Swiss military focus from 1912 onwards tended instead towards publicity campaigns both at home and abroad. The most famous of these was held 4-5 September 1912, when the Swiss military invited Kaiser Wilhelm II and General von Moltke to view the annual display of Swiss military manoeuvres between the fifth and sixth divisions in a Swiss town called Wil in the foothills of the Appenzell Alps. While the Kaiser's visit was to view Swiss military manoeuvres, the attendance of senior political figures and the local Wil citizens presented the interconnectedness of Swiss state, civic and military spheres to the German delegation. At the military breakfast, for example, before viewing the second day of military manoeuvres (to which the local populace were given exclusive access to and attended en-masse), the Kaiser was not seated beside members of the Swiss military but instead flanked at the breakfast table by the most prominent Swiss politicians - members of the Bundesrat; Arthur Hoffmann to his left, Gustave Forrer to his right and Giuseppe Motta who sat opposite.⁹¹ The extent of this inter-institutional public relations offensive could be seen in the carefully managed décor, seating arrangements and speeches throughout the visit down to the image of a lone Swiss citizen soldier which adorned the Kaisers' personal breakfast menu, and which stood guard over a depiction of the town of Wil, his face turned towards the German border.⁹² It was not known whether the Kaiser picked up on such symbolism, which detailed Swiss perception of Germany as an enemy; however, he appeared to have been impressed with the Swiss military. In a widely published address to the Swiss President, the Kaiser declared:

⁸⁸ *Allgemeine Schweizerische Militärzeitung*, Nr. 41, (12 October 1912), pp. 325-327.

⁸⁹ Colonel Feyler, "Les manœuvres du 3e corps d'armée en 1912" in *Revue Militaire Suisse*, No. 10, (October 1912), p. 826.

⁹⁰ Général H. Langlois, "Les manœuvres suisses en 1907", in *Revue Militaire Générale*, (Paris/Nancy, 1907), p. 4.

⁹¹ Appendix 5

⁹² Appendix 6

Since ancient times, the residents of the Swiss mountains have been efficient and remote fighters. [...] It is common knowledge, that the federal infantry has earned this exalted reputation on numerous battlefields. [It] does my soldier's heart good [to see this]. [...] The two days of manoeuvres have made it known to me that the Swiss army has been wrought from all sides with exceptional ardour. The great efforts of the Swiss soldier are cheerfully endured out of love of the fatherland and the Swiss army is borne on the love of the entire Swiss people.⁹³

Given the civil war and sectarian and linguistic division during the 19 century, it would appear that this perception of the ancient unity and ardour of the Swiss citizen militia army was a recent construction. It was further cultivated internally. One particular anecdote, which also featured in a series of postcards circulated within Switzerland, described how when the Kaiser asked one of the local Swiss spectators who had gathered to watch the military displays: "You are 100,000 Swiss rifle men, what happens when I come with 200,000 Prussians?" To which the Swiss citizen replied "Then we'll just have to shoot twice, your majesty."⁹⁴ While it seemed unlikely that the Kaiser would have explicitly spoken of invading Switzerland at a public engagement, the anecdote, embodied this vibrant sense of new found unity, which was a source of pride among the Swiss public and widely commented upon during the war. "One unique nation of brothers"⁹⁵, the oft-quoted phrase of Schiller's play, *Wilhelm Tell*, was presented in the annual celebration of Switzerland's national day, 1st August 1914, as the historic utterance of the *Rütli* pledge of allegiance – the origins of Switzerland. Both this *Rütli* and the celebration of 1 August, was in fact another social construction shaped by the concerns and conflicts of the present. This constructed myth of historic Swiss unity was powerful, as it became incorporated in Swiss self-image and thus Swiss defence. Yet it also threatened the reality. Pre-1914 Switzerland was a liberal and open society, which had a long history of welcoming foreign citizens and offered a unique atmosphere of inter-ethnic harmony. This constructed myth of a military band of national brothers sought to distance this welcoming nation from the outside world and gave rise to a sense of Swiss isolational exceptionalism which encouraged xenophobia and exclusion. Yet

⁹³ "Seit uralter Zeit sind die Bewohner der Schweizer Gebirge tüchtige und fernliege Kämpfer gewesen. [...] Denn allbekannt ist es, dass das eidgenössische Fußvolk auf zahlreichen Schlachtfeldern hohen Ruhm geerntet hat. [Es] hat meinem Soldatenherzen wohlgetan. [...] Die beiden Manövertage haben mich erkennen lassen, dass im schweizerischen heereswesen von allen Seiten mit außerordentlichem Eifer gearbeitet wird, dass der schweizerische Soldat große Anstrengungen aus Liebe zum Vaterlande mit Freudigkeit erträgt, und dass das Schweizer Heer getragen wird von der Liebe des ganzen Schweizer Volkes." *Der Bund*, 7 September 1912, p. 1.

⁹⁴ Kaiser Wilhelm, "Ihr seid 100,000 Schweizer Schützen und wenn ich mit 200,000 Preußen komme?" Schweizer, "Dann schießen wir eben zweimal, Eure Majestät." Kantonales Museum Altes Zeughaus Solothurn, Switzerland, Postcard 1912, *Grüsse aus dem Soldatenleben: Militärpostkarten aus der 1. Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Ulrich Gribi Collection), Exhibition catalogue (8 February – 29 April 2007); Richard Munday, *Most Armed and most free?*, (Piedmont Publishing, Essex, 1996), p. 16.

⁹⁵ "Ein einzig Volk von Brüdern."

the myth had a powerful external resonance. According to American Colonel George Bell's pre-war assessment:

Any nation, however powerful, will pause before invading Switzerland, for, [...] there is a Spartan patriotism and valour, inherited from ancestors who had no fear of death, and a love of country unsurpassed by any known people."⁹⁶

Among fellow neutral European states, pre-war Switzerland would appear to have been unique in its eagerness to engage with and promote its neutral image abroad. Swiss officials in the pre-war period endorsed and often actively sought a central role for Switzerland as neutral arbitrator or mediator. The Netherlands, by contrast, was a reluctant host of the International Peace conferences 1899 and 1907. The Dutch Queen, Wilhelmina, refused to officiate at the international gatherings held in her own palaces, "because they press upon us [the Dutch nation] the stamp of insignificance."⁹⁷ W. H. de Beaufort, the Dutch Minister for Foreign Affairs, initially turned down \$1.5 million from Andrew Carnegie to build the International Court of Arbitration.⁹⁸ By contrast, the Geneva society for public welfare and Swiss citizen Henry Dunant, campaigned, with government support, for Geneva to become the location for an international conference which would negotiate an international set of laws relating to the treatment and care of the wounded and prisoners of war. While Switzerland was an active negotiator and signatory of the 1864 and 1906 Geneva Conventions, according to Dutch observer Benjamin de Jong van Beek en Donk, the Netherlands' main role at the Hague conferences was "making tea and arranging flowers."⁹⁹ Nils Ørvik has argued that the First World War, delegitimised neutrality as a feasible foreign policy¹⁰⁰, but while this would appear to have been the case in other neutral states like Belgium and the Netherlands¹⁰¹ it may not have been so in Switzerland. Could Switzerland's cultivation of its neutral image and role abroad have developed symbolic capital in its own right? Could the reaction of belligerent powers towards Switzerland at the outbreak and during the war have legitimised Swiss neutrality as the lynchpin of Swiss foreign policy? These are the key questions to be explored further in chapter four of the thesis.

The Schlieffen Plan meant invading Belgium, Luxembourg and/or Switzerland, neutral countries, whose status was also guaranteed by international treaty. Since the Allies (as they became from 4 September 1914), Britain, France and Russia, condemned Germany's violation of Belgian neutrality,

⁹⁶ Sir Ian Hamilton, Colonel George Bell, *The officers Training Corps: The Australian System of National Defence, the Swiss system of National Defence*, Senate Document No. 796, 63rd congress, 3rd Session, 1915, (National Government Publication, Washington, 1915), p. 123.

⁹⁷ Cees Fasseur, *Wilhelmina. De jonge Koningin*, (Balans, Amsterdam, 1998), p. 393.

⁹⁸ E. H. Kossmann, *De Lage Landen. Twee Eeuwen Nederland en België 1780-1980*, Deel I, (Agon, Amsterdam, 1978), pp. 350-352.

⁹⁹ Benjamin de Jong van Beek en Donk, *History of the Peace Movement in the Netherlands*, (The Hague, 1915), p 22.

¹⁰⁰ Nils Ørvik, *The Decline of Neutrality 1914-1941*, 2nd edition, (Frank Cass and Co, London, 1971).

¹⁰¹ Maartje M. Abbenhuis, *The Art of Staying Neutral – The Netherlands in the First World War, 1914-1918*, (Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, 2006).

and Germany defended it, could Swiss opinion remain both neutral and united in the face of an event that was like a mirror image of its own worst fears? Did the First World War create two Switzerlands? Georges Rigassi was the Swiss francophone editor of the national press agency based in germanophone Basel, but he was also a prominent writer and journalist for one of the biggest selling francophone newspapers in Switzerland – the *Gazette de Lausanne*. He was one of the many citizens who were concerned with apparently opposed opposing reactions to the outbreak of the war. His question “are there two Switzerlands?”, published on October 1914¹⁰² in a front page article of one of the most popular Swiss newspapers, appeared to have been rhetorical. His article which accompanied his question described recent division within public opinion which could be defined linguistically, between the germanophone and francophone communities in Switzerland. The *röstigraben* as it was known among the germanophone populace or *le fossé*¹⁰³ as it was known among their francophone counterparts threatened, according to Rigassi, both Swiss “National harmony”¹⁰⁴ and Switzerland’s “good reputation”¹⁰⁵, which was deemed vital to Swiss neutral defence. This thesis seeks to examine how the war affected the two main language communities in Switzerland. Did the Great War create two Switzerlands as Rigassi described? Or did Swiss public reaction, exemplified in its humanitarian action during the war, indicate unified Swiss reaction? If there was a divided reaction to the war, how significant was it? To what extent was it defined linguistically between the Swiss francophone and germanophone communities? To what extent was division influenced by a reaction to the war or a particular event? Did this constitute a unique war experience? If so, what was the impact of such a divide on the five bastions of Swiss independence and defence; Public Consensus, Military and Economic Mobilisation, Swiss Exceptionalism and Neutrality?

i.viii The Historiography of Switzerland and the First World War

British, French, German and American historiography of the Great War has influenced Swiss analysis of the war but has also contributed to the exclusion and confinement of Switzerland as a topic of international research. During the inter-war period, Western discourse tended to view the war in terms of an international political conflict, which offered a small but legitimate space for Switzerland to be studied alongside fellow belligerents, because of its defensive policy of neutrality, its role in pre-war diplomatic negotiations and wartime repatriation. The main focus of Swiss history of the war lay with the Swiss military experience, in particular, military strategy. External military writings, in particular, Liddell Hart’s conclusions regarding the superiority of defence¹⁰⁶, legitimized the success of Swiss military strategy during the war and thus their historical analysis of the war itself. Liddell Hart was a prominent non-Swiss contributor to key Swiss journals like *Allgemeine Schweizerische Militär-Zeitung*, whose former editor had been General Ulrich Wille who had been the head of the Swiss army during

¹⁰² Trans. Are there two Switzerland? Georges Rigassi, *Gazette de Lausanne*, 11 October 1914, p. 1.

¹⁰³ Trans. The Trench.

¹⁰⁴ Trans. National Harmony.

¹⁰⁵ Trans. Good reputation.

¹⁰⁶ Basil Liddell Hart, *The real war, 1914-1918*, Faber & Faber, London, 1930.
A history of the World War 1914-1918, Faber & Faber, London, 1934.

the First World War. Similar to the “first historiographical configuration” defined by Jay Winter and Antoine Prost¹⁰⁷, Swiss historiography of the war began with its key actors’ retrospective analysis of the war. For example, Wille’s official report to the government on the military’s experience of the war was published in 1920 and was one of the first accounts of the Swiss wartime experience.¹⁰⁸ The publication and wide circulation of General Wille’s account emphasised the prominence of military experience of the war, within Swiss discourse. This discourse was influenced by historiographic trends of belligerent national history of the 1920’s and 30’s. This initial Swiss discourse offered an early example of a tendency, within the military sphere, which viewed the Swiss experience of the war as a kind of proxy experience, similar to that of a belligerent state.

Yet, despite the focus on military experience, in comparison to the overall context of Swiss historiography of the war, this initial period of the 1920’s was remarkably diverse. Jacob Ruchti’s account of the Swiss experience of the war was unique in its style of analysis which incorporated political, economic and cultural experience.¹⁰⁹ For Ruchti, the war stoked rival linguistic allegiance between the two dominant linguistic communities in Switzerland – francophone and germanophone. However, the division indicated by Ruchti was not examined further by other Swiss historians. To a certain extent, the development of Swiss historiography of the war was similar to that of fellow neutral state, the Netherlands. Dutch newspaper editor P.H. Ritter’s account of the Dutch experience of the war, published in 1931,¹¹⁰ was similar to the comprehensive account of Swiss newspaper editor, George Wagnière’s account of the Swiss war experience¹¹¹. Both offered a comprehensive narrative of the key events of the war and alluded to the divisions the war provoked, among general public opinion. However, their accounts did not lead to further analysis and examination by professional historians. Instead, they marked the beginning of the prolonged absence of the war as a theme of research and analysis in both Dutch and Swiss historiography.

During the 1930’s, 1940’s and 50’s, Switzerland was no longer presented in Swiss discourse as an international, diplomatic actor in the war. Any burgeoning cultural or comparative analysis was sidelined in favour of an increased emphasis on national history which particularly implied a strong historical tradition of public unity. The dominance of national history during this period was significantly influenced by the state endorsement of *Geistige Landesverteidigung* or Spiritual Defence.

¹⁰⁷ Jay Winter, Antoine Prost, *The Great War in History – Debates and Controversies, 1914 to the Present*, (Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 7.

¹⁰⁸ Ulrich Wille, *Rapport du général Ulrich Wille à l’assemblée fédérale sur le service actif de 1914 à 1918*, (Neuchâtel, Impr. Attinger Frères, 1920).

¹⁰⁹ Jacob Ruchti, *Geschichte der Schweiz während des Weltkrieges 1914-1919: politisch, wirtschaftlich und kulturell*, (P. Haupt, Bern, 1928), Vol. I.

¹¹⁰ Pierre Henri Ritter, *De Donkere Poort. Een boek, behelzende tal van Persoonlijke Herinneringen van vooraanstaande Mannen, Stemningsbeelden, Indrukken, Beschouwingen, Belangrijke en Onbelangrijke Gebeurtenissen, Verhalen en Anekdoten over Nederland in de jaren 1914-1918.*, D. A. Daamen’s Uitgeversmaatschappij, (The Hague, 1931), Vol. I, p.81.

¹¹¹ Georg Wagnière, *La Suisse et la Grande guerre. Notes et souvenirs*, (Payot & Cie, Lausanne, 1938).

The policy was particularly promoted by the Swiss Social Democrats, especially following their adoption of what was known as the *Richtlinienbewegung* or Movement of Guiding Principles in 1937. The policy gained wider acceptance and the Federal Council further endorsed the policy in 1938, when it created the state subsidised cultural foundation of scholars, writers and intellectuals known as *Pro Helvetia*. The Federal Council's official dispatch, December 1938, explained the role of the cultural and historical organisation, but also highlighted, in its language and argument, the interwoven nature of Swiss civilian and military identity.

While the armed defence of the nation [...] is exclusively a matter of the state – indeed its primary duty- we wish to leave the spiritual defence of the nation primarily in the hands of the citizen. [...] The spiritual forces of the nation should mobilise and deploy themselves in a common defensive front.¹¹²

This exclusive Swiss focus, in effect relegated analysis of the First World War to an external event which, if referred to, served as one among many key events which contextualised the longer national narrative of self-reliance and neutral defence.

Analysis initiated by Ruchti regarding Swiss public allegiance during the First World War was not developed further within Switzerland. For example, in 1940, Swiss historian Peter Aleman analysed the Swiss experience of the war by addressing the issue of linguistic allegiance and the Swiss response to the invasion of fellow neutral Belgium. Though Aleman's analysis was distinctly pro-German in its bias his discussion of linguistic division developed from Ruchti's initial analysis. However, the emphasis on united national history from 1938 onwards, contributed to the fact that Alemann's work was not published in Switzerland but in Buenos Aires in 1940. From the 1940's onwards, Swiss historiography tended to focus on popular national themes. The supposed historical origins of Swiss legends and founding myths presented in Karl Meyer's *Der Ursprung der Eidgenossenschaft* was a typical example of state-funded research during the period.¹¹³ The nationalistic views of right-wing figures like Gonzague de Reynold were easily assimilated into what was, in practice, a nationalist policy by the Swiss government. According to contemporary historian Ulrich Im Hof, this right-wing influence shaped the conservative nationalist tone of Swiss historiography during this period.¹¹⁴ Thus, the First World War could play no significant role in this nationalist narrative other than to endorse Swiss military strategy and the state's foreign policy of neutral defence. There could be no analysis examining public opinion, suggestions of linguistic division and the impact of developing linguistic identity.

¹¹² Bundesbibliothek, Bern, 90/Bd. 2/1938, *Botschaft des Bundesrates über die Organisation und die Aufgabe der schweizerischen Kulturwahrung und Kulturwerbung vom 9 December 1938*, pp. 985-1053.

¹¹³ Trans. Origins of the Confederation. Karl Meyer, *Der Ursprung der Eidgenossenschaft*, *Geschichtsforschenden Gesellschaft der Schweiz*, (A. G. Gebr. Leemann & Co, Zurich 1941).

¹¹⁴ Ulrich Im Hof, "Von den Chroniken der alten Eidgenossenschaft bis zur neuen "Geschichte der Schweiz – und der Schweizer"", *Geschichte der Schweiz und der Schweizer* (4 ed.) (Schwabe, 2006), p.20.

The development of Western First World War discourse of the 1960's moved towards analysis of war experience. The soldier's experience and veteran's recollection of the war became the focus of analysis written particularly by non-professional historians, of which *Vie et mort des français 1914-1918* was a good example.¹¹⁵ However, this development would seem to have further alienated neutral countries from engaging in the dominant trend of international discourse. For example, the neutral Swiss soldier or Belgian civilian non-combatant's experience did not fit within this historiography of the war. Neutral countries' experience of war was side-lined. It would not be until 2001 that crucial aspects of civilian experience the myth of the civilian *franc-tireur* soldier and atrocities inflicted on civilians, would be comprehensively addressed by John Horne and Alan Kramer.

¹¹⁶ Thus Swiss military history remained the dominant type of analysis during 1960's. As a citizen militia army, Swiss military culture and structure was less hierarchical than the armies of the belligerent powers – the division between Swiss commander, civilian and soldier was somewhat blurred and so it could be argued that the distinction between soldiers' experience and that of the high command was not as significant as it was among belligerent armies. However, the main focus of Swiss military history was focussed on the reaction of key military commanders and overall military strategy. The lack of engagement with international discourse isolated Swiss historiography and inflated the role of military discourse. Analysis of the Swiss citizen soldier's experience, mobilised for combat that would never occur, has not been addressed. But is Swiss experience of the war best defined by the experience of its citizen soldiers?

The revised constitution of 1874 brought increased centralisation and strengthened the Federal army which included the military service of every able bodied male citizen. This meant that on the eve of the war, potentially 700,000 Swiss men could be mobilised – one fifth of the Swiss population, which had already been trained to serve. Thus, the influence of the military, which heavily endorsed the image of national unity, may have undermined the citizen soldier's ability to comment on divisions which arose among the Swiss home front during the war. If a more reflective account of the Swiss experience – the experience of the remaining 2.8 million Swiss citizens and substantial number of foreign citizens, which made up the Swiss home front, were to be presented, one would need to widen the variety of source material to examine the nature of Swiss public opinion both military and civilian. The nature of Swiss public opinion, examined in this thesis, relied on primary evidence sourced from *Bundesbibliothek*, *Militärarchiv* and *Bundesarchiv* in Bern, and the archives of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Geneva, *L'office fédérale de la statistique*, Neuchâtel as well as a variety of regional, cantonal and university archives and private collections located throughout Switzerland. Conflicted public opinion and experience in other neutral states like the Netherlands and Belgium, and the influence of francophone and germanophone public reaction in belligerent states, invite comparison but also help to finally situate the Swiss experience of the war

¹¹⁵ André Ducasse, Jacques Meyer and Gabriel Perreux, *Vie et mort des français 1914-1918*, (Hachette, Paris, 1959).

¹¹⁶ John Horne, Alan Kramer, *German Atrocities, 1914: A History of Denial*, (Yale University Press, New Haven, 2001).

within a wider European context. Therefore, it was deemed necessary, to provide comparative analysis of international, neutral and belligerent, public opinion through the use of archives in Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Turkey, America and Slovakia.¹¹⁷

The political context of the 1960's encouraged a shift towards war-time struggles within the civilian sphere, for example the development of labour movements during the war, as examined by Jürgen Kocka¹¹⁸ and Jay Winter.¹¹⁹ Diversifying the focus of analysis of the war from military combat experience to include ideological and political combat within the civilian and military spheres, offered a space for Swiss experience of the war to be included in this international discourse. Switzerland had offered asylum to many prominent socialists during the war and had its own general strike following the armistice. Yet discussion of these important issues in Switzerland seemed to have depended on the current Swiss political context. The restrictions imposed by the state endorsed policy of *Geistige Landesverteidigung* were relaxed slightly during the 1960's. The Socialist party was allocated two seats on the seven-member Federal Council (the cabinet), as a result of the introduction of the *formule magique* in 1959. The *formule magique* encouraged political diversity, which in turn presented the opportunity to tentatively engage with linguistic identity and affinity. The Swiss labour movement and experience of the war offered a reinterpretation of Swiss national discourse and neutral defence.

The first volume of Edgar Bonjour's nine-volume *Geschichte der schweizerischen Neutralität*¹²⁰, was published in Basel in 1965 and reintroduced the topic of the war after a prolonged absence in Swiss historiography. Bonjour had been given access to the confidential papers of the federal administration. So, volumes IV and V, which related to both the First and Second World Wars, were initially commissioned for internal use by the Swiss foreign office and were not published. Gradually between 1965 and 1976 the nine volumes were made available to the general public. Bonjour's analysis of the First World War, though brief, divided the Swiss experience into two phases: the initial phase of mobilisation and reaction from 1914 to 1916 and the General Strike of 1918. In some ways, these two phases of mobilisation could draw parallels with the pattern of national mobilisation of

¹¹⁷ *Centre des Archives diplomatiques*, La Courneuve and *BDIC (Bibliothèque de Documentation Internationale Contemporaine)*, Paris, the *Centre de documentation historique de la Légion étrangère*, Aubagne, France, the *Politischen Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes* in Berlin and *Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv* in Freiburg, Germany, the *Archives générales du Royaume*, *Archives générales du Palais Royal*, and Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Brussels, the *Nationaal Archief*, The Hague and Utrecht, *Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivleri (BOA)* Istanbul, *National Archives and Records Administration (NARA)*, Washington, *Slovenská národná knižnica (Slovak National Library)*, Martin, Slovakia.

¹¹⁸ Jürgen Kocka, *Klassengesellschaft im Krieg Deutsche Sozialgeschichte 1914- 1918*, (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen, 1973).

¹¹⁹ Jay Winter, *Socialism and the challenge of war. Ideas and politics in Britain 1912-18*, (Routledge & Kegan Paul Books, 1974).

¹²⁰ Edgar Bonjour, *Geschichte der schweizerischen Neutralität- Vier Jahrhunderte eidgenössischer Aussenpolitik* Basel, 1965–1976), Vol. 9.

belligerent societies like Germany, Britain and France, as defined by John Horne in recent work.¹²¹ Bonjour's work paralleled developments in Dutch historiography of the war, in particular, C. Smit's analysis of the Dutch experience published between 1971 and 1973.¹²² Bonjour was one of the few Swiss historians to acknowledge a division within Swiss public opinion. As was the case with Smit's analysis of political divisions in the Dutch experience, Swiss divisions and allegiance were analysed and determined by Bonjour almost exclusively from diplomatic and Swiss political sources. Thus, according to Bonjour, political allegiance was delineated along anti-British and pro-German lines, the extent of which was greatly exaggerated, according to Bonjour, by the British military attaché reports.¹²³ However, there was little analysis of such allegiances in the public sphere, which would have included the allegiance of francophone public opinion.

Increased public support for the Socialist party during the 1960's and 1970's, despite the conservative rhetoric of the federal administration, influenced the increased interest in the development of Swiss socialist and labour movement, of which the Swiss general strike of 1918 was simply a key event. Initial Swiss analysis in the 1970's tended to side-line the role of the Swiss citizen in the development of their labour movement and the Swiss general strike. Alfred Erich Senn¹²⁴ and the socialist historian Willi Gautschi, for example, over-emphasised the role of Lenin in the Swiss labour movement.¹²⁵ Gautschi concluded that the "bourgeois notion" of national unity during the war remained because the Swiss labour movement and general strike were instigated by foreign forces.¹²⁶ However, later analysis during the 1980's, following the creation of the Swiss *L'association pour l'étude de l'histoire du mouvement ouvrier* in 1984 and creation of social history schools at the Universities of Geneva and Zurich, moved away from the war as the focus of analysis and chose instead to establish the pre- and post-war narrative of the Swiss labour movement. Analysis by Albert Tanner offered a deeper social analysis which showed that Switzerland's labour movement had a strong pre-war history and often, in the case of Robert Grimm, operated independently of outside ideological trends and influence.¹²⁷ Thus, the focus on the labour movement displaced the interest in the First World War, while leaving unexplored a newer social history of the conflict in terms of civilian mobilisation, war cultures and society at war.

¹²¹ John Horne (ed.), *State, society, and mobilization in Europe during the First World War*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997), p. 5.

¹²² C. Smit, *Nederland in de Eerste Wereldoorlog (1899-1919)*, (Wolters Noordhoff, Groningen, 1971-1973), Vol. I, II & III.

¹²³ Edgar Bonjour, *Histoire de la neutralité suisse*, (La Baconnière, Neuchâtel, 1979), Vol. IV, p. 310.

¹²⁴ Though an American citizen, Senn was of Swiss origin. Alfred Erich Senn, *The Russian Revolution in Switzerland 1914-1917*, (University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1971).

¹²⁵ Willi Gautschi, *Der Landesstreik 1918*, (Benziger, Zürich, Einsiedeln, Köln, 1968); *Lenin als Emigrant in der Schweiz*, (Benziger, Zürich, Köln, 1973).

¹²⁶ Gautschi, *Lenin*, 1973.

¹²⁷ Albert Tanner, *Arbeitsame Patrioten – wohlständige Damen. Bürgertum und Bürgerlichkeit in der Schweiz 1830-1914*, (Orell Füssli, Zürich, 1995).

Economic analysis, prominent in the 1980's and 90's, emerged from analysis of the Labour movement and the development of social history a decade earlier. This offered an opportunity for Swiss historiography to engage with wider trends of historiography. As president and author of the reports of the *Independent Commission of Experts* in 1996, economic historian Jean-Francois Bergier was a pivotal figure in Swiss historiography. Published in 1984, his *Histoire économique de la Suisse*¹²⁸ offered a fresh perspective on Swiss history and thus the Swiss experience of the First World War. However, the result was similar to that of Swiss social history of the 1970's. Within the typically broad timeframe analysed, the First World War was a key event but not the central focus. Western and Swiss economic history of the war tended to focus on the national war economy but this displaced or indeed ignored the significant role played by international trade during the war. For Charles Maier¹²⁹ the allies retained commanding control of the global economy, but for Switzerland the war transformed its economy. For the war provided the neutral economies of Switzerland and the Netherlands with a more transformative, purposeful and prosperous legacy, as the instability of surrounding belligerent economies provided opportunities to be exploited in terms of foreign direct investment and global economic trade. In the particular case of Switzerland, Chapter three of this thesis seeks to examine to what extent global trade was a significant factor in maintaining the neutral war economy and asks whether this trade endorsed the cultural capital of Swiss neutrality abroad? However, as Soutou's research showed,¹³⁰ analysis of global trade and the wartime economy requires a comparative perspective, which the Netherlands will provide in this thesis.

i.ix Public Opinion

From the 1990's onwards, the issue of consent has come to particularly define francophone academic debate on the First World War. The different approaches of both sides of this debate seem to be driven by the same aim - to bridge the historiographic gap between the wartime experience of the military and the home front. For Jean-Jacques Becker, Annette Becker and Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, the issue of *consentement patriotique* was a key factor in explaining the way in which the general public accepted the outbreak of the war.¹³¹ Though neutral, the Swiss public were mobilised and officially unified in their allegiance and so aspects of the French debate regarding consent may help to explain the perception of Swiss national unity and adherence to military neutrality. Switzerland's long tradition of democracy and universal male suffrage offered the necessary conditions for the depiction of a Habermasian public sphere in which politics, economics and conceptualisation of the nation intersected. However, as outlined in Habermas's definition of the

¹²⁸ Trans. Economic History of Switzerland.

¹²⁹ Charles Maier, *Recasting bourgeois Europe: stabilization in France, Germany, and Italy in the decade after World War I*, (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1975).

¹³⁰ Georges-Henri Soutou, *L'Or et le sang. Les buts de guerre économiques de la Première Guerre Mondiale*, (Fayard, Paris, 1989).

¹³¹ Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau & Annette Becker, *14-18, retrouver la guerre*, (Gallimard, Paris, 2000).

public sphere¹³², this strong democratic tradition did not exclude the possibility that Swiss public opinion could have been shaped and indeed controlled by certain élites. Therefore it is appropriate to examine the nature of consent among Swiss public opinion. However, as Frédéric Rousseau and Rémy Cazals argue in the case of French public opinion, this interaction between the state and the public, which presented itself in the case of military mobilisation in the form of discipline, camaraderie, patriotism, was actually constructed by obedience.¹³³ As the war progressed and the likelihood of invasion faded in the initial phase of mobilisation - why then did the Swiss public consent to intense and prolonged military mobilisation despite the financial and emotional hardships endured at home? Why had the pre-war promise of electoral reform stalled, despite increased support for alternative political manifestos during the war? Given the lack of public support for Swiss external engagement, as proposed by Swiss President Hoffmann, or lack of public calls for Switzerland to implement its pre-war role as neutral arbitrator, why did the Swiss public accept its humanitarian role so readily despite the strain on public resources? Applying aspects of francophone analysis offers insight in the case of Swiss public opinion but also alludes to the same fundamental problem of Becker, Becker and Audoin-Rouzeau's thesis. For Rousseau and Cazals, the *l'Historial*¹³⁴ argument presupposes the transnational universality of patriotic consent. Thus, the same question must be asked of Swiss public opinion. If patriotic consent was an issue for the Swiss public, did it transcend the deep traditional cantonal allegiance and developing linguistic division during the war? For this, Herbert Blumer's theory of collective behaviour in assessing public opinion proved more useful than Habermas' theory of the public sphere. It defines a grouping, of which the Swiss linguistic communities are a prime example, by their discussion of a particular topic at any one time.¹³⁵ While the issue of consent could potentially bridge the gap between neutral and belligerent history of the wartime experience, most analysis surrounding the issue of consent has hitherto ignored the role of the economy – could the wartime economy, both neutral and belligerent, have exerted a significant coercive influence on public opinion and public consent? An accurate assessment of the reaction of the Swiss population depends on the analysis of a broad range of social groups and a variety of topics. No matter how important, no single issue (such as the newspaper reaction to the invasion of Belgium) would suffice to do justice to the myriad of voices and factors that constitute public opinion.

i.x Conclusion:

¹³² Jürgen Habermas, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit. Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft*, (Luchterhand, Neuwied, 1962).

¹³³ Frédéric Rousseau, *La Guerre censurée: une histoire des combattants européens de 14-18*, (Seuil, Paris, 1999); Rémy Cazals & Frédéric Rousseau, *14-18: le cri d'une génération*, (Éditions Privat, Toulouse, 2001). Frédéric Rousseau, *L'Affaire Norton Cru*, (Seuil, Paris, 2003).

¹³⁴ *l'Historial de la Grande Guerre*, Péronne.

¹³⁵ Herbert Blumer, "Collective Behavior" in A. M. Lee (ed.) *New Outline of the Principles of Sociology*, New York: Barnes & Noble. (1951), pp. 166–222.

Only one Swiss historian, Pierre du Bois de Dunilac, has analysed the period through the prism of the Swiss linguistic divide.¹³⁶ Before his untimely death in 2007 du Bois, highlighted the need for research in this area which, according to him, had become a taboo in Swiss public discourse:

I have always been struck by the (self) censorship, conscious or unconscious which hampers the discussion of topics deemed scabrous. The relations between the germanophone, francophone and italophone Swiss are one of these (topics).¹³⁷

For Jean-Francois Bergier, the lack of analysis of the First World War had led to the “narrow focus on 1933-1945” within his own ICE (Independent Commission of Experts) report into matters, which according to Bergier, were “embedded in a longer period of time which had begun with Swiss reaction to the First World War.”¹³⁸ The dearth of analysis or *(auto) censures* which Du Bois referred to, regarding a possible Swiss linguistic divide or *Röstigraben/fossé*, could have been due in part to the interference of *Geistige Landesverteidigung*. Pro Helvetia was entrusted with the state sanctioned role to safeguard and promote “Swiss spiritual values” within the media, certain institutions and academic scholarship. Swiss unity or a perception thereof was one of these key values. Therefore within this restricted context, it would have been unlikely that either the state or prominent academic institutions would have encouraged research in the area of public division. While there has been sparse analysis of Switzerland during the First World War internationally, recent scholarship tended to acknowledge the prevalence of a Swiss linguistic divide. According to Jean-Jacques Becker’s account of war aims and neutrality during the First World War, “Switzerland experienced the most extreme internal tensions in its history between its German-speaking population, which supported the Central Powers, and its French-speaking populace which favoured a French victory.”¹³⁹ Yet official Swiss political and military sources suggest that the Swiss experience of the war was officially mediated to the general Swiss public as a potentially transformative event, which threatened the very existence of the Swiss nation itself. In many ways this assessment of the war was strikingly similar to the existential threat that belligerent peoples feared. Given the parallels between belligerent and neutral Swiss military and economic mobilisation and the consolidation of the home front and political truce, could it be said that the Swiss war experience was not that of a neutral aloof state but in fact an experience of a war by proxy? August 1914, at the key defensive outpost of the Swiss fortress of St. Maurice, Colonel Fama addressed the assembled Swiss citizen troops. The existential interpretation of the war’s impact, the invoking of ancestral strife and triumph, the nationalistic motifs of blood,

¹³⁶ Pierre du Bois, *Union et Division des Suisses – Les relations entre Alémaniques, Romands et Tessinois aux XIXe et XXe Siècles*, (Éditions de l’aire historique, Lausanne, 1983).

¹³⁷ “J’ai toujours été frappé par les *(auto) censures* conscientes ou inconscientes qui entravent la discussion de thèmes qui passent pour scabreux. Les relations entre Alémaniques, Romands et Tessinois est de ceux-là.” Ibid. p. 7.

¹³⁸ Bergier, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 1 June 2002.

¹³⁹ Jean-Jacques Becker, “War Aims and Neutrality”, in John Horne (ed.), *A Companion to World War I*, (Wiley-Blackwell, Oxford, 2010), p. 205.

kinship and sacrifice were remarkably similar to the speeches given by the commanders of the belligerent powers during that same first week of August 1914.

The current situation surrounding our country is very grave. For us it may have to do with remaining Swiss. [...] Consider when you raise three fingers to heaven in the manner of our glorious ancestors, the importance of the promise you are about to make, consider the family you will perhaps leave behind in difficult circumstance in order to save them from a situation even worse – the violation of our territory. [...] Finally, consider that there is something worse than death – Dishonour! [...] The continuation of Swiss existence depends on every one of us. Once again, I am counting on you all.¹⁴⁰

Colonel Fama, Fortress of St. Maurice, August 1914

¹⁴⁰La situation actuelle est excessivement grave autour de notre pays. Pour nous il s'agit peut-être de rester Suisses. [...] Songez lorsqu'à l'exemple de nos glorieux ancêtres, vous lèverez les trois doigts au Ciel, à l'importance de la promesse que vous allez prendre ; songez à la famille que vous laissez dans une situation difficile peut-être, pour la sauver d'une situation encore plus mauvaise qui résulterait certainement d'une violation de notre territoire ; [...] songez enfin qu'il est quelque chose de pire que la mort - c'est le déshonneur ! [...] Il dépend de chacun de nous que la Suisse continue son existence. Encore une fois, je compte sur vous, Colonel Fama, Commandant of the St. Maurice Garrison published in the *Gazette de Lausanne* 8 August 1914, p. 2.

CHAPTER ONE: Divided Neutrality - Neutrality with röstigraben¹?

On general cultural grounds as well as political, I believe that a German victory is desirable.²

Karl Scheurer, July 1914.

Karl Scheurer was a germanophone Radical Party representative of the canton of Bern in the *Nationalrat*, the lower house of the Swiss Federal Assembly. Though a prominent politician of the dominant political party in Switzerland, his diary entry at the outbreak of the war did not subscribe to his government's policy of neutrality. As head of the military department of the canton of Bern, his partisan comments would appear to have been at odds with the Swiss military's strategy of neutral defence. Scheurer's decision to view German victory as desirable was founded not exclusively on political grounds, which could have perhaps been pragmatic, given Swiss-German trade links. Instead, the first reason Scheurer gave for favouring a German victory was "general cultural grounds." What did Scheurer mean by "general cultural grounds"? Were these simply the private comments of a political/military figure gone rogue or could Scheurer's private allegiance have been shared by members of the general public too? By describing this cultural affinity as "general" did Scheurer's comment imply that a wider, generally known, linguistically defined allegiance existed in Switzerland in 1914? These are questions which are fundamental to this thesis – Was there a linguistically defined division among the Swiss public's reaction to the war? However, in order to answer this question, it is necessary first to assess the extent of Swiss, French and German allegiance expressed during the pre-war period.

1.1 Pre-war Allegiances

For the Swiss, the Entente Cordiale not only heralded the end of British aloofness from Europe in 1904, but the resurgence of French military might. As a neutral buffer zone between two strong states, Switzerland favoured a balance of power between France and Germany. The Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 threatened that equilibrium. Senior officials in the Swiss military expressed concern that, as a result of the formation of the Triple Entente, France would be the more likely aggressor in any impending Franco-German conflict.³ It was a perception shared not only by the Swiss high command but also by senior Swiss politicians. In 1907, the Swiss Federal Council, in conjunction with the Swiss Chief of General Staff Theophil Sprecher von Bernegg, prepared a list of negotiation points called *Punktationen* with the German army detailing the conditions of a defensive

¹The term Röstigraben (Rösti - A germanophone Swiss dish of shredded fried potato. Graben – trench) originated during the First World War. It is used today to describe the dividing line between germanophone and francophone Switzerland.

²Bundesrat Karl Scheurer, in Hermann Böschstein (ed.), *Tagebücher 1914-1929*, (Stämpfli Verlag, Bern, 1971), p. 50.

³Bruno Lezzi, 1914. *General Ulrich Wille und die Kriegsbereitschaft der schweizerischen Armee*. Ph.D. Thesis, Osnabrück University, (1975); Hans Rudolf Fuhrer, *Die Schweizer Armee im Ersten Weltkrieg -Bedrohung, Landesverteidigung und Landesbefestigung*, (Verlag NZZ, Zürich, 2001).

alliance in the case of a French invasion.⁴ However, Sprecher von Bernegg stressed that such an alliance would only exist if France invaded Switzerland; in the case of a Franco-German war, Switzerland would maintain strict neutrality and would mobilise its forces against both aggressors. The Swiss reaction to external alliances revealed an intriguing paradox which contradicted the argument that such alliances were viewed as defensive “blocking coalitions”⁵. In fact when one compares the Swiss reaction with that of a fellow neutral state like the Netherlands, both states viewed such alliances as a threat. For example, in response to the strengthening alliances of the larger states which surrounded the Netherlands, Queen Wilhelmina declared in a public address to the Dutch nation, “The Netherlands must arm itself against England, France and Germany.”⁶ However, it was not military mobilisation that would secure Swiss and Dutch neutrality and independence. According to Maartje Abbenhuis, it was the balance of trade and the great powers’ perception of the advantages of Dutch and Swiss neutrality, which would prove “vital to [their] continued feasibility.”⁷

In Switzerland, relations with both France and Germany were cultivated by pre-war trade and migration. Forty per cent of all food consumed was imported.⁸ A third of all imports in 1913 came from Germany, while approximately one fifth of total imports, in the same year, came from France. Of the two remaining states that bordered Switzerland, Austria-Hungary and Italy each only accounted for a tenth of total imports.⁹ The extent of Swiss trade and interaction with France and Germany dwarfed that of Italy and Austria-Hungary. 70% of all foreign commercial visits to Switzerland in 1913 came from Germany while just 3% came from Austria-Hungary.¹⁰ 41% of all registered accident insurance societies operating within Switzerland were German, while just 6% were Italian.¹¹ John Maynard Keynes’ analysis succinctly outlined the extent of pre-war economic interdependence - Germany was Switzerland’s “best customer, [...] and largest source of supply.”¹² The strength of German trade with Switzerland, therefore, could have encouraged Swiss support for Germany in the event of another Franco-German conflict.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Pascal Venier, “The Diplomatic Context, Britain and International Relations in 1904”, in Brian W. Blouet (ed.), *Global geostrategy: Mackinder and the defence of the West*, (Frank Cass, London and New York, 2005), p. 56.

⁶ Queen Wilhelmina, April 1905, in C.M. Schulten, “The Netherlands and its Army (1900-1940)”, *Revue Internationale d'Histoire Militaire*. 58, (Commissiion Internationale d'histoire militaire, Hague, 1984), p. 73.

⁷ Maartje Abbenhuis, *The Art of Staying Neutral: The Netherlands in the First World War, 1914-1918*, (Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, 2006), p. 25.

⁸ Bundesarchiv, Bern, *Statistisches Jahrbuch der Schweiz 1914*, (Bundesamt für Statistik (BFS), 1915), p.102.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid. XI. Commerce, assurances, banques, prix, 8. Statistique des voyageurs de commerce en Suisse, 1912-1913, p. 149

¹¹ Ibid. XI.B Versicherung, 4. Versicherung gegen Unfall und Wasserleitungsschaden, Transport und Ruckversicherung, 1913, p. 160.

¹² John Maynard Keynes, *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*, (Indo-European Publishing, Los Angeles, 2012), p. 7.

Between 1880 and 1910 the percentage of foreigners residing in Switzerland doubled.¹³ At 40.4% of the canton's population, pre-war Geneva had the highest proportion of foreign residents.¹⁴ Foreign migration to germanophone and italophone cantons was also quite high. Before 1914, the percentage of foreign residents rose to almost a third in border towns like Basel and Lugano. Before the war, 40% of all foreigners in Switzerland were from Germany. Italian migrants were the second biggest community at 39%. The number of French citizens residing in Switzerland was comparably lower at 11%. Just 7% of foreigners in Switzerland were Austrian, indicating a comparable lack of interaction between Switzerland and Austria compared with that of Switzerland and its other germanophone neighbour - Germany.¹⁵ Immigration to germanophone and italophone cantons was distinct from migration to francophone cantons, as it tended to be more homogenous in terms of origin and language. For example, in 1913, one in three citizens in Basel was German. By contrast, Geneva's pre-war foreign population was more diverse and not exclusively francophone.¹⁶ The strength of migration between Germany and Switzerland could also have potentially encouraged support among Swiss citizens for a German victory as the strength of German migration to Switzerland had the potential to exert a destabilising effect on Swiss neutrality and indeed Swiss economic stability in the event of a Franco-German conflict.

Before 1914, the biggest bank in Switzerland was based in Basel, the second largest germanophone city. *Schweizerische Bank Verein's* share capital, according to Hans Bauer,¹⁷ was 82 million CHF.¹⁸ To put this figure into perspective, the federal government's entire budget for 1912 was 112 million CHF.¹⁹ The beginning of lending to Germany and German customers before the war had the potential to expand during another Franco-German conflict and thus exacerbate what was already a serious regional concentration of risk, in relation to germanophone Swiss banking. According to Youssef Cassis, "although smaller in size, Geneva was in many respects a more cosmopolitan financial centre than Zurich, largely on account of its [...] links with France."²⁰ This was reflective of the cultural diversity of its foreign population. In France, articles published in *L'économiste français* confirmed the francophone public's mutual awareness of the relationship. In 1913, it advertised Switzerland as a

¹³ Bundesamt für Statistik, "Neuchâtel, Foreigners from the European continental area according to country of origin 1900-2003", in *Ausländerinnen und Ausländer in der Schweiz*, Swiss Federal Statistics Office, 2004.

¹⁴ Schweizerisches Sozialarchiv, Zürich, *Kleine Geschichte der Einwanderung in der Schweiz in 20. Jahrhundert*, (Zürich, 2003).

Willi Wottreng, *Ein einzig Volk von Immigranten. Die Geschichte der Einwanderung in die Schweiz*. (Orell Füssli Verlag, Zürich, 2001).

¹⁵ Bundesamt für Statistik, Neuchâtel, *Ausländerinnen und Ausländer in der Schweiz*, (2004). p. 93.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Hans Bauer, *Société de Banque Suisse (1872-1972)*, (Société de Banque Suisse, Basel, 1972)

¹⁸ CHF (Confoederatio Helvetica Franc): Swiss Franc, the currency and legal tender of Switzerland. Ibid.

¹⁹ Hugo Bänziger, *Die Entwicklung der Bankenaufsicht in der Schweiz seit dem 19. Jahrhundert*, (Haupt, Berne/Stuttgart, 1986), p. 30.

²⁰ Ibid. p. 128.

safe place to invest.²¹ One particular article rather ominously declared, "In the case of a large European war, Switzerland is a country where neutrality has more of a chance to be effectively respected than Belgium."²² Geneva was also part of the Parisian merchant bank's *Paribas system*. Indeed, the general manager of *Paribas* from 1908 to 1918 was a Genevan citizen named Albert Turrettini. According to Cassis, Geneva rather than Zurich or Basel, profited most from the Latin Monetary Union between France, Belgium, Switzerland and Italy.²³ In the event of a Franco-German conflict, francophone Swiss banking could potentially have gained not just from a French victory but an Entente victory. The considerably more cosmopolitan nature of francophone banking and finance, based in Geneva, appeared as a topic of doctoral research at the University of Zurich in the run up to the outbreak of the war. However, it did not feature in more widespread germanophone debate.²⁴ While a dangerous germanophone concentration of risk was a flaw unique within Switzerland to germanophone banking, the pre-war banking industry overall was not risk averse. Between 1910 to 1913, a total of 45 local and regional banks suffered losses of 112million CHF.²⁵ Nevertheless, on the eve of the war, a German victory was seen as preferable for the germanophone banking industry; in the case of Basel, in particular, it was crucial.

The Kaiser's visit to Switzerland in 1912 was welcomed unanimously by the Swiss public. Both the francophone and germanophone press during September praised "the great ruler of the powerful German Reich"²⁶ (germanophone) and the "good relations with the great empire"²⁷ (francophone). The Swiss press reaction, in general, exhibited a certain affinity with and allegiance to Germany, in their coverage of the Kaiser's visit. However, the germanophone press were more effusive in their welcome of the Kaiser than the francophone press:

With reverence and warmth our people greet the great ruler of the powerful German Reich. [...] it is our sincere wish that our guests will leave with nothing but positive impressions and memories.²⁸

While there may have been different degrees of affinity expressed within both main linguistic communities, such subtlety did not constitute a division between opposing germanophone and

²¹ *L'économiste français*, 14 June 1913.

²² "La Suisse est un pays dont la neutralité a bien plus de chance d'être effectivement respectée que la Belgique, en cas de grande guerre européenne." Ibid.

²³ Youssef Cassis, *Capitals of Capital: The Rise and Fall of International Financial Centres, 1780-2009*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2010).

²⁴ A. Mayor, *Le développement des bourses en valeurs mobilières de la Suisse française*, (Ph.D. thesis, University of Zurich, 1914), p. 49.

²⁵ Bänziger, *Die Entwicklung der Bankenaufsicht* p. 30.

²⁶ "Den großen Beherrscher des mächtigen deutschen Reiches" *NZZ*, 3 September 1912. (Morgenblatt)

²⁷ "Bonnes relations avec le grand empire." *Journal de Genève* 3 September 1912, p. 1.

²⁸ "Mit Ehrfurcht und warmer Sympathie begrüßt unser Volk den großen Beherrscher des mächtigen deutschen Reiches. Es ist unser aller herzlicher Wunsch, [...] bei unserm Gaste keine andern als erfreuliche Eindrücke und Erinnerungen zurücklassen mögen." *NZZ*, 3 September 1912.

francophone opinion before the war. Intriguingly, there were suggestions of the fear that this initial difference had the potential to metamorphose into division. The editor of the *Journal de Genève*, Georg Wagnière, described a growing fear among the francophone community that the pan-German movement could threaten national cohesion in Switzerland. What concerned Wagnière in particular was that pan-German affinity could exclude the francophone community from its “special role” in German-Swiss relations.²⁹ Among the pre-war francophone community, which was predominantly Protestant, this “special role” was doctrinally determined. According to the francophone press, the Swiss francophone community had “established a link between the German Reformation and the French Reformation”.³⁰ For the editor of one of the most renowned newspapers in the country, religious affinity outweighed linguistic allegiance. This was a prime example of how, in the pre-war period, the traditional multiplicity of allegiances (primarily linguistic and religious) in Switzerland prevented the development of a clear cut division within public opinion.

A pre-war political allegiance between Switzerland and fellow neutral states did appear in the Swiss press but generally was not a feature of public debate. Expression of such affinity was more a topic of pre-war diplomatic correspondence. For example, Swiss and French diplomatic correspondence before the war suggested that an affinity between Switzerland and Belgium had the potential to develop. Correspondence between the French ambassador in Bern and French Prime Minister René Viviani, 8 July 1914, discussed Swiss-Belgian affinity among the national Swiss press, which was based on both countries’ shared neutrality: “The Swiss press has particularly insisted on the mutual interest which would bring these two peoples, living the same international life, together”.³¹ It was perhaps revealing of the myopic focus of the germanophone Swiss – German interaction, that such discussion of a Swiss-Belgian affinity was not considered a topic of interest within German and Swiss diplomatic correspondence. The diversity of francophone trade and finance, religious allegiance and more cosmopolitan immigration to francophone cantons, encouraged a more outward looking stance, which appeared to distinguish francophone interaction from germanophone Swiss interaction with the world which surrounded it. While the expression of such difference was nuanced during the pre-war period, the outbreak of World War and the nationalistic, ethnic divisions it provoked, had the potential to turn nuanced difference into division.

1.2 The Outbreak of the War

The Swiss press reported on the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand but through July, the assassination and its aftermath, were generally confined to the “Oriental Affairs” section of the

²⁹ “Part spéciale”

³⁰ “Établi le lien entre la Réforme allemande et la Réforme française”, *Journal de Genève*, 3 September 1912, p.1.

³¹ “La presse Suisse a particulièrement insisté sur le grand intérêt qu’auraient à se rapprocher deux peuples qui vivent de la même vie internationale”, Archives diplomatiques de la Courneuve, Paris, *Politique étrangère en relation de la Suisse rapports avec l’Allemagne 1897-1917*, Swiss ambassador in Bern to Prime Minister Viviani 8 July 1914, No. 357.

paper.³² Press coverage of the aftermath of the assassination was quite similar to that in Germany.³³ The escalation of tensions between neighbouring powers, during July 1914, did not dominate reporting in Switzerland. The *Journal de Genève* referred to the assassination, 12 July 1914, as the “drama of Sarajevo”.³⁴ The article featured on page four, among announcements of school holidays, celebrations of Bastille Day among French expatriates residing in Switzerland, discounted rail fares from Geneva to Paris, in lieu of the holiday, the type of car used by the Belgian royal family who were holidaying in Bern and the triumph of Genevan wine at the national food and drink expo.³⁵ Reports indicated that Swiss officials during the month were preoccupied with the celebration of the centenary of Geneva’s entry to the confederation. The local press published the Swiss President’s letters, praising celebrations of the Swiss “worship of their fatherland”, which had taken place among Swiss expatriates abroad.³⁶ A three day advertisement campaign by Kodak, with the tag line “Holidays without a Kodak are missed holidays” seemed to sum up the general mind-set – the build-up to the celebration of the Swiss national holiday on 1 August.³⁷ This holiday mood would appear to have been characteristic of other neutral states as well. The Belgian Royal family continued to holiday in Switzerland, following the assassination³⁸ and the Commander in Chief of the Dutch army, General Snijders, was given three weeks of holiday leave, by the Dutch government, which he took during July.³⁹

Though Swiss diplomatic and press reports to the Bosnian Crisis increased in number, there was an overriding sense of calm, regarding France’s and Germany’s reactions during the final days of July 1914. Diplomatic correspondence between the Swiss minister in Paris, Charles Lardy, and Swiss President Hoffmann was primarily concerned with the French economy. While Minister Lardy viewed French president Viviani’s visit to St. Petersburg as dangerously bellicose, looking for support for “prepar[ations] for revenge”⁴⁰, he was not censored and reported that according to “the opinion of the majority of diplomats, the general situation in Europe [was] not worrying”.⁴¹ The *Journal de Genève* reported the atmosphere of “calm in Paris” and the “calm attitude in Berlin” where “Germany is

³² Les Affaires d’Orient, *Journal de Genève*, 18 July 1914, p 1.

³³ Jeffrey Verhey, *Spirit of 1914: Militarism, Myth and Mobilization in Germany*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2000), p. 1.

³⁴ “Drame de Sarajevo”, *Journal de Genève*, 12 July 1914, p. 4.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ “Culte du patrie”, Chronique Locale : Les Fêtes du Centenaire, *Journal de Genève*, 21 July 1914, p. 4.

³⁷ “Des vacances sans un Kodak sont des vacances manquées”, *Journal de Genève*, 24 July 1914, p. 6, 25 July 1914, p. 5, 30 July 1914, p. 6.

³⁸ *Gazette de Lausanne*, 8 July 1914, p 1

³⁹ Instituut voor Militaire Geschiedenis/Koninklijke Landmacht (Institute for Military History/Royal Army), The Hague, IMG/DC 91A/3C, J. Snijders, *Mobilisatie-Herinneringen 1914-1918* no. 16, 6 May 1931.

⁴⁰ “Préparer la revanche” Bundesarchiv, Bern, E2300 Paris, Archiv-Nr. 67 *Le Ministre de Suisse à Paris, Ch. Lardy, au Chef du Département politique, A. Hoffmann*, 12 July 1914.

⁴¹ “Je me rallie donc, [...] à l’opinion de la généralité des diplomates, à savoir que la situation générale européenne n’est pas inquiétante” Ibid.

focusing all its efforts on continuing to maintain an attitude of calmness and moderation".⁴² The Swiss minister in Berlin, de Claparède, joked with the Swiss President about maintaining small talk in the waiting room of the German Foreign Office with the Austro-Hungarian ambassador to Berlin, Count Szögyény, who was "silent as usual".⁴³ Swiss diplomatic correspondence failed to mention that aged 73, Count Szögyény, was in fact partly deaf. However, the reported encounter was revealing as it adds weight to Graydon A. Tunstall's argument that Szögyény may not have been able to fully grasp the details of pre-war negotiations with Germany and may have thus misrepresented the extent of German support for Austro-Hungary.⁴⁴ As the butt of this running joke between Swiss Minister de Claparède and the Swiss president, Szögyény's incompetence would seem to have been more widely recognised, even among neutral diplomats. The casual manner, in which such a topic was included in correspondence, so close to the outbreak of war, was further evidence of the lack of panic.

Swiss diplomats in both France and Germany, though nuanced in the focus of the information they conveyed to the Swiss president, remained calm, almost jocular. However, during the last two days of July, calm turned into quiet resignation before the inevitability of a European war. The focus of Swiss diplomatic and press concern was the mobilisation of Russia.⁴⁵ There was widespread confusion as to what this meant under the terms of the Franco-Russian alliance. According to French diplomatic correspondence during preliminary discussions on the Franco-Russian Military Convention, General Boisdeffre declared "Mobilisation is the declaration of war" to which Tsar Alexander III responded, in 1892, "That's exactly the way I understand it".⁴⁶ On 21 November 1912, Tsar Nicholas II contradicted this when he declared that "the proclamation of mobilisation must not be regarded as an imperial order for the opening of hostilities".⁴⁷ On the afternoon of the 31 July, when Germany had received news of the Russian mobilisation, the Swiss ambassador recorded that he had been told by German Under Secretary of State, Arthur Zimmermann, that the "dice have been cast". According to De Claparède, Zimmermann declared how he had "hoped, up to the very last, that a peaceful way out could have been found."⁴⁸ Both the francophone and germanophone Swiss press portray Germany

⁴² "Le calme à Paris", "attitude calme à Berlin [...] L'Allemagne portera tous ses efforts [...] en continuant à garder une attitude calme et modérée" *Journal de Genève*, 30 July 1914

⁴³ "Schweigsamer als gewöhnlich" Bundesarchiv, Bern, E2001 Archiv-Nr. 733 *de Claparède au Hoffmann*, 31 July 1914.

⁴⁴ Graydon A. Tunstall, Jr, "Austria-Hungary", in Richard F. Hamilton & Holger H. Herwig (eds.), *The Origins of World War I* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003), p. 178.

⁴⁵ Bundesarchiv, Bern, E2001 Archiv-Nr. 733 *Le Ministre de Suisse à Berlin, A. de Claparède, au Chef du Département politique, A. Hoffmann*, 31st July 1914; *Journal de Genève*, 30 & 31 July 1914.

⁴⁶ *Livre jaune : L'Alliance Franco-Russe*, (Paris, 1918), p. 92.

⁴⁷ Gunther Frantz, *Russlands Eintritt in den Weltkrieg: Der Ausbau der russischen Wehrmacht und ihr Einsatz bei Kriegsausbruch*, (Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft für Politik und Geschichte, Berlin, 1924), pp. 234-40.

Luigi Albertini, *The Origins of the War of 1914*, Volume II, (Oxford University Press, Oxford 1965), pp. 579-80.

⁴⁸ "Die Würfel sind gefallen!", "Wir haben bis zuletzt die Hoffnung gehabt, es könnte ein friedlicher Ausweg gefunden werden", Bundesarchiv, Bern, E2001 Archiv-Nr. 733 *Le Ministre de Suisse à Berlin, A. de Claparède, au Chef du Département politique, A. Hoffmann*, 31 July 1914.

as a reasonable actor, demanding clarification from Russia before mobilising its forces. The *Journal de Genève* declared "Germany wants to know: 1. What is the aim of this mobilisation, 2. If this mobilisation is directed against Austria."⁴⁹ According to Charles Lardy reporting from Paris to the Swiss president, he summed up how he and the French authorities viewed Russia's role: "Peace in Europe depends on [the Russian Tzar] and not on [France]."⁵⁰

By 2 August 1914, Swiss and German diplomatic correspondence revealed the extent of Swiss and German affinity which had developed on the eve of the invasion of Belgium. Early in the morning of 2nd August, ambassador de Claparède was summoned to a private meeting with General von Moltke. Von Moltke began by assuring the Swiss minister that "in the coming war, Swiss neutrality will be totally and fully respected."⁵¹ Yet, by 2 of August, Switzerland was most directly implicated in the possibility that either France or Germany or both might violate Swiss neutrality by invading its opponent across the relatively flat lands of the north western hinterland. However, According to von Moltke, the German government and army viewed Switzerland as "a friendly land"; in "these difficult times would gladly ensure that the greatest possible accommodation be given to facilitate the supply of foodstuffs and other supplies for the army."⁵² Following this opening assertion of the Swiss-German special relationship, von Moltke addressed what de Claparède, accurately, perceived to be the main German concern. According to von Moltke, western Switzerland may have been under threat from a French invasion. In his report sent to Swiss president Hoffmann, de Claparède confirmed that reports were circulating in Berlin, regarding the possibility of a French invasion and thus he was cautious of dismissing von Moltke's warning. He thanked the General for the promise of military support, and advised Hoffmann to notify the Swiss high command of his discussion.

As general war broke out, any connection with the "oriental affair" or the "drama of Sarajevo" rapidly disappeared, despite the fact that there was a general awareness among the Swiss public regarding the Balkan crisis', which had been widely covered in the Swiss press. The editor-in-chief of the *Journal de Genève*, had written extensive editorial articles in the same newspaper on the Balkan crisis. "The war,"⁵³ as it was referred to in 1913 was, according to Bonnard, the Balkan people's legitimate struggle for autonomy.⁵⁴ Yet, given Bonnard's knowledge of the context of the assassination of the archduke, it was pertinent that he, along with the majority of the Swiss press, did

⁴⁹ *Journal de Genève*, 31 July 1914.

⁵⁰ Bundesarchiv, Bern, E2001, Archiv-Nr. 719 *Le Ministre de Suisse à Paris, Ch. Lardy, au Chef du Département politique, A. Hoffmann*, 28 July 1914.

⁵¹ "Die deutsche Regierung und die Armee betrachte die Schweiz als ein befreundetes Land und werden auch gerne in dieser schweren Zeit der Schweiz das möglichste Entgegenkommen zuteilwerden lassen, um derselben die Versorgung von Lebensmitteln und sonstigen Bedarfs für die Armee zu erleichtern." Bundesarchiv, Bern, E2001 Archive Nr 733 *Le Ministre de Suisse à Berlin, A. de Claparède au Chef du Département politique, A. Hoffmann*, Berlin 2 August 1914.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ "La guerre", *Journal de Genève*, 10 May 1913, p. 2.

⁵⁴ *Journal de Genève*, 11 July 1913, p. 1.

not refer to the Balkans in the context of this new war. Swiss analysis, during the initial weeks of August 1914, did not describe the outbreak of a world war, or a Balkan war but a “Franco-German conflict”. Though neutral, it could be argued that Switzerland’s reaction to the outbreak of World War was still framed by its reaction to earlier European conflicts and notably by the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71.

Bonnard made this quite explicit as he referred to the Battle of Wissembourg on 4 August 1870 and the beginnings of the Franco-Prussian conflict.⁵⁵ The germanophone counterpart of the *Journal de Genève*, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, referred to the “Franco-German theatre of war”.⁵⁶ Swiss Colonel Feyler was the *Journal de Genève*’s chief correspondent on military affairs. On 8 August 1914, in a front page article he drew comparison with the early battles of the Franco-Prussian war, when he reminded his readers that 6 August was the anniversary of encounters at Wörth/Froeschwiller and Spicheren/Forbach. Given that the Prussian army defeated the French in both battles, Feyler seemed to have been hinting at the possibility of German victory over the French in this new Franco-German war. He alluded to the impulsive and irrational nature of General Karl von Steinmetz’s attack in 1870 in his description of what he described as the impulsive nature of the German invasion of Belgium. By contrast, the Dutch did not draw such direct comparisons with the Franco-Prussian war, except in regard to their own military preparedness. According to Maartje Abbenhuis, “the 1870 [Dutch] mobilisation [was] renowned for its dismal defence failures and its abominable lack of military preparedness.”⁵⁷ Both neutral states’ attempts to relate the outbreak of war to previous wars suggest a “larger process of destabilization”, which extended to the Balkan wars, as defined by David Stevenson.⁵⁸ However, in the Swiss context this wider process of destabilization also included the Franco-Prussian War. While both francophone and germanophone Swiss reaction framed the war from the outbreak as a Franco-German conflict, the Dutch public’s preoccupation with Britain’s role made its initial perception of the war more international.⁵⁹ Each reaction expressed each state’s different interests. For Holland this was trade; as the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs put it, the country was “between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea”.⁶⁰ For the Swiss, however, trade loomed less large than other matters, including possible invasion by either of the main belligerents.

⁵⁵ Albert Bonnard, “Le 4 août”, *Journal de Genève*, 6 August 1914.

⁵⁶ “Deutsch-Französischer Kriegsschauplatz”, *NZZ*, 6 August 1914.

⁵⁷ Abbenhuis, *The Art of Staying Neutral*, p. 75.

⁵⁸ David Stevenson, “Militarization and Diplomacy in Europe before 1914”, *International Security*, Vol. 22, No. 1, Summer, 1997, p. 127; David Stevenson, *Armaments and the coming of War: Europe, 1904-1914* (Oxford University Press, New York, 1996), p. 404.

⁵⁹ Amry Vandenbosch, *Dutch Foreign Policy since 1815: A Study in Small Power Politics*, Martinus Nijhoff, (The Hague, 1959), p. 105; Nigel Ashton & Duco Hellema (eds.) *Unspoken Allies: Anglo-Dutch Relations since 1780*, (Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, 2001).

⁶⁰ Letter from Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs, John Loudon to Dutch Minister in London, Reincke de Marees van Swinderen, 26 November 1915 in C. Smit (ed.), *Bescheiden betreffende de buitenlandsche politiek van Nederland 1848-1919*, (Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague, 1962), p. 482.

1.3 Neutral Trade and Public Confidence

In his private diary, Amsterdam Banker, Jan Lodewijk Pierson, described the outbreak of war as an economic “disaster”, 3 August 1914.⁶¹ Dutch stock values plunged and leading securities plummeted.⁶² The Swiss capital markets, by contrast, remained relatively stable and in some instances rose.⁶³ From the beginning of the war, Swiss investors became “attracted to foreign equivalents of securities that had done well for them domestically” before the war.⁶⁴ This was seen particularly in electrical engineering whose success, Randal Michie argued,

led investors to purchase the securities issued by electric supply utilities operating elsewhere”. Thus, these Swiss stock exchanges became a central market for the securities of many companies generating and supplying electricity in diverse parts of the world.⁶⁵

According to Bauer and Blackman, Swiss citizens never appeared to have lost confidence in the value of their currency.⁶⁶ By contrast, belligerent states, particularly Germany and France experienced widespread currency dumping, as many citizens at the outbreak of the war moved their money to Swiss banks for security but also to avail of the better exchange rate as the Swiss franc increased in value. In fact, the Swiss economy itself both reflected, was influenced by and in turn exerted an influence on public opinion. For example, similar to the public of a warring state, there was a run on Swiss banks as Swiss customers’ initially panicked at the outbreak of the war. Christian Geinitz and Adrian Gregory have highlighted the difficulties of interpreting mass scenes and reaction among public opinion within belligerent countries. The categorisation of what appeared initially to have been public anxiety and panic often obscured “the complexities of [society and] individual responses”.⁶⁷ For Geinitz, in order to determine and accurately gauge war enthusiasm, context is paramount.⁶⁸ The

⁶¹ Gemeentearchief Amsterdam, *Dagboek Jan Lodewijk Pierson*, 155, Inv. Nr. 3, August 1914.

⁶² Abbenhuis, *The Art of Staying Neutral*, p. 65, S. de Meester, “Overzicht van den economischen toestand van Nederland voor en in het begin van den Europeeschen oorlog” in W.A.T. de Meester (ed.), *Gedenkboek van de Europeanen Oorlog in 1914*, (A.W.Sythoff, Leiden, 1914) p. 37, G. Vissering & J. Westerman Holstijn, “The Effect of the War upon Banking and Industry” in H.B. Greven (ed.), *The Netherlands and the World War: Studies in the War History of a Neutral*, Vol. IV, (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1928).

⁶³ Basil Selz, “Capital and Stock Markets 1900-2007”, *Swiss National Bank Historical Time Series*, (Swiss National Bank, Zurich, 2 May 2007), Swiss National Bank, (http://www.snb.ch/en/mmr/reference/histz_kapitalmarkt_book/source), [accessed 15 Sept. 2013].

⁶⁴ Randal C. Michie, *The Global Securities Market: A History*, (Oxford University Press, New York, 2006), p. 64.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Hans Bauer & Warren J. Blackman, *Swiss Banking: An Analytical History*, (Macmillan Press, Basingstoke, 1998) p. 188.

⁶⁷ Adrian Gregory, *The Last Great War. British Society and the First World War*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2008), p. 33-36.

⁶⁸ Christian Geinitz, *Kriegsfurcht und Kampfbereitschaft. Das Augusterlebnis in Freiburg. Eine Studie zum Kriegsbeginn 1914*, (Klartext Verlag, Essen, 1998), p. 411.

Swiss public may have feared the instability that the war might bring, driving the "panic" to withdraw money enmasse. However, other more specific and rational considerations may have been at work.

During the first week of August 1914, approximately 220,000 Swiss men were called up. The general mobilisation exacerbated the panic as mobilised men prepared to go to what was widely described as their "front". Given that these mobilised men were not paid for their service, the women and families left at home required immediate access to hard cash. Lack of political or social female emancipation would have made it difficult for Swiss women to easily withdraw such money from what were undoubtedly their husband's accounts. For women in predominantly rural areas, lack of access to banking facilities required foresight on the part of their men in preparation for their absence. The Swiss National Bank stepped in to prevent a drain on metallic currency, which had the potential to destabilise the Swiss banking sector. A similar solution for the same "panic" was implemented in France. From the 1 August 1914, the French government instructed banks, faced with the prospect of a run, to limit withdrawals from deposit and current accounts.⁶⁹ A day later, 2 August 1914, a similar solution was sought in Switzerland to control the prospect of a Swiss run. Unlike France, however, it was the Swiss national bank and not the government, which instructed Swiss banks that a maximum of 200 francs could be drawn from deposit accounts and 50 francs from savings accounts. Smaller banknotes of 5 and 20 francs were issued and seem to have satisfied public demand for cash payments. The national bank was exempted by the federal council from redeeming its banknotes in silver or gold. While the effect of the Swiss public's financial preparations for mobilisation was contained by the policy of the national bank, their mutual influence upon one another was clear. It was an early indication that maintaining Swiss economic and financial stability would be vital to limiting the effect of the war on public opinion.

1.4 The Invasion of Belgium

In accordance with the Schlieffen Plan, one million German soldiers in five armies would sweep through central and southern Belgium, envelop the left wing of the French armies and ultimately take Paris, while two armies would stave off French invasion from Alsace-Lorraine in the south. On 4 August 1914 Germany attacked neutral Belgium. The German "strike force" sought to take the fortress complex around Liège with a force of 39,000.⁷⁰ The German high command anticipated to be met with a Belgian force for 9,000. Instead, they were met with a Belgian force of 32,000, which included a civic guard.⁷¹ Initially repulsed by Belgian military resistance the German high command conceded the use of heavy artillery in order to reduce the forts. Despite their bravery, the Belgian force at Liège simply could not hold out against the reorganised onslaught of German might and siege

⁶⁹ J. Rivoire, *Le Crédit Lyonnais: Histoire d'une banque*, (Le cherche midi, Paris, 1989), p. 106.

⁷⁰ E.S. Mittler and Sohn, Reichswehrministerium, *Sanitätsbericht über das deutsche Heer (Deutsches Feld- und Besatzungsheer) im Weltkriege, 1914/1918*, vol. 3, 1934-8, John Horne and Alan Kramer, *German Atrocities, 1914: A History of Denial*, (Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2001); John Keegan, *Opening Moves: August 1914*, (Ballantine Books, New York), pp. 8-55.

⁷¹ Horne & Kramer, *German Atrocities*, p. 11.

artillery. By 7 August the town fell and by 16 August so had the surrounding forts. Such unanticipated resistance was one trigger for the rapid emergence of the German myth of the *franc-tireur*.⁷²

A *franc-tireur* could be described as a civilian sniper. The German reference to the *franc-tireur* lies in their use by the French during the Franco-Prussian war of 1870. During the invasion and subsequent occupation of Belgium in 1914, the German armies succumbed to a collective delusion of supposed atrocities committed by Belgian *franc-tireur* soldiers.⁷³ This myth instigated a sense of paranoia among the German troops who saw this supposed *Volkskrieg*/Guerrilla warfare as amounting to a war crime which justified severe punishment.⁷⁴ Rumour was reinforced by the press and authorities. This sense of paranoia along with the pressure to maintain a speedy advance led to the vicious reprisals perpetrated by German soldiers on innocent Belgian and French civilians in a wave of violence that only finally died out in late October. It included the destruction of cultural monuments such as the university library at Louvain and Rheims cathedral, as well as rape, pillage and the use of human shields.⁷⁵

The most intense phase in terms of brutality to civilians was during the second half of August 1914. 6,500 civilians were killed during the invasion of both Belgium and northern France⁷⁶ leading approximately one million Belgians to flee to the Netherlands.⁷⁷ Whole villages and towns were razed. August 19 saw the mass execution of 156 civilians of Aarschot, many of which were women and children. Andenne on 20 August witnessed the murder of 262 of its civilians. 22 August saw the first use of human shields at Tamines. The worst civilian death toll of the invasion came on 23 August, perpetrated by the German third army at Dinant which left 674 dead.⁷⁸ Over 20,000 buildings were deliberately destroyed throughout the invasion.⁷⁹ Perhaps the most notorious destruction was that the university library of Louvain on 25 August, which destroyed irreplaceable precious manuscripts and ancient books. German reprisals were illegal under the Hague Convention IV on land warfare agreed at the Second Hague Conference of 1907, and of which all belligerent powers, including Germany, were signatories. The invasion of Belgium served as a stark warning to other neutral countries, in particular Switzerland and the Netherlands, as their public looked to the flood of reports of the invasion with a heightened awareness of their strategic vulnerability and the precarious protection

⁷² Ibid. p.116

⁷³ Ibid. Chapter Three, pp. 89-129.

⁷⁴ Reichsarchiv, *Der Weltkrieg 1914 bis 1918. Die militärischen Operationen zu Lande*, Berlin 1925-1944, vol. 1 *Die Grenzschlachten im Westen*, (Mittler & Sohn, Berlin 1925), pp. 108-200, Horne & Kramer, *German Atrocities*, p. 17.

⁷⁵ Ibid. "Appendix 1, German atrocities in 1914: incidents with ten or more civilians killed", pp. 435-443.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Abbenhuis, *Art of Staying Neutral*, p. 95.

⁷⁸ Norbert Nieuwland & Maurice Tschoffen, *La légende des francs-tireurs de Dinant. Réponse au mémoire de M. le professeur Meurer de l'université de Wurzburg*, (Gembloux, 1928), p. 86.

⁷⁹ "Appendix 1 German atrocities in 1914: incidents with ten or more civilians killed" in Horne & Kramer, *German Atrocities*, pp. 435-443.

offered by international law. Following the declaration of war, the Swiss Federal Assembly granted the Federal Council “the unlimited power to take all measures necessary to guarantee the security, integrity, and neutrality of Switzerland”, which was an evocation of Article 3 of the Federal decree of 3 of August 1914. Similar to a state of siege law, the interpretation of another article, Article 2, further strengthened the powers of the state. Article 2, which read “The aim of the confederation is to ensure the independence of the fatherland against the foreigner [and] to maintain internal tranquillity and order”, further strengthened the role of the State in internal affairs.

1.5 Initial Reaction to the Invasion of Belgium

Swiss diplomats in Paris and Berlin were calm and unwavering in their main task – to make sure France and Germany respected Swiss neutrality. Throughout the invasion of Belgium, de Claparède in Berlin continually updated President Hoffmann on Germany’s commitment to respecting Swiss neutrality. The frequency of these reports conveyed a sense of heightened anxiety, which betrayed an undeclared acknowledgement on the part of these Swiss officials that what had happened to neutral Belgium might also occur in neutral Switzerland.⁸⁰ Lardy in Paris was concerned that neither political circles nor the public acknowledged Swiss neutrality sufficiently, and were often unwilling to distinguish between Germany and germanophone Switzerland. From 3 August onwards, Lardy reported to President Hoffmann regarding French citizens’ attacks on Swiss citizens and Swiss businesses in France. The most significant of these was the destruction of the dairies owned by the germanophone Swiss company Maggi in Paris.⁸¹ By contrast, there were no reports of similar attacks on francophone Swiss businesses or citizens in Germany. For Lardy, the protection of germanophone Swiss citizens and businesses in France was paramount and the key to ensuring this was to impress upon the French public and politicians that Switzerland was a unified, identifiably neutral state.⁸² The press both in Switzerland and abroad was, for Lardy, a crucial resource in this regard and he recommended to President Hoffmann that “the proclamation of Swiss political neutrality” be widely published in every Swiss newspaper throughout Switzerland.⁸³

The two most widely read Swiss newspapers within their respective linguistic communities were the *Tribune de Genève* and the *Tagesanzeiger*. With an approximate circulation in 1914 of 44,000 the *Tribune de Genève* was clearly the biggest selling newspaper in francophone Switzerland, as was The *Tagesanzeiger*, which in 1914 had a circulation of 84,000, making it the biggest selling newspaper in Switzerland as a whole. On average, during August 1914, the *Tribune de Genève*,

⁸⁰ Bundesarchiv, Bern, E2001, Archiv-Nr. 715 *Le ministre de Suisse à Berlin, de Claparède au Chef du Département politique, Hoffmann*, 18 August 1914.

⁸¹ Appendix 3, J. J. Becker, 1914, *comment les Français sont entrés dans la guerre*, (Presses de la Fondation nationale des sciences politiques, Paris, 1977).

⁸² Bundesarchiv, Bern, E2001, Archiv-Nr. 715 *Le ministre de Suisse à Berlin, de Claparède au Chef du Département politique, Hoffmann*, 3 August 1914 & 7 August 1914.

⁸³ *Ibid*, 7 August 1914.

devoted 14% of its daily press coverage to the invasion of Belgium.⁸⁴ The *Tagesanzeiger* devoted roughly 6% of its daily coverage to the invasion of Belgium. There was a similar disparity in coverage in the Swiss broadsheet press. For example, the francophone broadsheet, *Journal de Genève*, consistently featured the invasion of Belgium in August 1914.⁸⁵ The germanophone broadsheet *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (NZZ), like its tabloid counterpart *Tagesanzeiger*, was slow to report on the invasion and showed a lack of editorial engagement with the issue. In addition, the germanophone press was consistently slower to report on the invasion. The *Tagesanzeiger* and NZZ reported on the invasion on the 8 and 6 of August respectively but the francophone *Tribune de Genève* and *Journal de Genève*'s coverage of the invasion began earlier, with their coverage of the German ultimatum to Belgium, on 1 August and 3 August respectively.

The tendency to see the outbreak of war through the lens of 1870, which we have already noted, was especially marked in the germanophone press, which saw the plight of Belgium as the almost inevitable extension of the terrain of combat in this newer and larger conflict. This had the effect of playing down the significance of Belgian neutrality. In sharp contrast with this, the francophone press condemned the violation of Belgium's neutral status.⁸⁶ The *Journal de Genève*'s first report on the invasion was an 11-line report published 3 August. It cited the French government's assurance that it would come to Belgian aid if "Belgian neutrality was not being respected by other powers".⁸⁷ For the francophone press, Belgian neutrality was a legal reality dependent on the support of external powers. An article by the more populist, *Tribune de Genève*, 6 August, argued that under the Schlieffen plan Switzerland could have just as easily been invaded. Its germanophone equivalent, *Tagesanzeiger*, did not agree but saw the fact that Switzerland was not invaded as testament to the strength and readiness of the Swiss military. For the *Tagesanzeiger*, the Belgians were ultimately to blame for the invasion by not investing in their military and delaying the introduction of universal conscription. However, it was the less populist germanophone broadsheet which expressed the same unease. The NZZ devoted half of its front page, 9 August, to explaining German strategy. The front page article expressed understanding of and sympathy with the German nation's need to suppress France first before the "inevitable" war with Russia, but was "puzzled" by Germany's decision to invade neutral Belgium: "While Germany has gained military advantage, it has handed its enemies the moral high ground". The francophone populist press offered a very different slant. For the *Tribune de Genève*, "Belgium isn't just defending European independence; it is its champion of honour."⁸⁸

⁸⁴ Appendix 4.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ "Die Neutralität Belgiens spielte bereits in der Geschichte des letzten deutsch-französischen Krieges eine gewisse Rolle." NZZ, 6 August 1914

⁸⁷ "La neutralité de la Belgique n'était pas respectée par les autres puissances", *Journal de Genève*, 3 August 1914.

⁸⁸ "La Belgique ne défend pas seulement l'Indépendance européenne, elle est le champion d'honneur." *Tribune de Genève*, 6 August 1914.

1.6 Increased Promotion of Neutrality at Home

Following ambassador Lardy's recommendations to President Hoffmann that the Swiss declaration of neutrality be widely published in Switzerland, during the second week of August a letter from Hoffmann to his "Faithful and dear confederates" appeared verbatim on the front-page of the *Journal de Genève*.⁸⁹ The *Journal de Genève* gave the letter the title "Call to the Swiss People". However, the letter was disseminated almost exclusively among the germanophone-catholic press and francophone press.⁹⁰ This suggested the letter's main target audience was not the majority germanophone Protestant community. At first glance, the letter displayed the characteristic patriotic fervour one would expect. Its description of the situation the Swiss people faced seemed both appropriate and typical: an army poised ready to defend the country from a war which "had been unleashed at its borders".⁹¹ However, closer analysis seems to suggest a duality of context and intent that suggests the divisions that may have posed a threat to Swiss unity. As explained in the introduction the narrative and First, President Hoffmann seemed at pains to link the date of general mobilisation, 3 August, with the contentious anniversary of the foundation of the Swiss Confederation, 1 August: "our army is mobilised and at the ready since the first of August, the day of the anniversary of the foundation of the Confederation".⁹² Given that the male populace received their notice to mobilise on the third, surely the majority of the *Journal de Genève*'s readers could have recognised the inaccuracy of such a claim. The contentious nature of the particular anniversary of 1 August made Hoffmann's reference to it more than a mere rhetorical flourish. The fact that this call to the nation was only disseminated among those communities whose opinions regarding the war ran contrary to the dominant germanophone narrative, suggests that internal divisions were significant.

Officially the celebration of 1 August was a recent occurrence. The declared "official tradition" had only been practised for 24 years. The creation of such an anniversary in 1891 was in fact pragmatic. The confederation's capital, Bern, was due to celebrate the 700th anniversary of the foundation of its capital city in 1191. The 600th anniversary of the Swiss Federal Charter which suggested a date of early August seemed convenient and so a cantonal celebration became a national one. Crucially, however, this appeared to have been an assertion of ideological dominance by and a propaganda boon for the confederate (radical party) victors of the Swiss Civil War of 1847, whose heartland was in germanophone Bern. The defeated predominantly catholic *Sonderbund*⁹³ deeply resented what they saw as the opportunistic re-dating of the creation of the state by the radical party affiliated victors of the Swiss Civil War.⁹⁴ The Swiss radicals had overwhelmingly dominated Swiss politics since 1848.

⁸⁹ "Fidèles et chers confédérés", *Journal de Genève*, 8 August 1914.

⁹⁰ "Appel au peuple Suisse", Ibid.

⁹¹ "Est déchaînés à nos frontières", Ibid.

⁹² "Notre armée est sur pied; dès le premier août, jour anniversaire de la fondation de la Confédération", Ibid.

⁹³ Special Alliance

⁹⁴ The federal treaty and first federal constitution had its origins in the federal charter, which advocated centralised control and thus grated with the *Sonderbund* cantons. These catholic cantons preferred to celebrate the anniversary of the Rütli Schwur which was simply an oath which pledged allegiance between sovereign

For example from 1848-1891 every member of the seven-member Federal Council was from the radical party. From 1848 to 1914 six of the seven-member council were members of the radical party. President Hoffmann, author of the letter to the Swiss people published 8 August 1914 in the *Journal de Genève*, was a radical party member. In linking Swiss mobilisation with the radical party and a Protestant/confederate interpretation of the foundation of the Swiss state, President Hoffmann's letter appeared to have taken on a political significance that was both pointed and loaded. The fact that his letter to the nation was not as prominently published in the germanophone Protestant press suggests a division between the majority radical party, Protestant germanophone community and the rest, francophone, italophone and/or catholic Swiss.

The public were increasingly aware of the political and linguistic divisions the war had already provoked. Increasing division raised genuine concerns whether or not Switzerland would be able to stand apart from the ideological and political force-field of European War. The distinct lack of jubilation and overriding mood of fear among the francophone public's celebration of the Swiss national holiday was recorded by the French author and intellectual Romain Rolland, who was living in Switzerland at the outbreak of the war: "It is the Swiss national holiday, a sad holiday. The Swiss seem perhaps more terrified than the nations directly concerned".⁹⁵ Give the fear described by Rolland, President Hoffmann's words took on a heightened significance. One phrase, which appeared mid-sentence in the letter, seemed to have been singled out for the reader's specific consideration. Highlighted in bold black print, "we will observe complete neutrality"⁹⁶, was the only phrase to be emphasised in an article covering the entire front page. This emphasis was not simply communicated the key message to the reader. The fact that it was not necessary to publish the speech among the dominant germanophone community indicates that the speech was directed to a target audience, the francophone community in particular, who did not concur with mainstream germanophone opinion. Given this context, the sentence which followed alludes to what the state was prepared to do should any community be found in breach of Swiss neutrality:

The Federal Assembly and the Federal Council are determined to use all their strength and make any sacrifice to maintain our independence and the defence of our neutrality.⁹⁷

Given the previous days' front-page coverage of French President Poincaré's calling for a *union sacrée*, Hoffmann's letter suggested a Swiss version of such a union. The evocation of the Swiss state of siege law, five days earlier, showed that a legal structure to enforce such a union was already

cantons in matters of defence and mutual cooperation and nothing more. Dated November 1307 by the counter-reformation Swiss historian Aegidius Tschudi, the 600th anniversary was celebrated in 1907 in Altdorf, the capital of the founding canton of Uri, the supposed birthplace of Wilhelm Tell.

⁹⁵"C'est la fête nationale de la suisse. Triste fête. La Suisse est peut-être plus affolée que les nations directement intéressées.", Rolland, *Journal*, p. 32.

⁹⁶"Nous observerons une complète neutralité", *Journal de Genève*, 8 August 1914.

⁹⁷"L'assemblée fédérale et le Conseil fédéral sont résolus à employer toutes leurs forces et à faire tous les sacrifices pour le maintien de notre indépendance et la défense de notre neutralité.", Ibid.

in place. Though officially censorship was not declared, the interpretation of Article 2 could effectively act as such, where an article or a public figure could be deemed a threat to internal tranquillity and order and therefore could be either censored or prosecuted. Germanophone broadsheet, *NZZ*'s first comment on the federal decree was in an article entitled "On with censorship!" in which it endorsed and welcomed what it perceived as the introduction of state censorship and criticised what it perceived as biased reporting among certain Swiss communities. This leads to the questions: What exactly was this biased reporting among certain Swiss communities? To what extent did such bias represent a division within public opinion? How significant a threat to Swiss national unity was it?

1.7 Pro-French and Pro-German Bias in Swiss Reports of the Invasion of Belgium

Despite Hoffmann's call to unity, the press of each language community identified with one of the two belligerents. The germanophone press, particularly used German angles and sources when adopting and adapting its narrative. The pro-German bias of populist germanophone newspapers, like the *Tagesanzeiger*, seemed to have stemmed from its sourcing. The *Tagesanzeiger*'s reports were often copied from German newspapers. The *Tagesanzeiger*'s initial reports specifically featured articles copied from the *Kölnische Zeitung*, and more generally from the German press agency, *Wolff*. Thus the *Tagesanzeiger*'s first reports of the invasion during 7 and 8 August made no reference to Belgian civilians or casualties. Its coverage on 7 August focused on the injuries and casualties suffered by the German 53rd Infantry Regiment, despite the fact that during this period the 53rd Infantry Regiment was not mobilised and did not enter the line until mid-October.⁹⁸ While broadsheet analysis from the germanophone *NZZ* may not have been as overtly partisan as the *Tagesanzeiger*, a subtle bias was apparent on closer reading. By consistently referring to Belgium as the "French-German theatre of war"⁹⁹ the germanophone media were apportioning both France and Germany equal blame in what was undeniably a German invasion of the sovereign and neutral state of Belgium. The disparity between both communities' reporting style and quality of reporting were revealed in the way the two main germanophone and francophone broadsheets analysed German military tactics. For example, the German victory at Liège was described so differently by both communities that this discrepancy became a topic of analysis within the francophone media. Subsequent reports by the *Journal de Genève* questioned the germanophone analysis within their own analysis.

The germanophone press described the fall of Liège as a swift success based on the superiority of German organisation. Feyler, in the *Journal de Genève* questioned the nature of German victory at Liège as reported by the germanophone Swiss press:

⁹⁸ Gerhard Bauer and Jürgen Kraus, *Handbuch der Verbände und Truppen des deutschen Heeres, 1914-1918* (Verlag Militaria, Vienna, 2007)

⁹⁹ "Deutsch-Französischer Kriegschauplatz", *NZZ* 6 August 1914.

If the reports of the bombardment of Liège are true this would seem to indicate a dramatic change in German tactics and the deployment of heavy artillery which it would seem was not anticipated in the Schlieffen plan.¹⁰⁰

This change of tactics according to Feyler validated reports of a strong Belgian military resistance. Thus one may conclude that on 6 August, Feyler remarkably anticipated the German Oberste Heeresleitung's change of tactic on 8 August from heroic frontal infantry to bombardment by heavy artillery. Feyler acknowledged the difficulties of obtaining information: "facts are difficult to establish, on the basis of current information"¹⁰¹. He also questioned Belgian sources used by his own newspaper *Journal de Genève*:

Belgian reports tell of 7 cannons taken and 600 wounded collected from the field of battle. If the last figure was correct, one could, [...] assume that the Germans had launched a division.¹⁰²

Indeed according to the revised Schlieffen plan of 1912 one division was deemed sufficient. Feyler described what he referred to as the "aberration of pride"¹⁰³ of the germanophone press agency, Wolff and germanophone reports, which failed to acknowledge reports that the Germans might have underestimated the Belgian civilian force that Feyler rather accurately estimated to be in the region of 22,000 men. In fact, the Germans were met with a Belgian force of 32,000 at Liège. Feyler accurately explained the strategic importance of Liège to the Germans, given its access to the Meuse River and the central plain.

The germanophone broadsheet *NZZ* presented its analysis of German military tactics, 8 August. However, unlike the *Journal de Genève*, it was written by a journalist, rather than a military analyst, and thus lacked Feyler's insight. The author stated simply that, for the Germans, the initial invasion was not difficult, given that the fortress of Liège was 25 years old and therefore no longer modern. The *NZZ* article offered more puzzlement at, than explanation of, Belgian resistance. "It is in fact very surprising that they [the Belgians] are still pretty stubbornly resisting".¹⁰⁴ Their reluctance and often superficial analysis of the invasion of Belgium was uncharacteristic, given the insightful parallels drawn previously regarding the outbreak of the war. Rather than engage directly with the invasion of Belgium and its implication for neutrality, the germanophone *NZZ* articles from 9 onwards approached the invasion in abstract terms. For example, the main article of 16 August entitled "The War and the

¹⁰⁰ *Journal de Genève*, 6 August 1914.

¹⁰¹ "Le calcul est difficile à établir, sur la base de informations actuelles", Ibid.

¹⁰² "Les dépêches belges parlent de 7 canons pris et de 600 blessés ramassés sur le champ du combat. Si ce dernier chiffre était exact, on pourrait, en admettant du 68% de perte, supposer que les Allemands ont engagé une division." Ibid.

¹⁰³ "Aberration d'orgueil" Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ "Es ist so im Grunde eher verwunderlich, daß sie (the Belgians) trotzdem noch ziemlich hartnäckig Widerstand geleistet hat"

Word of God”¹⁰⁵ or “The beginning of the war”¹⁰⁶ a day before, were abstract musings on the invasion of Belgium. These articles prevented the NZZ editor from engaging in analysis of the invasion. In “The War and the Word of God” it is crucially Descartes who is advocated as the philosopher through whom these extraordinary events were to be reasoned. Not a single German philosopher was named, which suggests the following question: in this article was the NZZ advocating Descartes and French rationalism over the likes of Hegel, for example, and German romanticism? Perhaps, but such opacity is not found in either the germanophone tabloid press or francophone press in general which are considerably more overt in the sides they choose to take.

From mid-August onwards, the populist germanophone press reported on supposed “numerous atrocities”¹⁰⁷ perpetrated by Belgian and Alsace-Lorraine civilians on the German army. One early article cited the “sympathetic” attitude of the German press towards the “neutral powers”. Perhaps, in an attempt to court italophone Swiss sympathies, such “sympathy” was contrasted with accounts by the germanophone *Tagesanzeiger* of the “brutal treatment of neutral foreigners, particularly Italians, in France”.¹⁰⁸ These mid-August claims of atrocities committed by Belgian citizens in the *Tagesanzeiger* were contradicted by the populist francophone press; for example, the *Tribune de Genève* which reported claims of atrocities committed by German soldiers. On 18 August, the *Tribune de Genève* featured an article titled “German Repression” which reported the first eyewitness reports of German atrocities in the Swiss press:

An eyewitness from the French town of Blamont [...] reported on the murder by German soldiers of three civilians; one small girl and an old man aged 86.¹⁰⁹

The following day the *Tribune de Genève*, published a front page quote from the *Patriote de Bruxelles* “we [Belgians] will defend, like dogs defend their master.”¹¹⁰ The inclusion of such emotive language and subject matter is hardly the example of a neutral, non-partisan press. However, more importantly such reporting showed how the press was imbibing the polemics of the war along language lines.

During the month of August 1914 the invasion of Belgium made up a mere 3% of the germanophone *Tagesanzeiger*’s front page coverage on an average day. There was one exception. The 28 August saw 63% of its front page devoted to the topic of the invasion of Belgium. The first article entitled “Eyewitnesses’ experiences and other topics from the battle fields”¹¹¹ began with the *Tagesanzeiger*’s criticism of the bias succumbed to by some elements of the Dutch media and saw it as a warning to the Swiss press. The article criticised an account published in the Dutch *Geldersche Courant*, which featured an account of the invasion by an eyewitness from Maastricht who travelled across the border

¹⁰⁵ “Der Krieg und das Wort Gottes”, NZZ, 16 August 1914.

¹⁰⁶ “Der Kriegsbeginn”, NZZ, 15 August 1914.

¹⁰⁷ “Zahlreiche Greueltaten” *Tagesanzeiger* 11 August 1914.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ “La repression allemande”, *Tribune de Genève*, 18 August 1914.

¹¹⁰ *Tribune de Genève*, 19 August 1914.

¹¹¹ “Erlebnisse und anders von den Schlachtfeldern”, *Tagesanzeiger*, 28 August 1914.

to assess the situation himself. He described the conduct of the German invaders as that of “true barbarians”.¹¹² The anonymous eyewitness described how he witnessed “unarmed old men being shot at” and “young girls being strung up”.¹¹³ The *Tagesanzeiger* was deeply sceptical and its use of the konjunktiv II¹¹⁴ throughout makes this scepticism all the more evident. The *Tagesanzeiger* concluded that from the accounts they received the Belgians only had themselves to blame. “Indeed as the Red Cross was bandaging up injured civilians [some] Belgian farmers shot at men from the Red Cross!” The *Tagesanzeiger* went on to give examples of eyewitness accounts brought to its attention by a certain “informant”. This informant described the brutal retaliation of the Belgian civilians on the otherwise civilised German troops:

A doctor from the Red Cross told our informant of the arrest of a ten-year-old girl who had plucked out the eyes of a wounded unarmed German soldier. He also told of four Belgian farmers from the village of Berneau who were caught in the process of chopping off the hands and feet of wounded German soldiers on the battle field.¹¹⁵

However, the *Tagesanzeiger* went on to say that these stories may have gained in the telling but the pro Belgian/French bias of the Dutch media “must be highlighted”. It cited further evidence of what it saw as the culpability of the Belgian citizens in their fate:

Argenteau was a village in which its citizens reacted peacefully and as a result the Germans left it untouched. However, as a result of its citizens’ appalling acts, Berneau was razed to the ground.¹¹⁶

The article went on to describe how since they took Liège, the Germans had managed to get the tram service up and running and reopen four factories in the area. The article was followed by another which reported the *Corriere della Sera* as having said it had found “reports of unfortunate German behaviour to be somewhat believable”. However, any further discussion of the validity of German atrocities was abandoned and the subsequent reports in the populist germanophone press featured an overwhelming pro-German bias. For example, the headlines of reports on the treatment of German citizens resident in Brussels read; “We [the Germans] were hunted like dogs from Antwerp”, “the consequences of Belgian lies”, “what a young soldier from Cologne can endure”, and “Bismarck’s nephew volunteers”.¹¹⁷ Such reports could well have been mistaken for the front page of the *Kölnische, Berliner* or *Frankfurter Zeitung*. Despite the difficulty in accessing accurate information, the *Tribune de Genève* managed to report rather accurately on the dramatic surge of German atrocities on 22nd August.¹¹⁸ Yet the *Tagesanzeiger* completely ignored the topic of atrocities perpetrated by the

¹¹² “Wahre Barbaren” Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ A grammatically modal tense used express doubt and critical distance.

¹¹⁵ *Tagesanzeiger*, 28 August 1914.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ “Wie die Hunde sind wir aus Antwerpen gejagt” Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Horne & Kramer, *German Atrocities*, p. 78.

German army on Belgian civilians. During the remaining days of August the invasion of Belgium was referred to by the *Tagesanzeiger* in terms of the “franc-tireur-war”. The wide reach of such rumour published in neutral Switzerland illustrated just how prevalent the myth of the franc-tireur soldier was. The fact that Swiss germanophone newspapers like the *Tagesanzeiger* did not offer independent investigative analysis into dubious German reports of atrocities committed by civilians, revealed the extent of their bias. The different francophone and germanophone reports show that by late August two totally opposed narratives on the invasion of Belgium had developed.

During the final week of August the populist *Tribune de Genève* published numerous articles highlighting German atrocities. On 21st August, the *Tribune de Genève* highlighted a report issued by the “General Commander-in-chief of the l’armée de l’Est” on 11 August:

The General Commander-in-chief of the l’armée de l’Est has reported that the Germans are burning villages, massacring inhabitants, using Belgian women and children as human shields, especially at Villy during the battle of 10th August.

25 August saw further reports in the *Tribune de Genève* of the Germans use of human shields during the battle of Charleroi. The *Tribune de Genève*’s reports on the invasion during the final days of August concluded with a large front page headline “Belgium devastated”.¹¹⁹ The article which followed told of the general confusion after the German capture of Louvain. The article detailed the horrendous atrocities inflicted on unarmed Belgian civilians:

Germans guarding the entrance to the town were mistakenly fired upon by their own men who mistook them for Belgians. Not realising their mistake the German soldiers embark on a series of reprisals including the destruction of the town. Though both the police and the general population had been disarmed a week ago, many of the men of Louvain have been killed or arrested. Most of the women and children have been reported missing and are suspected to have been put on a train to an unknown destination.

Unlike the germanophone press the *Tribune de Genève* and its francophone counterparts analysed reports from German as well as French press agencies. This report was followed by one on the 30/31st August which quoted a correspondent of the Wolff agency as saying “The attitude of the [Belgian] population merited these inevitable reprisals. This is why the ancient town of Louvain, rich in works of art, no longer exists today”.¹²⁰

To what extent did the contradictory reports and discrepancy of engagement between the francophone and germanophone press during the first two weeks of August 1914 reflect the Swiss public’s reaction to the invasion of Belgium? For Romain Rolland, the distinction between the allegiances of both communities regarding the issue was stark. On 16 August, he declared “All French

¹¹⁹ “La Belgique dévastée” *Tribune de Genève*, 25 August 1914.

¹²⁰ “L’attitude de la population méritait des représailles inexorable. C’est ainsi que l’ancienne ville de Louvain, riche en oeuvres d’art n’existe plus aujourd’hui” *Tribune de Genève*, 30/31 August 1914.

Switzerland is enraged against the Germans".¹²¹ Such anti-German sentiment would appear to have extended to some members of the Swiss military. Rolland recorded his encounter with a Swiss Lieutenant Colonel, at Doret who when asked by Rolland what he would do if he, as a francophone Swiss citizen, was ordered to shoot a French soldier, declared:

If I am commanded to fire on the French ... RRAN!" And he made a gesture, violently thrusting his sword back into its sheath."¹²²

By contrast, Rolland felt that, "the majority and the petite bourgeoisie of Switzerland are German for the Germans".¹²³ The same perception of divided Swiss reactions to the war emerges from the leader of the propaganda mission that the Belgian government sent to Switzerland later in the autumn. Emile Waxweiler, declared that the majority "ignore Belgium".¹²⁴ He followed this statement with a list of the key assumptions about Belgium he had encountered: Belgium was a country that had "failed to impose military expenses in proportion to its wealth"; it was seen as a country of clerical dominance, where "the dominance of [Catholic] priests has impeded its general development"; it was "a country of revolutionaries", "illiterates", "of privilege", with "an anti-democratic electoral regime"; it was "the land responsible for the atrocities in the Congo" and "a nation of alcoholics who take pleasure in the combats of animal savagery".¹²⁵ However, Waxweiler's report acknowledged that these "commonly held" Swiss views were distinct from the minority francophone Swiss view, which according to Waxweiler was unanimous in its sympathy for Belgium. Waxweiler went on to state that often this sympathy had evolved into empathy and allegiance and quoted an article in the francophone Swiss press: "Belgium – has she not been offered as a holocaust for Latin civilisation?"¹²⁶ His report, therefore, confirmed the above analysis that the press were divided in their understanding of the fate of the Belgians and suggested that this reflected a more general split into two opposing reactions to the war itself.

1.8 Conclusion

Swiss public and official reaction to the outbreak of war, though nuanced in the preferences expressed, was not clearly divided or aligned with either France or Germany. While Karl Scheurer

¹²¹ "Toute la Suisse française est enragée contre les Allemands", Rolland, *Journal*, (1952), p. 37.

¹²² "Si on me commandait de faire tirer sur les Français...Rran!" Et il faisait le geste de rentrer violemment son sabre dans le fourreau." Ibid. p.37

¹²³ "Le peuple et la petite bourgeoisie de Suisse allemande sont pour les Allemands." Ibid.

¹²⁴ "Ignore la Belgique." Archives Générales du Royaume, Brussels, Emile Waxweiler, *Première Mission en Suisse 1914*, p. 2.

¹²⁵ "N'a pas su s'imposer des charges militaires en rapport avec sa richesse", "la domination des prêtres entrave son développement general, un pays de révolutionnaires," "d'illettrés", "de privilégiés", "un regime electoral anti-démocratique", "le pays des atrocities du Congo", a nation of alcoholics who "prend plaisir aux combats d'animaux". Ibid.

¹²⁶ "La Belgique ne s'était-elle pas offerte en holocaust pour la civilisation latine?"

viewed a German victory to be desirable, he still adhered to the official Swiss stance of neutrality.¹²⁷ Close pre-war ties with both France and Germany were cultivated by trade, finance and migration. The dominance of Germany's influence in these areas, might suggest a logical preference for a German victory. But rather than the outbreak of war, it was the invasion of Belgium that provoked deep division between the francophone and germanophone communities. This change found expression in the Swiss press. Analysis of four main newspapers *Journal de Genève*, *Tribune de Genève*, *Tagesanzeiger*, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* showed a clear division between the allegiances of each linguistic community. The germanophone press's resounding silence betrayed a sense of unease with the actions of Germany in invading Belgium. The *Tagesanzeiger's* reliance on the German press agency Wolff promoted a distinctly pro-German stance regarding the invasion, relaying many false stories. The *Journal de Genève* and *Tribune de Genève*, on the other hand, reported the invasion on a daily basis. Towards the end of the month the *Tribune de Genève* began to highlight the atrocities committed by German soldiers on Belgian civilians. The francophone press's remarkable analysis of the invasion of Belgium would seem to have been motivated not simply by a tradition of international awareness among the francophone community and linguistic allegiance but also by a genuine fear of a German invasion of Switzerland, which in turn inspired sympathy for the Belgian plight. By the end of August, President Hoffmann's call to national unity at the start of the month had been sharply qualified by the division between francophone and germanophone Swiss over the invasion of Belgium and the larger significance of the war. This had deep implications for Swiss neutrality and for the respect in which this was held internationally on which national security in turn depended. As Emile Waxweiler had observed of Belgium and Switzerland as neutral countries: "These two states have a neutrality that is guaranteed but it is the Swiss that have a neutrality that is recognised".¹²⁸

¹²⁷ Böschenstein (ed.), *Tagebücher*, p. 50.

¹²⁸ "Ces deux Etats ont une neutralité garantie, tandis que la Suisse a une neutralité reconnue", Waxweiler, *Première Mission*, p.7.

CHAPTER TWO: The Politics of the Swiss Union Sacrée

On 4 August 1914, Kaiser Wilhelm II declared "I know of no more parties, I know only Germans!"¹ President Poincaré called upon French citizens to forge a *union sacrée* and stand "fraternally gathered with the same indignation against the aggressor and with the same patriotic belief".² A day later, 5 August 1914, Swiss President Hoffmann penned a letter to the nation in which he called on Swiss citizens to be ready "to shed their blood and give their lives for their country"³ and urged "that the Swiss people would stand firm and resolutely behind their authorities"⁴. All three countries; two belligerent, one neutral, called for national unity in the face of war – a *union sacrée* in France and *Burgfrieden* in Germany, the origins of the francophone *défense spirituelle* and germanophone *Geistige Landesverteidigung*⁵ in Switzerland. How successful was the Swiss call for national unity in the wake of the emergent ethno-linguistic divide over the invasion of Belgium? Is the comparison with the *union sacrée* and *Burgfrieden* useful in analysing neutral, yet mobilised Switzerland?

2.1 Neutral and Belligerent Political Truces

In both France and Germany, the *union sacrée*/*Burgfrieden* required convergence on the purposes of the war between rival political, social and religious groups; secularists and theocrats, Protestant and Catholic, political reformists of both right and left, pacifists and militarists. The *Burgfrieden*, as it was known in Germany, was the agreement of all political parties to maintain a political truce while their country was at war. For the German SPD, this newly-forged unity manifested itself in its support for war credits and an agreement to refrain from criticising either the German government or Germany's war. In France, the political truce meant the suspension of hostilities between the left, centre, right and extreme right under René Viviani's government. What became state-endorsed, and often enforced, national unity was on occasion legitimized with state propaganda. This propaganda sought to instil an ideal of patriotic duty: embodied in France in the image of the rugged French infantry-soldier, the *poilu*, while in Germany, it was embodied in the image of the ordinary *Landser*

¹ "Ich kenne keine Parteien mehr, ich kenne nur noch Deutsche!" in "Kriegs-Rundschau. Zeitgenössische Zusammenstellung der für den Weltkrieg wichtigen Ereignisse, Urkunden, Kundgebungen, Schlacht- und Zeitberichte", *Von den Ursachen des Krieges bis etwa zum Schluß des Jahres 1914*, (Verlag der Täglichen Rundschau Berlin 1915), Vol. 1, p. 37.

² "Fraternellement assemblés dans une même indignation contre l'agresseur et dans une même foi patriotique". Raymond Poincaré, *Message du Président de la République aux Assemblées*, 4 August 1914, *Le Temps*, 5 August 1914.

³ "à verser son sang et à donner sa vie pour son pays" President Arthur Hoffmann *Journal de Genève*, 8 August 1914.

⁴ "Derrière ses autorités le peuple suisse tout entier se tient ferme et résolu." Ibid.

⁵ *Défense spirituelle* and germanophone *Geistige Landesverteidigung* was a nationalistic political-cultural movement which was officially endorsed from 1938 to 1960s. It was created as a bulwark initially against the influence of Nazi ideology, Socialism and later Communism. It guaranteed the defense of the supposed "common spiritual values of Switzerland" and advocated the creation of state sponsored propaganda to counterbalance propaganda from neighbouring countries.

who was called upon to fight what was presented as a defensive war. For the Swiss military, though neutral and not engaged in combat, there existed a widely publicised perception that it was fighting a defensive battle, resisting invasion and the infiltration of the foreign politics and ideology of the belligerent states.⁶

In *State, Society and Mobilization in Europe during the First World War*, John Horne interprets belligerent mobilization "in a broader sense than is customary in historical analysis of the First World War."⁷ Though it deals exclusively with belligerent mobilization, this approach raises the possibility that the capacity of war to both mobilize and divide societies was perhaps not exclusive to belligerent war experience and might also apply to neutral countries particularly those that may have been politically, economically and ideologically invested in the conflict.⁸ The *Burgfrieden/union sacrée* political truce was not exclusively confined to socialists residing within belligerent states. On 1 August 1914, leader of the Dutch SDAP (Sociaal-Democratische Arbeiders Partij), Pieter Jelles Troelstra, addressed the Dutch Chamber of Deputies stating that his party would support the vote for the mobilization of funds "since Holland must observe its neutrality". On 6 October 1914 the Portuguese Radical Party and Socialist members of the Portuguese parliament issued a joint manifesto demanding that Portugal remain neutral in the war. On 2 December 1914, the Swedish Socialist Party agreed to form a political alliance with the Liberal Party with a view to forming a coalition government after the war. Some neutral countries maintained an internal political truce but remained aloof from political cooperation. Though the Socialist parties held sizable minorities in the Dutch and Danish governments, both refused to form coalitions with rival political parties when this was proposed in 1914. Similar political divisions existed in Switzerland. As outlined in the introduction the dominance of the radical party and the divisions between it and the predominantly catholic, conservative minority dated from the Swiss Civil War of 1847. There was a dramatic rise in support for the Swiss socialist and other minority parties, which was reflected in the pre-war campaign for the introduction of proportional representation. These various aspects of pre-war Switzerland along with an emergent linguistic divide had the potential to undermine national unity.

2.2 The Response of the Swiss Left

Swiss socialism displayed similar ideological divisions that beset both the French and German socialists regarding the war in general, but, in addition, it had to contend with the influence of francophone and germanophone linguistic identity. During the pre-war period, there was already a certain aloofness between the left of each language community. Though a strong socialist movement had developed in francophone Switzerland, according to G.D.H Cole, the "main body of Swiss

⁶ Speech by Colonel Fama, Commandant of the St. Maurice Garrison published in the *Gazette de Lausanne* 8 August 1914, p. 2.

⁷ John Horne (ed.) *State, Society and Mobilization in Europe during the First World War*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997). p.4

⁸ Ibid. p. 4.

delegates at International Congresses came from the German areas.”⁹ Francophone socialists did not regularly attend and certainly did not feature prominently in congresses held in germanophone Zurich for example. On first glance it would appear the language barrier was the key reason for this, but there was an ideological divergence too. In general, the francophone community was dominated by the anarcho-syndicalist agenda, while the germanophone Swiss could have been described as more traditional socialists. Proportionally, the francophone Swiss representation within the Socialist Party Congress, for example, was always smaller than the germanophone majority, and as a consequence its voice was somewhat muffled. Yet these pre-war differences did not manifest themselves in a pre-war divide. Both sides retained a common lack of interest in marxism and were defined internationally by their commitment to industrial legislation, political and social reform rather than theory.¹⁰ The Swiss socialist reaction to the July crisis was united and this reflected the united reaction of the general public towards the outbreak of the war.

29 July 1914, Swiss socialists organised a demonstration against the war. Though it was held in germanophone Zurich both francophone and germanophone socialists attended and were jointly involved in its organisation.¹¹ The rhetoric of two of the prominent organisers of the demonstration, germanophone Hermann Greulich, and francophone deputy for the socialist party in Geneva Jean Sigg, was not the typical anti-war, pacifist rhetoric that one would have anticipated. 29 July, 1914, Greulich, for example, saw the escalating conflict as a justified freedom struggle of an oppressed class and nation: “out of the oppressed Serbians there has sprung a free peasant people.”¹² Sigg’s interpretation of the conflict expressed support for the nationalist cause and uncharacteristically endorsed empire and patriotic allegiance to it:

Let Austria bear the blame for this development. She has done nothing to assimilate the Slavs whom she has taken over to herself. She has done nothing to arouse thoughts loyal to Austria among her Serb subjects, nothing to awaken an attachment for the Austrian Empire in their hearts.¹³

There was no direct reference in either speech to the prospect of a Franco-German conflict, which was surprising given that Austria-Hungary had already embarked on war with Serbia and, as chapter one of the thesis has shown, Swiss newspaper reports during July already viewed the impending conflict as a prospective Franco-German conflict. The neglect of the Franco-German dimension in early socialist discourse suggested either the socialists were out of touch with mainstream public opinion or that they simply wished to ignore what was developing into a potentially divisive issue.

⁹ G. D. H. Cole, *The Second International 1889-1914*, (Macmillan, London, 1967), Part II, p. 616.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ William English Walling (ed.), *The Socialists and the War*, (Henry Holt & Co., New York, 1915), p. 204.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

However, following the invasion of Belgium, public displays of unity and close co-operation between francophone and germanophone socialists ended. This renewed aloofness was articulated in the opposing responses of the Swiss socialists to the German *Burgfrieden*. Germanophone socialists were supportive of the German Social Democrats' decision to abide by the *Burgfrieden* political truce and support the war, but this stance was opposed by francophone socialists.¹⁴ The germanophone Swiss socialist press, *Tagwacht* and *Volksrecht*, resembled the mainstream germanophone Swiss press in their coverage of the invasion of Belgium – an event initially ignored, briefly addressed but mostly excused. The *Tagwacht* was the main germanophone socialist newspaper. Its founder, Hermann Greulich, had originally come from Germany in 1865, but had become “the outstanding person of the Swiss trade union movement”¹⁵. His paper's analysis reflected a bias in favour of Germany and German sources. Similar to the division which had emerged in general Swiss public opinion, reaction to the invasion of Belgium seemed to have accentuated the linguistic divide within socialist circles. The francophone socialist press, *Le Réveil* and *Le Falot*, *La Libre Fédération*, etc resembled the mainstream francophone press in their consistent outrage at German atrocities and their commitment to the issue of Belgium throughout the war. The francophone socialist press' sympathy with Belgium, reflected the close cooperation and interaction which had existed between francophone and Belgian socialists. “Pioneer” of francophone socialism, Dr. Pierre Coullery, worked closely with Belgian socialists, regularly visiting Belgium, in order to form an international workers' association in the 1860s.¹⁶ Like the *NZZ* and the *Tageszeiger*, it was not until the final days of August that German culpability in a war crime was hinted at in the germanophone socialist press. On 31st August the *Tagwacht* declared:

Comrades in Switzerland cannot understand the attitude of our German comrades and feel that the situation was too big for the leaders of the German movement. [...] We might understand had our German comrades hesitated to vote against the budget.¹⁷

The *Volksrecht* defended the position of German Social Democrats throughout August 1914 but made a spectacular U-turn in September during the visit to Switzerland by German SPD Reichstag member Richard Fischer:

We have already seen the way in which Comrade Fischer, in the *Volksrecht*, has tried to explain and excuse the violation of the neutrality of Belgium, [and] that the eyes of the leading comrades of Germany are remarkably blind.¹⁸

This was reflective of how Swiss displays of unity often manifested themselves during wartime. Though internally divided, the semblance of unity was maintained when engaging with the outside

¹⁴ Ibid. p.398.

¹⁵ Cole, *Second International*, Part II, p. 610

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ *Tagwacht*, 31 August 1914.

¹⁸ Walling (ed.), *Socialists and the War*, p. 397.

world. As soon as Fischer appeared in Switzerland, the germanophone allegiance expressed internally was abandoned and a distinct Swiss hostility, a sense of distinctness – exceptionalism – was assumed.

When faced with an international audience at the Conference of the Swiss and Italian Socialists, held in Lugano, 27 September 1914, the germanophone Swiss delegates who attended presented the united response of Swiss socialists. The concluding declaration of the conference was far more polished in style and homogeneous in objective:

The European War is not a struggle for higher culture, for the freedom of the people. It is at once a struggle of the capitalist classes for new markets in foreign lands, and a criminal attempt to break down the revolutionary movement of the proletariat and the Social Democracy at home.¹⁹

A more engaged reflection on the war was proposed:

Italy and Switzerland thus believe it to be their task to fight to the last breath against the extension of this war into other nations, [...] to demand that their governments shall immediately take up diplomatic negotiations with the governments of the nations engaged in this war, with a view toward a speedy close of this mass murder of the European people.²⁰

However, on further examination, there was a notable absence of francophone attendees at the conference, which indicates that though the socialist delegates present purported to speak for Swiss socialists in general, internally they were viewed as speaking for germanophone socialism. Though the declaration described the “unspeakable horror [...] in the outrageous violation of Belgium and the waste of that country”²¹, which indicated a shift in mindset, there was no direct reference to, or condemnation of, Germany. This appeared to have caused dissent among the francophone Swiss socialists. Contemporary analysis after the conference concluded that francophone socialists saw this germanophone declaration as “only partially satisfactory”.²² The divided reaction of the Swiss public generally regarding Germany’s actions suggested that the francophone socialists’ dismay was in tune with wider francophone sentiment.

However, such a split was not unique to the Swiss socialists. Dutch socialists were also divided during the initial months of the war. For example, an editorial of Dutch Social Democrat newspaper *Het Volk* states, 8 August 1914: “We must assume that our German comrades did not protest, with all their might, against the violation of Luxemburg’s neutrality and Belgium’s independence”²³ However, in a

¹⁹ Walling (ed.), *Socialists and the War*, p. 206.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ *Het Volk*, 8 August 1914.

speech addressed to the Swiss party Congress on 1st November 1914, the leader of the Dutch socialists, Troelstra, disagreed:

Nationalism is not opposed to internationalism, but internationalism is the organisation of the nations [...] Therefore we do not call the comrades of other countries to account for their conduct.²⁴

Co-founder of the Dutch Social Democrat Workers' Party, Henri van Kol, declared on 15 April 1915 "It is not the [German] vote in favour of the war loan that makes the international socialist situation so critical, it is rather their silent consent to the violation of Belgium²⁵" Despite van Kol's comments, by 1915 division among the Dutch socialists regarding their "comrades" in Germany was not prominent. In Switzerland, by contrast, the linguistic dimension accentuated the divide. Compared to Holland, the divisions of the Swiss socialists – whose internationalist creed should have made them the most resistant to it – showed how deep the division was, regarding the meaning of the war, along language community lines.

It was the lack of proportional representation in Switzerland which ensured the continued dominance of the radical party and muted the ability of minority parties of the right and left to influence political debate in the same way that such parties did in France, Germany and the Netherlands. As Jonathan Steinberg has written:

In the elections of 1914 based on a single member and majority vote system, the ruling Radical Party, the party of bourgeois liberalism and capitalism, had 111 of 189 seats, while the Socialists had 19. For every 34,000 votes in the elections of 1908 the Radicals had picked up eight seats in the federal parliament [assembly], while the Socialists required the same number to win two.²⁶

Membership of the Swiss socialist party increased steadily from 10,000 in 1911 to 33,000 in early 1914²⁷ but in the pre-war period the biggest rival of the radical party was not the socialist party but the Christian conservatives. They held 18% of seats in comparison to 5% of an amalgam of various socialist groups.²⁸ However, as explained earlier, these figures in parliament did not accurately reflect public support on the ground. Both the left and the right campaigned for the introduction of proportional representation but chose to exert their constrained influence on political debate in very

²⁴ *Volkszeitung* 15 April, 1915.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Jonathan Steinberg, *Why Switzerland?*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996), p. 57.

²⁷ François Masnata & Claire Rubattel, *Le pouvoir suisse. Séduction démocratique et répression suave*, (Editions de l'Aire, Vevey, 1995).

²⁸ Bundesarchiv, Bern, Ref. Nr. 40001206, "Bundesversammlung/Assemblée fédérale, Nationalrat/Conseil national, Gewählt für die 21. Amtsperiode 1908—1911", *Eidgenössischer Staatskalender*, (1909); Swiss Parliament Online Data Base, *Datenbank der Ratsmitglieder seit 1848*, (<http://www.parlament.ch/d/suche/Seiten/ratsmitglieder.aspx>) [accessed 28 September 2013].

different ways. While the socialist movement engaged in petitions for constitutional reform and in strike action, the Christian conservatives focussed on the organisation of oppositional voting alliances, which according to Urs Altermatt:

slowed or halted the radical law-making machinery. In this way the Catholic-conservative opposition [which was] excluded from executive authority in the government found compensation for its powerlessness in parliament.²⁹

Despite the evocation of Article 3 of the Federal decree of 3rd of August 1914, which extended the powers of the executive, the Swiss petition and referenda system remained the same. There were five referenda during the war. Did the socialists and conservatives exert an influence on voters in these referenda? To what extent did the linguistic divisions influence the debate?

2.3 First Referendum and General Election

The first of five referenda during the war was held on a revision of article 130 of the federal constitution and the adjunction of article 114bis to the federal constitution. Both referred to the constitutional guarantee of social insurance for the unemployed (Art.114bis) and for particular regions and professions experiencing economic hardship (Art.103). Elections to the national council were also held on the same day. However, for the francophone press, oppositional voting alliances and rival political allegiance was not of primary concern. The *Journal de Genève*'s main article on the election³⁰, 25 October 1914, focused on the participation of the military in Swiss elections and referenda during wartime. However, the paper's concern regarding the increased power of the military in wartime was once again defined by the linguistic division. Swiss-born but of German parentage, Ulrich Wille was controversially elected as head of the Swiss army on 8 August 1914. His vocal support for Germany and adoption of Prussian-style drill worried the francophone community in particular.

The linguistic divide can also be seen in the divergence of opinion between the Swiss minister of defence, Decoppet, who was francophone and General Wille. Decoppet favoured a reduction of troops mobilised, which would allow a substantial number of demobilised men to vote in the upcoming referenda and elections as citizens. Wille disagreed, arguing that the troops were "not war ready [...] and not what was presented publically" but crucially, in his opinion, Switzerland continued to be in grave danger of being invaded by France.³¹ The francophone defence minister saw both France and Germany as equal threats but deemed an invasion by either unlikely, given the onset of trench warfare. The high command's position stood and Wille requested that a date be set allowing the

²⁹ Urs Altermatt, *Katholizismus und Moderne. Zur Sozial- und Mentalitätsgeschichte der Schweizer Katholiken im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, (Benziger, Zurich, 1989), p. 146.

³⁰ The article column is framed with articles relating to the situation in Belgium; "Souscription du journal de Genève en faveur des Belges", "Fribourg – Pour les Belges".

³¹ "nicht kriegsbereit [...] war nicht das, was sie äusserlich darstellte." Bundesarchiv, Bern, E 27, Archiv-Nr. 13458, I, *Le General U. Wille au Chef du Département militaire fédéral, C.Decoppet*, (Bern, 31 October 1914).

soldiers to vote separately. For the francophone community this was perceived as the high command's interference in Swiss democratic process. Francophone concern may have been warranted. In a more significant referendum, the military could potentially influence the vote. The 220,000 Swiss men mobilised in August 1914 would have made up 26% of the registered electorate in the election and referendum of 1914. Given that only 44% of the registered electorate actually voted in the referendum of 1914, the possibility of the military's interference did seem as credible as the military could potentially have ensured over half of the voting electorate voted. It is significant, however, that in the resulting debate, the press was once again divided in their reaction, along linguistic lines. The francophone press expressed their concern yet the germanophone press did not even debate the military's proposal. However, it is also significant that such disquiet did not interfere with Swiss citizens' allegiance to their army or with francophone Swiss military recruitment. From 3 to 7 August, 220,000 Swiss men were put into service. Once again, on an international stage the image of national unity overrode other divisions.

The federal government acquiesced to the military's demand that their soldiers vote in a separate ballot held a month later, 7 November 1914. While the referendum passed without much comment, the results of the general election to the federal council provoked the francophone press to openly criticise the political establishment. On 10 November 1914, following the military vote, the *Journal de Genève* condemned the political dominance of the Radical Party. The editor of the *Journal de Genève*'s stark tone illustrated his dismay at the narrow defeat of Liberal councillor Frédéric-Jules de Rabours by the dominant Radical Party's candidate Jacques-Louis Willemin:

The defeat of our friend is deeply regrettable, because he would have been an invaluable asset to the Genevan representation in Bern. But we are counting on the next ballot to repair the injustice and to assure Mr. De Rabours the place he deserves among our federal representatives.³²

De Rabours's strong criticism of germanophone reaction to the invasion of Belgium, and his vocal opposition to the election of germanophile Swiss General Ulrich Wille as head of the Swiss military in August 1914, were considered by the *Journal de Genève* to have been contributory factors in his defeat.

2.4 Military

The Swiss military tribunal system conducts criminal proceedings in relation to criminal offences perpetrated by uniformed staff of military organisations and mobilised citizen soldiers while on duty. It also includes those who may have committed offences regarding military secrecy and breaches of military discipline. General mobilization throughout the war meant that the majority of Swiss male

³² L'échec de notre ami est profondément regrettable, car il aurait été pour la députation genevoise à Berne une force extrêmement précieuse. Mais nous comptons sur un prochain scrutin pour réparer cette injustice et pour assurer à M. De Rabours la place qu'il mérite dans notre députation fédérale. *Journal de Genève*, 10 November 1914.

citizens were citizen soldiers. Military service was a key component of national mobilisation in defence of neutrality. While very different from combat, it nonetheless imposed a major strain, potentially testing national support for a Swiss union Sacrée. Comparison in the Netherlands is especially relevant as with belligerent countries, military justice is therefore an important indicator of attitudes to the war. While the rate of cantonal prosecutions and federal-court prosecutions remained generally consistent, the rate of military-court prosecutions for the duration of the war, peaked dramatically during 1915.³³ The following graph displays the percentage of military prosecutions, as a proportion of the total of all Swiss prosecutions, from 1912-1920.³⁴ The peak of military court prosecutions in 1915 indicated a level of dissent existed that had previously not been seen. On average a mobilised Swiss soldier served 500 days on active duty and received no compensation for loss of earnings.

Throughout the war this was a key bone of contention. Military prosecutions rose from 324 in 1914 to 2256 cases in 1915.³⁵ This rise in persecutions corresponded with a similar trend in other neutral countries. According to Maartje M. Abbenhuis' analysis of the Netherlands during the First World War, "By April 1915, commanders already had real problems convincing their men of the necessity of continued mobilisation."³⁶ Though neutral, the Swiss front was not immune to the influence of changes within the morale of the belligerent front. The declarations of defence, in germanophone soldiers' magazines such as "Pro Patria"³⁷, echoed the patriotic declarations of war among the belligerent powers. Though the experience of warfare was of course not comparable, there were points of comparison in how both belligerent and neutral mobilisation and morale were instigated, manufactured and controlled. It also could be argued that the methods of revolt and dissent against such public and official coercion were equally comparable among both belligerent and neutral powers.

The most common Swiss military prosecutions throughout the war were for desertion, which averaged 57% of all cases brought before the Swiss military court between 1914-1918. Despite the peak in prosecutions in general during 1915, specific cases of desertion dipped by 33% that year in comparison to 1914's proportion of prosecutions for desertion.³⁸ This reduction was, perhaps, a consequence of the fact that the majority of desertions must have taken place during the initial mobilisation. However, other manifestations of low morale increased generally among the mobilised forces. According to historian Hans Rudolf Fuhrer, the style of command seemed to have become a particular irritant:

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ See Appendix 1. Hansjörg Siegenthaler & Heiner Ritzmann-Blickenstorfer (eds.), "W.13 Neue Urteilsauszüge des Zentralstrafregisters 1906-1986", *Historische Statistik der Schweiz*, (Chronos Verlag, 1996), p. 1027.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Maartje M. Abbenhuis, *The Art of Staying Neutral The Netherlands in the First World War, 1914-1918*, (Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, 2006), p. 226.

³⁷ Bundesarchiv, Bern, E27 14080 *Kompanie- (Batterie-) Zeitungen vom Aktivdienst 1914-1918*, "Pro Patria", cover of *Grenzbesetzung 1914-1915*, *Kompagnie Zeitung*, Etappenkompagnie 1/103.

³⁸ Bundesarchiv, Bern, E5330-01 OA 1914-1921, *General registratur der Militärgerichtsfälle*, Part 1 Personenindex.

The leadership style of many officers and under-officers soon led to an encroaching sullenness among servicemen, a military service which was rarely orientated around the person and set on tasks and situation law. A key reason for the dissatisfaction lay in the training methods of the drill.³⁹

1915 saw a 2% increase in insubordination and stealing which each made up 16% of all military prosecutions⁴⁰. Two relatively new prosecution categories emerged during 1915: rioting and self-mutilation, which started in 1915 at 5% of cases. As in Switzerland, mobilised soldiers also rioted in the Dutch army in 1915.⁴¹ However, while the Dutch high command went to great lengths to stifle any report of rioting, the Swiss high command did not appear to have either the power or will to ban such reports.⁴² The rise in insubordination and the appearance of rioting and self-mutilation among the mobilised troops in 1915 undermined the picture of high-morale and national unity presented by military authorities and public officials.⁴³ As one of the three main centralised institutions of the state, the Swiss military during the election campaign of Ulrich Wille in 1914, disregarded the linguistically-defined allegiance that had of its largest minority. While the linguistic allegiance of military cases prosecuted cannot be satisfactorily verified, the dramatic rise in military prosecutions and the new types of prosecutions that emerged in 1915, suggest a breakdown in unity; a dramatic rise which cannot be brushed aside as inevitable unrest related to continued mobilisation.

Intriguingly, such dramatic peaks in military prosecutions were not paralleled by civil prosecution in cantonal courts, which actually decreased marginally during 1915. Initially this could suggest that such a dramatic rise in prosecutions was exclusive to the military. Swiss civilians were more vocal in terms of allegiance to belligerent powers than Swiss soldiers. The wider context of this prosecution data suggested that decentralised authority, which brought civilian cases to court, was more selective in its prosecution. However biased the allegiance of the high command may have been, the highly-centralised structure of the Swiss military allowed each case to be prosecuted under the same set of laws and centralised process. By contrast, the Swiss police force was highly federalised and did not exist as a unified national entity. It could be argued that the centralised unified authority of the Swiss military was both an example and an aegis of national unity, at least in theory. The administrative structure and identity of the Swiss police force differed from canton to canton. This made it more an

³⁹ "Der Führungsstil vieler Offiziere und Unteroffiziere führte bald zu einer verbreiteten Dienstverdrossenheit, da sie den Dienstbetrieb nur selten menschenorientiert, aufgabenbezogen und situationsgerecht gestalteten. Ein häufiger Grund der Unzufriedenheit bildete die Ausbildungsmethode des Drills." Hans Rudolf Fuhrer, *Die Schweizer Armee im Ersten Weltkrieg. Bedrohung, Landesverteidigung und Landesbefestigung*, (NZZ-Verlag, Zürich 1999).

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Abbenhuis, *Art of Staying Neutral*, (2006), p. 227.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

example and aegis of internal difference rather than of national unity, influenced by differing religious and linguistic affinities. This shall be examined further in chapter five.

2.5 The Second Swiss Referendum of the War, 6 June 1915

The second referendum of the war, held on 6 June 1915, referred to the proposed adoption of a article concerning the introduction of a non-renewable war tax. This referendum was significant as 94.3% of the electorate voted yes. Such a near unanimous decision had not been seen either before or since.⁴⁴ When the voting patterns of the cantons like Basel-Stadt and Geneva are compared, the referendum of 1915 reflected a convergent trend.⁴⁵ Both cantons are comparable because of their relative parity of population density related to the number of registered voters during the period cited, and because of their similar religious affiliations⁴⁶. The francophone Genevan electorate and germanophone Basel electorate appeared to have begun to vote similarly from 1914. What was unusual was that the catholic and rural majority francophone canton of Valais first voted similarly to protestant francophone Geneva in 1915 and exhibited a more convergent trend with Geneva in subsequent referenda during the war. Analysis of these voting patterns raised two key questions: First, was this new convergence, between what had previously been two social and religiously opposed cantons, evidence of the emergence of a distinctly francophone voting block? Second, could the overwhelming support for the introduction of a Swiss war tax have been the result of similar political truces witnessed a year earlier within both France and Germany?

A lower voter turnout among francophone cantons for the referendum of 1915 may have had a bearing on the overwhelming nature of the vote. Though traditionally lower, voter turnout among francophone cantons was considerably lower than among the germanophone cantons: the cantons of Geneva and Neuchâtel had the lowest voter-turnout rates of 32.8% and 36.0% respectively. These figures can be compared with the higher turnout rates of 88.3% in Aargau and 66.8% in Zurich.⁴⁷ The overall figure of voter turnout among Germanophone cantons was somewhat distorted by the fact that Swiss citizens in rural areas had open-air voting; for example, the canton of Appenzellen. Open-air voting seemed to have encouraged a higher voter turnout. However, the considerably lower overall voter turnout for this referendum and election was significant given the recorded public dissent. The

⁴⁴ The referendum of 1908, which concerned the introduction of federal legislation regarding the use of hydraulic power the transportation and distribution of electricity and received 84.4% yes-votes. The referendum of 1902 on the introduction of a state subsidy for Swiss primary schools 76.3%. No other referendum comes close to the unanimous result of 1915.

⁴⁵ See Appendix 2, Office fédéral de la statistique, Neuchâtel, Collection générale, *Encyclopédie statistique de la Suisse*, Votations populaires fédérales 1901-1950: résultats par cantons.

⁴⁶ Geneva with a registered electorate of 30,750 in 1914 can be more accurately compared with the canton of Basel-Stadt (registered electorate of 24,019) than with the canton of Zurich which has a registered electorate of 115,533. example both the canton of Geneva and Grisons would appear to have similar figures regarding their respective registered electorate, however, the rural area of Grisons with a population density of 4/km² would not accurately compare with the canton of Geneva given its urban electorate density (109/km²).

⁴⁷ Ibid.

voter turnout in Geneva for the 1915 referendum and election was between 10-20% lower than usual, while the figure for Zurich, for example, rose by a similar degree. This low voter turnout among francophone cantons suggested there was a sense of disenchantment among the francophone Swiss. For Masnata and Rubattel, Swiss political consensus did not necessarily mean the absence of conflicts: ⁴⁸

The overlap between political economic, military and cultural elites [gave] priority to politics that [were] oriented towards the continuation of economic and social policies [which favoured] these same elites. Consensus [was] thus established, but at the detriment of specific social groups: the lower classes, but also foreigners and women.⁴⁹

However, in the context of the ideological fourcefield of world war, the threat of invasion and the interal division which emerged, unanimous support for the introduction of a Swiss war tax can be equated with continued support of mobilisation, in spite of internal public division. It also sent an important message abroad. Did this constitute Switzerland's moment of union sacrée?

2.6 Swiss Union Sacrée

Analysis of the francophone-Swiss press coverage of the referendum reveals a thinly veiled unease among its journalists, torn between over enthusiastically confirming their commitment to Swiss unity, while often in the same sentences criticising the Swiss state's and military's "moral conscience"⁵⁰. A front-page article on the day of the election in the *Journal de Genève* was titled "Solidarité nationale". It described how willing the canton of Geneva was to make financial sacrifices for the greater good of Switzerland, in line with every other canton in Switzerland.⁵¹ Clearly, a majority passing of the referendum was expected. However, oddly enough, the *Journal de Genève* felt the need to define its role in such a likely manifestation of national unity: "We would never sacrifice our moral conscience for a *factice* of unity."⁵² What was meant by this "moral conscience"? The consistent reference to "nous" (we) seems to refer to a united francophone Swiss stance rather than a Genevan view point, thus implying that the "eux" or them was Germanophone Switzerland. Belgium was not directly referred to in the article but it was clear from the context that the "moral conscience" referred to related to the francophone public's outrage and condemnation of the invasion, in contrast to the germanophone public's "immoral" silence. The theme of Belgium is reinforced with the columns of articles on the invasion of Belgium which surround it. The argument made could well be that of any journalist of the belligerent powers. The language used, the fears expressed, and motivations for war questioned, all displayed a phenomenon that could be called a Swiss war culture by proxy. If national

⁴⁸ Masnata & Rubattel, *Le pouvoir suisse*, (Editions de l'Aire, 1995).

⁴⁹ Nora Natchkova, *Swiss Consensus and Domination: Areas of Gender Inequality in Switzerland. Comparative Perspective with Sweden, the Netherlands, Finland, Denmark and Austria*, Ph.D. dissertation, (University of Lausanne, 5th September 2012), p. 5.

⁵⁰ *Journal de Genève* 6 June 1915 p.1.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² "Nous ne sacrifierons jamais notre conscience morale à une unite factice" Ibid.

unity is intertwined with Swiss defence, the *Journal de Genève* article's and the wider francophone Swiss motivation for unity lay in a fear of what had happened to the similarly neutral nation of Belgium. The germanophone government's silence pleaded unity for unity sake; the francophone community saw such unity for the *factice* it was.

The Swiss press viewed overwhelming support for the introduction of a war tax as evidence of a political truce between Swiss Conservatives, Liberals and Socialists. According to the nationalist germanophone newspaper *Vaterland*, 5 June 1915, "The war has worked a decisive wonder! Even in the canton of Solothurn there is peace among political parties [and] a real ceasefire has emerged."⁵³ This expression of intra-cantonal political unity was further endorsed by the new Swiss President Motta in a speech he gave on 22nd June 1915, which commemorated the Swiss victory over the Duchy of Burgundy in the Battle of Morat. Though the Battle of Morat occurred on 22nd June 1476, Motta drew parallels with what he saw as an expression of Swiss unity exhibited in the recent referendum:

From Lake Geneva to Lake Ticino to Lake Constance, from the Rhein to the Rhone, from the Alps to the Jura we were internally united. Without [any need of] legislative ties we were united sovereign states in a free confederation.⁵⁴

Motta's rhetoric exhibited a less-measured tone than the tone typical of previous presidents' addresses to the nation. While Hoffmann's letter to the nation at the outbreak of the war could be criticised for endorsing a Radical Party interpretation of a key event, Motta's reference to the historical event he was commemorating was not simply a biased interpretation but a completely inaccurate account of the Battle of Morat. The Swiss Confederacy during 1476 did not stretch from the lakes of Tessin and Geneva, far from it in fact. The Swiss forces that fought came primarily from Bern, Basel, Zurich and Fribourg. Neither Geneva nor Ticino had any part in the battle. Geneva's first union with any of the members of the Swiss confederation was in 1526 with Bern and Fribourg. Ticino was not successfully invaded and conquered by the Confederation until 1512 and did not become a full member of the Swiss Confederation until 1803. Such an unnecessarily distorted version of history presented by such a prominent member of the Swiss government strikes one as an overzealous expression of national unity. Hoffmann's speech to the nation may have exhibited bias but the historical inaccuracies in Motta's speech a year later could be described as the deliberate use of myth-making.

Three days after the referendum, 9 June 1915, was the 100th anniversary of the handover of the francophone region of Jura to the germanophone canton of Bern. In anticipation of the anniversary,

⁵³ "Der Krieg wirkt entschieden Wunder! Sogar im Kanton Solothurn ist unter den politischen Parteien stillschweigend ein gewisser Waffenstillstand eingetreten", *Vaterland*, 5 June 1915 Blatt 2.

⁵⁴ Wir waren vom Genfersee und den Tessiner Seen bis zum Bodensee vom Rhein zur Rhone, von den Alpen zum Jura, innerlich geeinigt ohne verfassungsmässige Bande uns zu einer Eidgenossenschaft freier und souveräner Staaten zusammengeschlossen haben. President Motta, *Speech*, 22 June 1915.

the executive council decided in 1911 that the event should and would be commemorated. A committee of reportedly⁵⁵ reluctant Jurassians was set up to organise the event, the details of which would be dictated from Bern. Analysis of press coverage in the local newspaper *le Petit Jurassien* from 1914 to 1915 indicates an increasing sense of disillusionment with the proposed plans for commemoration. This seems to confirm the general lack of public will towards the celebration. The planned commemoration was abandoned at the last minute, as no one seemed to have shown up. Crucially, however, despite the anger and dissent voiced in the press not a single demonstration took place. Within the confines of the Swiss *union sacrée*, francophone Jurrassians expressed their lack of enthusiasm and support for the celebration but no overt protest was made thus and the façade of unity was maintained.

The image of national unity presented was countered with the divided reality. During 1915, violence against germanophone citizens and germanophone visitors, in particular, increased. Riots during 1915, in sensitive areas like Fribourg, which straddled the francophone-germanophone Swiss fault line, indicated there was palpable discord.⁵⁶ Accounts of Swiss public opinion by French, German and Swiss diplomats in 1915 contradicted the image of national unity that was publically presented. A flurry of diplomatic correspondence between the German ambassador in Bern, von Romberg, to Minister of Foreign Affairs von Bethmann Hollweg, from March to June 1915, documented Germany's preoccupation with what it saw as the worsening of the linguistic division. Of key concern to the German ambassador was the spate of reported attacks on random German citizens in the franco-germanophone canton of Fribourg by Swiss citizens, chanting "Long Live France".⁵⁷ The victims included a senior professor of German origin, who taught at Fribourg University. Germanophone public opinion would seem to have echoed Bethmann Hollweg's concerns. Zurich pastor Eduard Blocher, grandfather of the recent leader of the current right-wing party SVP (Schweizerische Volkspartei), published a pamphlet in June 1915 which stated: "In Western [francophone] Switzerland it seems to be all right to go about beating up German citizens, even if they had nothing to do with the matters of war".⁵⁸ The image of national unity presented in the referendum result of 1915 could not be further from the divided reality presented in internal and external diplomatic and regional reports.

However the question still remains, with such evident disharmony why did the Swiss electorate vote unanimously for the introduction of a non-renewable war tax? English-Walling offered a possible explanation:

⁵⁵ *Le Petit Jurassien*, 1914, passim.

⁵⁶ Siegenthaler & Ritzmann-Blickenstorfer (eds.), *Historische Statistik der Schweiz*, (1996), p.1027.

⁵⁷ "Vive la France" Politischen Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts, Berlin, Prof. Dr. Gustave Schnürer, Deutsche Hilfsvereins to Von Romberg March 1915 p.2; Von Romberg to Von Bethmann Hollweg 20 March 1915 p.1.

⁵⁸ "In der Westschweiz aber hielt man es fürs legitim, deutsche Staatsangehörige anzurempeln, auch wenn sie mit dem Kriegsgeschehen direkt nichts zu tun hatten." Archives Générales du Royaume, Brussels, Eduard Blocher, *Belgische Neutralität und Schweizerische Neutralität*, (Verlag der "Stimmen im Sturm," Zürich, 1915), p.47.

The German Socialist Reichstag members were only defending their fatherland, just as the Swiss comrades in the national parliament had done when they voted for mobilization and the war loan.⁵⁹

The *Journal de Genève*'s review of the referendum results offers an alternate explanation. It saw the result as a victory for the dramatic rise in support for the Liberals as opposed to the dominant Swiss Radicals. This theory could be described as a Liberal-Party-francophone-protest-vote buried in a national consensus of varying motivations. While it did explain why many francophone citizens, otherwise disenchanted with the national government in Bern, were moved to vote, it could not explain everything. While there was certainly a dramatic rise in national support of the Liberal Party, scepticism should be employed regarding the *Journal de Genève*'s account because of its clear political allegiance to the Liberal political agenda. Liberal councillor De Rabours went on to become political director of the *Journal de Genève* in 1928. It should be noted that the backlash against the Swiss Radicals during cantonal elections both during and after the war is better defined as a backlash against centrist values. While the Swiss Liberals, darlings of the *Journal de Genève*, contributed to this, the rise in influence of the conservative Catholic parties of central Switzerland contributed equally to the Radicals' downfall in the elections during the war. The Protestant, Liberal ethos of the *Journal de Genève* makes it difficult for it to acknowledge the contribution of the Conservative Catholics. Founding member of the resurgent Conservative movement Adalbert Wirz had an interesting take on the benefits of the *röstigraben* divide. In a letter to his friend Rudolf von Reding 9 February 1916 he stated; "that the opposition of francophone Switzerland had its good points [...] that after the war, centralisation and militarism were not at the forefront in the way they previously were."⁶⁰ However, the referendum of June 1915 indicated that support for the military, under the guise of approval for the introduction of a war tax, was as strong, perhaps even stronger than ever. On 13 November 1916 an article in *Vaterland* described this *Burgfrieden* unity as a "godly peace".⁶¹ The Socialists defined their *union sacrée* thus: "The war between nations has quietened the class war between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat".⁶²

2.7 Christian Conservative Reaction

⁵⁹ Walling, *The Socialists and the War*, p. 397.

⁶⁰ "Dass die Opposition der Welschen auch ihr Gutes habe [...] dass nach dem Kriege Zentralisation und Militarismus nicht so üppig ins Kraut schießen wurden, wie es sonst geschehen wäre.", Private Collection of Manuscripts by von Reding, Schwyz. Adalbert Wirz letter to Rudolf von Reding, 9th February 1916.

⁶¹ "Gottesfrieden"

⁶² "Der Krieg zwischen den Nationen hatte den Klassenkampf zwischen Bourgeoisie und Proletariat allenthalben zum Stillstand gebracht." Hans Erb, "Zur Vorgeschichte des Landesgeneralstreiks 1918 in der Schweiz: II Teil: die internationale Zimmerwalder Bewegung/ III Teil : die radikalisation der sozialdemokratischen Partei der Schweiz", *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Geschichte*, (Verlag Schweizerische Gesellschaft für Geschichte, 1961). Vol. 11, p. 434.

In his analysis of the rise of the Christian right in Switzerland during the War, Bernhard Wigger reiterates Walling's conclusions regarding the Swiss Socialists. Like Walling, he saw the referendum regarding the introduction of a Swiss war tax as an example of a Swiss "Burgfrieden".⁶³ The key threat to this *Burgfrieden* (fortress peace) was the *röstigraben* linguistic divide:

The war ripped open non-party trenches. The contrast between German and Romansh (francophone) became as major threat to the unity as the contrast between right and left. As the Swiss gazed mesmerised on international developments during the first few months of the war, they gradually broke away from their torpor. The internal political life came back to relative normality.⁶⁴

The relative normality that Wigger described required that internal political differences would be set aside in the best interests of the state when a war tax supporting the Swiss military was in the national interest of a country increasingly surrounded by belligerent powers – an *union sacrée* of right and left, militarists and pacifists, Radical and Liberal, Catholic and Protestant, germanophone and francophone.

The increased influence of the conservative Christian movement during this Swiss political truce had parallels with the rise of French Catholic Conservatism. As the war progressed, French anti-socialist rhetoric coincided with the rising influence of conservative rhetoric and the political axis of the *union sacrée* shifted from centre to centre right.

2.8 Remobilisation 1916

Rumours in the final months of 1916 of a possible French attack led to a period of increased mobilisation, and from December 1916 to January 1917 100,000 more Swiss soldiers were mobilised⁶⁵. Unlike the mobilisation of August 1914, when patriotism and civic duty overrode division and discontent, this time the government and military establishment directly addressed the issue of Swiss morale. This tied in with a wider campaign of cultural mobilisation of the home front and the Swiss *union sacrée*. In order to address disillusionment, the *Vortragsdienst der Armee* organised talks and entertainment for the troops. The military library in Bern was closed from the beginning of the war; the building in Bern was used by the Army Staff. This seemed to have been a matter of discord among troops stationed often in remote areas for long periods of time. It reopened three months later but it was not until 1916 that a programme of work was initiated to catalogue the library. This seems to have boosted moral somewhat. 1,000 *Soldatenstuben* and so-called *Soldaten Häuser* were set up

⁶³ Bernhard Wigger, *Die Schweizerische konservative Volkspartei 1903-1918*, (Universitätsverlag Freiburg Schweiz, 1997), p. 55.

⁶⁴ "Der Krieg [riss] überparteiliche Gräben auf. Der Gegensatz zwischen deutsch und welsch wurde zu einer größeren Gefahr für die Einheit als der Gegensatz zwischen Rechts und Links.[...] Starren die Schweizer noch in den ersten Monaten des Krieges gebannt auf die international Entwicklung[...] lösten sich nach und nach aus der Erstarrung und fand zu einer relative Normalität zurück." Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

by the *Christlicher Verein Junger Männer (CVJM)*, which aimed to “help the soldiers to make productive use of their time”⁶⁶. Similar to the self-mobilization of belligerent societies, analysed by John Horne and others⁶⁷, voluntary participation of Swiss organisations and agencies like the *Christliche Verein Junger Männer* helped to define Swiss “national ideals” of Christian charity, national unity and inter-religious and linguistic harmony - ideals which were being defended by the Swiss military.

Encouraged by the state, these soldier drop-in points *Soldatenstuben* served many purposes: the involvement of women often as waitresses boosted the moral of the home front, the interaction with members of the opposite sex boosted the morale of both men and women, the *Soldatenstuben*'s endorsement by a Christian organisation would seem to have transcended the linguistic division which had developed yet also diminished the perception of state involvement, thus reinforcing the images of the citizen militia and Swiss civic duty. Finally, the involvement of a religious organisation made an attempt to address soldiers' concerns, yet it diverted attention from reform and reduced the influence of socialism. These *Soldatenstuben* were a key feature in the development of *Soldatenlieder* which developed during the war. Swiss-born but of Polish/German parentage Ladislaus Krupski would become the poster boy for this aspect of Swiss cultural mobilisation. His name was changed to the more Swiss-sounding Hans in der Gand and by 1916 he became known as “The Army's Soldier Singer”.⁶⁸ His song *Gilberte de Courgenay* composed during a period of low morale in the winter of 1915/16 became a hit - the unofficial soldier song of the war. *Gilberte de Courgenay* struck a chord with an increasingly divided public. Each verse was sung in Swiss-German followed by a chorus in French. Set in the Jura, perhaps this could have been seen as a way of accommodating the campaign for Jurrasian independence from Bern. It tells the tale of *Gilberte de Courgenay*, a kind of Swiss version of *Madelon*, the popular French soldier song, by Louis Bousquet/Camille Robert, who befriended many soldiers who frequented an inn in the rural region of Pruntrut. The song encouraged Swiss soldiers to embrace their military service and to see it as some excitement instead of the boredom of peacetime. Gilberte was a bored girl who spent her time “looking out the window three times each hour.”⁶⁹ That was until the war started when she became the girl “who lightened the hearts and minds of every Swiss lad.”⁷⁰ Indeed the final verse with its speculation on future peace came across as somewhat bleak - the empty inn leaves Gilberte and the innkeeper with nothing to do but stare out at the empty village street:

And when the war is over and everyone heads home,
when the innkeeper in her empty inn [has nothing to do but] look out on the street.⁷¹

⁶⁶ “halfen den Soldaten, ihre Freizeit sinnvoll zu gestalten”

⁶⁷ Horne (ed), *State Society and Mobilization*.

⁶⁸ “Soldatensänger der Armee”

⁶⁹ “jedi Stund drümal zum Fänschter us”

⁷⁰ “Iüpft es jedem Schwizerbueb sis Herz und au sis Bei.”

⁷¹ “Und wänn dr Chrieg dänn dure isch und alles heizue gaht
und wänn dr Wirtin ihres Huus leer a dr Strass a staht.”

Crying for the brave 300,000 soldiers who are no more:
 Throws an eye to the window looking out on the Ajoia [plateau]
 and cries for the three hundred thousand soldiers [that are no more]⁷²

An egalitarian portrait of the Swiss military is presented: one in which every soldier "from Corporal to Lieutenant and also to Major"⁷³ "trumpeter"⁷⁴ "drummer"⁷⁵ and "a simple soldier"⁷⁶ drank together in the inn and were treated equally by Gilberte. This image seemed to have been at odds with the complaints of authoritarian Prussian-style drills, which seemed to have particularly irked francophone recruits.

The song may seem to contain somewhat bawdy overtones, as, according to the chorus, Gilberte apparently has knowledge of 300,000 Swiss soldiers and all the officers.⁷⁷ However, the public accounts of Gilberte saw her not as some kind of Swiss sex symbol but as a good Christian waitress who encouraged the Swiss soldiers to talk about their situation, in particular their isolation and disillusionment and in doing so boosted their morale to continue to defend the country. While the chasteness of the protagonist actions can be verified, the context of the setting of the song seemed less than innocent: The song begins: "near Pruntrut in Jura, a farmer has a house."⁷⁸ Pruntrut, or Porrentruy as it was known to its francophone inhabitants, was a Swiss municipality which lies at the foothills of the Jura Mountains in the northwest corner of Switzerland, near Basel and the French border. Hardly the heartland of the linguistic divide, it would seem to be an innocuous location for what could initially have been assumed to be nothing but a light-hearted soldier's song. The more extreme separatist groups emerged during 1917, following the publication of a pamphlet titled "We Want Autonomy for the Canton of Jura"⁷⁹ This new opposition would later form the *Rassemblement Jurassien* and the more sinister *Front de liberation de Jura* and *Groupe Béliet* which predominantly engaged in arson campaigns after the war.

The Jura was the most volatile region of Switzerland. Given to germanophone Protestant Bern, as a result of the Congress of Vienna, the francophone Catholic region of Jura was involved in a protracted and periodically violent campaign for independence from 1815 to 1979. Though state censorship was not enforced as strongly as it was in belligerent states, the Jurassien newspaper, *le petit jurassien*, would appear to have borne the brunt of the limited instances of state censorship. The editor of *le petit jurassien*, Léon Froidevaux, was sentenced before the war to thirteen months imprisonment in

⁷² "Wer wüschet am Fischter d'Augli us und luegt i d'Ajoia
 und trued um die drümal hunderttuusig schöne Ma?"

⁷³ "vom Corporal zum Lütenant bis ufe a Major"

⁷⁴ "Trompeter"

⁷⁵ "Tambour"

⁷⁶ "eine simple Soldat"

⁷⁷ "Elle connaît trois cent mille soldats et tous les officiers."

⁷⁸ "Bi Pruntrut im Jura, da het ä Wirt äs Huus."

⁷⁹ "Nous voulons l'autonomie pour le canton du Jura".

March 1914, for criticising Swiss neutrality and for a further fifteen days following the outbreak of the war for criticising what he perceived as the germanophile influence of the Swiss high command. The official soldier song Gilberte de Courgenay's reference to the Jurassian town of Pruntrut was significant in that it endorsed the policy of germanization, and by incorporating the Jura within the image of unity the song portrayed, it allowed the song to convey a message of state propaganda. Before the war, it seemed fellow francophone cantons remained aloof from Jura's separatist campaign. One reason could have been that before the war the linguistic affinity felt by francophone cantons was not strong enough to override the religious opposition. Though francophone, protestant Geneva did not necessarily support Catholic Jura's independence struggle from germanophone Protestant Bern. However, the growing linguistic affinity during the war was not the only factor to stimulate unity in the francophone community, for the rise of socialism also played a key role. The Jurassian political movement for independence had its influence on the anarchist movement. The *Jura Federation*, the anarchist wing of the First International, defined the independence movement as anti-authoritarian and anti-centralist. This alienated them somewhat from what they perceived as the centralized authoritarian structure of the germanophone-dominated Swiss representation at the First International. Both Kropotkin and Bakunin spent considerable time in Jura and published in the Geneva based *La Révolte* journal, thus damaging the influence of an anarchist ideology that defined francophone Swiss socialism. Genevan socialists of 1914, by contrast, were predominantly defined as anarcho-syndicalists.

2.9 Conclusion

The French mutinies of 1917 seriously damaged the union sacrée, while internal division among the SPD regarding Germany's war aims heralded cracks within the unity of the Burgfrieden. The French union sacrée may be described as internally damaging in that it fostered the continued perpetuation of war enthusiasm and spiritual mobilisation of the Home front, long after it seemed sane to do so. The Swiss union sacrée exerted a negative impact on Swiss democratic structures. It endorsed a state of siege law which had the potential to harm the democratic process. It delayed needed reform of the parliamentary electoral structure, thus excluding a significant number of minority parties from exerting the power they democratically-speaking should have held. It condoned, fomented and encouraged anti-socialist sentiment, especially among the military, which inadvertently led to a perception of acceptability regarding extreme right-wing fascist movements.

While traditional historiographical analysis focused often exclusively on socialist compliance and interaction with the Burgfrieden and the union sacrée, ultimately, the political truce, the patriotic nationalist feeling it inspired and crucially the suspension of civil liberties it endorsed, impacted as much on the development of the right as it did on the left in French and German politics. For example, the upsurge in religious faith alone during the war, documented by Annette Becker, may have encouraged support for the development of right-wing politics, but the blurring of boundaries between religious patriotism and the secular political aims of the war seemed to have been more significant and directly influenced the development of right-wing politics. For Michel Winock, the union sacrée encouraged the integration of Catholic Conservatism into the Republic. The political isolation in

Switzerland of Catholic Conservatism after the Swiss Civil War was somewhat comparable with French Catholic Conservatives. The single-member majority vote system maintained the Radical Party's dominance in Swiss politics during the war and did not reflect the rise in support for Swiss Socialist parties.⁸⁰ Swiss mobilization during the first two years of the war, like that of the belligerent mobilization outlined by John Horne,⁸¹ relied on persuasion in the form of self and cultural mobilization rather than on coercion. By 1915, this appeared to have changed. In the case of Switzerland, military prosecutions increased dramatically, but it has to be said the coercion used by the Swiss state was not as severe as that inflicted within belligerent states. By contrast, civilian prosecutions decreased and the deepening linguistic bias which developed within the police force suggested that the Swiss state did not coerce civilian life to same extent as in belligerent states. However, the fact that such bias was allowed to develop can also be seen as an example of the negative impact on democratic structures that the coerced unity of the Swiss *union sacrée* had encouraged.

The experience in the neutral Dutch political sphere was quite different. Ivo Kuypers argued that political unity in the Netherlands during the war increased co-operation and encouraged constructive dialogue, which forced the government to consult with trade unions and to recognise their own responsibilities to their citizens.⁸² Could the same be said of neutral Switzerland? According to Kuypers' research and more recent research by Samuël Kruizinga, despite divisions within Dutch public opinion, Dutch political unity during the First World War was a constructive force for change which laid the foundations of the Dutch *overlegeconomie* (consultation economy) and welfare state.⁸³ The engaged nature of interaction between the Dutch political elites and the general populace would appear to have been in stark contrast with the disconnect, analysed by Becker, between the French political élite and the general French public, who remained steadfast in their support for the war. However, the *levée en masse* character of Swiss militarized unity – the Swiss citizen militia – suggests that the Swiss case may have been more comparable, in this regard, with the coerced unity which developed in the French *union sacrée* and the German *Burgfrieden*. The next two chapters will seek to answer whether Swiss political unity increased a co-operation and political dialogue similar to the Netherlands. Or, could Swiss unity be described as a *Burgfrieden/Union Sacrée*, which weakened and undermined the civic sphere's capacity to resolve the linguistic divide through reasoned public debate? And was the linguistic divide allowed to fester and define Swiss reaction throughout the war, despite the image of national unity presented? The political shift from the dominance of one party to multiple party allegiances by 1918, would seem to indicate there was some form of tension within the

⁸⁰ Steinberg, *Why Switzerland?*, (1996), p. 57.

⁸¹ Horne (ed), *State Society and Mobilization*, (1997), pp. 1-17.

⁸² Ivo Kuypers, *In de Schaduw van de Grote Oorlog. De Nederlandse arbeidersbeweging en de overheid, 1914-1920*, (Aksant, Amsterdam, 2002).

⁸³ Samuël Kruizinga, *Economische politiek: de Nederlandsche Overzee Trustmaatschappij (1914 -1919) en de Eerste Wereldoorlog*, PhD dissertation, Instituut voor Cultuur en Geschiedenis, Universiteit van Amsterdam, Digital Academic Repository, oai:ARNO:391047, (2011), p. 496.

Swiss public sphere. Determining the significance of the linguistic division in this political shift will be the key question.

CHAPTER THREE: Escalade¹ – Breaching the Union Sacrée (1915-1916)

"The Swiss people stand together firm and resolute behind their authorities."

President Arthur Hoffmann, 5 August 1914.²

"The idea of a specifically Swiss democratic spirit, which automatically guarantees the success of the military, is a hallucination that from the first day of battle will become painful and bloody disillusion."

Chief of General Staff Theophil Sprecher von Bernegg³

By the end of 1915, mobilized soldiers and public opinion had begun to question official expressions of unity. Military prosecutions peaked during 1915 and the federal police force displayed increased levels of linguistic bias and dysfunction. Nevertheless, the image of Swiss unity was officially maintained and widely publicised. By the beginning of 1916, however, revelations regarding a spying scandal within the military threatened to undermine national unity. Similarly to its reaction to the invasion of Belgium, the francophone-Swiss public did not remain silent. The scandal exposed the growing sense of impunity enjoyed by the Swiss military from the beginning of the war. It was this sense of impunity and the weakening of democratic structures, imposed by the coerced unity of the Swiss *union sacrée*, which enabled key military figures like Theophil Sprecher von Bernegg to openly advocate rejection of the Swiss "democratic spirit".⁴ An increasingly divided Swiss public began to question its faith in the key bastion of Swiss "spiritual defence" – the Swiss military. The *Affaire des Colonels* during 1916 initiated an outpouring or *escalade* of public debate, which breached the defensive *union sacrée* and reaffirmed the linguistic divide.

3.1 Espionage

From the outbreak of the war, French diplomatic correspondence expressed fears that Swiss germanophone affinity could lead Switzerland into an alliance with Germany.⁵ According to the

¹ *L'escalade* – *escalade* from the French verb to climb was a medieval tactic of siege warfare, used to describe the scaling of defensive walls. One of the biggest Genevan and Swiss festivals *L'escalade* is celebrated around the nearest weekend to the 12th December each year. The celebration commemorates the *L'escalade* of 1602 in which the protestant citizens of Geneva successfully fought off and resisted the armies of Catholic Charles Emmanuel I Duke of Savoy.

² "Derrière ses autorités le peuple Suisse tout entier se tient ferme et résolu." Letter from President Arthur Hoffmann dated 5th August 1915, *Journal de Genève*, 8 August 1914.

³ "L'idée d'un esprit démocratique spécifiquement suisse qui garantit automatiquement le succès militaire [...] relève d'une hallucination qui, dès le premier jour de la bataille, entraînera une douloureuse et sanglante désillusion." Benedict Hartmann, *Oberstkorpskommandant Theophil Sprecher von Bernegg, Generalstabschef der Schweizerischen Armee*, (F. Schuler, Chur, 1930), p. 84.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Archives National, Paris, F7 12934, *Report by Prefect of the department de la Savoie to minister of interior Chambéry*, (1 August 1914).

correspondence of the Swiss minister for defence, francophone, Camille Decoppet, the information which was being passed on generally concerned German and French troop movements, viewed from the border by Swiss citizens.⁶ Similar to the situation in Holland⁷, such espionage was a source of income for the Swiss citizens involved who would pass on the information gathered to the highest bidder.⁸ While Minister Decoppet warned border cantons of such practices, there did not seem to be a centrally-administered campaign against them. By contrast, the Dutch authorities were able to organise a centrally-administered campaign, which included a poster campaign, to dissuade its citizens from spying on belligerent powers.⁹ With the onset of trench warfare, it was suggested in germanophone correspondence that Swiss espionage changed to intelligence gathering from the prisoners of war and interned deserters residing in Switzerland. Obviously this information focused less on troop movements, but continued to be dictated by the linguistic affinity of location and the dominant nationality of resident prisoners of war and interned soldiers. However, it seems unlikely that such civilian espionage was as serious a treat as was maintained by the high command. Civilian repatriation convoys officially ended in March 1915 and as shall be examined in chapter five, the repatriation of military prisoners of war, which began a few months later, primarily concerned the repatriation and hospitalisation through Switzerland of ill and injured prisoners who did not have much contact with the wider public. The localisation of foreign espionage and the lack of a centrally-administered police force and supporting legislation left the prosecution of suspected cases of espionage open to the linguistic bias of the röstigraben divide. While the concerns of civilian espionage may have been exaggerated, how the divide influenced the reactions of those involved revealed the extent with which the linguistic divide framed public and official opinion.

For example, two months into the war, the germanophone high command, and crucially not the cantonal police, set up a national detective department in the border town of Porrentruy, which was a few miles from the French border. The fact that francophone Porrentruy was chosen and not a town on the Austrian or German borders, for example, displayed the high command's rather biased assessment of where the key threat of foreign espionage lay – France. The high command and germanophone public opinion in urban centres like Basel and Zurich perceived espionage as predominantly perpetrated by Swiss francophone civilians under foreign influence and attributed increased prisoner of war and foreign civilian migration to a perceived rise in espionage. The francophone Minister for Defence, Decoppet, viewed espionage differently. For Decoppet it was a

⁶ Staatsarchiv Basel-Stadt, Politisches JJ2, Letter from Camille Decoppet, Minister for the Military, Bern, to the cantonal governments of Bern, Solothurn, Basel-Stadt and Basel-Land, Bern, 24th October 1914.

⁷ P. H. Ritter, *De Donkere Poort. Een boek, behelzende tal van Persoonlijke Herinneringen van vooraanstaande Mannen, Stemningsbeelden, Indrukken, Beschouwingen, Belangrijke en Onbelangrijke Gebeurtenissen, Verhalen en Anecdoten over Nederland in de jaren 1914-1918* (D.A Daamen's Uitgeversmaatschappij, Den Haag, 1931), Vol. 2, pp.198-199.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Archieven van de Generale Staf, Nationaal Archief, The Hague, Ref. Nr. 2.13.70, 98 (1914-1940), Commander of Coastal Battery near Neuzen, The Netherlands, "Politieverordening" poster, 2nd November 1914, mede als onderdeel van het Algemeen Hoofdkwartier.

problem which included all Swiss communities, officials as well as civilian citizens. It was encouraged by the lack of a centralised police force and should be tackled with the implementation of legislation.¹⁰

Decoppet was correct in his assessment. The linguistic affinity or “kinship”¹¹ between the police in French-, German- and Italian-speaking cantons and the police in neighbouring France, Germany and Italy was deeply entrenched even before the war.¹² While the majority of germanophone cantonal police were divided into “Abteilungen”¹³ and “Kommandos”¹⁴; the francophone cantonal police had a “gendarmerie” and a “sûreté”¹⁵, which was a similar structure to that of the French police system. Both germanophone and francophone structures were not compatible. As a result the relationship, for example, between the Genevan police force and its counterparts in France was very close.¹⁶ Geneva had a tradition of communicating often directly, with the French police regarding political cases.¹⁷ Similarly the cantonal police of Basel-Stadt canton maintained immediate contact with the German police in the border area of Lörrach, throughout the war.¹⁸ The absence of a national Swiss executive police force made the suppression of espionage a cantonal affair. As a result, this made it quite difficult to implement a consistent policy targeting espionage. By contrast, the centralised Dutch police and military structure allowed it to be stricter, quicker and more consistent in tackling its espionage problem.

In addition espionage in Switzerland was highly localised. The high number of Russian émigrés based in Geneva, for example, was not comparable with Italian espionage in Ticino, Vatican espionage in Lucerne, or German espionage in Basel.¹⁹ The linguistic tensions of the war often determined the affinity of the local populace and sometimes its police towards a belligerent nation. However, it is important to note that such affinities were not always determined by mere linguistic familiarity. The strength of the affinity of key Swiss trading towns lay also in the focus of their trade. Their motivations were similar to the trading towns of other neutral countries. For example, despite the lack of linguistic affinity, key trading towns in the Netherlands were similarly divided in their links with one or other of the belligerent powers. For example, Rotterdam, situated on the Rhine, had a pro-German stance that

¹⁰ Staatsarchiv Basel-Stadt, Politisches JJ2, *Camille Decoppet, Militärdepartement, Bern to cantonal governments of Bern, Solothurn, Basel-Stadt and Basel-Land*, (Bern, 24 October 1914).

¹¹ Hsi-Huey Liang, *The Rise of Modern Police and the European State System from Metternich to the Second World War*, (Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 36.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Dr. Robert Heuss, *Polizeikommando Basel-Stadt, “Die Organisation des Nachrichtendienstes in der Schweiz,”* Lecture, Landespolizeischule, Freiburg im Breisgau, (1984), p. 5.

¹⁵ The Swiss *sûreté* ran the detective branch of the cantonal police in French speaking cantons.

¹⁶ Henri G. Mutrux, *La Police modern au service du public*, (Genève, 1950), p. 15.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Heuss, “Die Organisation des Nachrichtendienstes in der Schweiz,” Lecture, 5.

¹⁹ Siegenthaler & Ritzmann-Blickenstorfer (eds.), *Historische Statistik der Schweiz*, (1996), p. 1027.

lay in the German focus of its trade²⁰. This was similar to Basel, which was also situated on the Rhine. By comparison, the focus of Amsterdam's trade lay in overseas exports, which was dominated by the allies and so its affinity lay with the allied powers rather than with Germany²¹. While the focus of trade may have been a potent factor in the affinity of certain Swiss trading cities, it was the linguistic familiarity which cemented allegiance, allowing a stronger manifestation of affinity to be expressed in the likes of Geneva and Basel than in the likes of Amsterdam or Rotterdam.

National prosecutions statistics further emphasised the linguistic bias which had developed. While the end of 1915 witnessed the beginning of the biggest public spying scandal of the war, prosecutions for spying during 1915 only made up 2% of military prosecutions.²² However, further investigation would seem to indicate that this figure may not be a true reflection of the extent of Swiss espionage for belligerent powers. For example, the half-canton of Basel-Stadt was a key town for espionage. Basel was equidistant to both the French and German borders, situated on the Rhine, and surrounded by both francophone and germanophone cantons, and one in three of its residents were of German citizenship. It was perfectly poised to become a hub for German espionage. Yet between August 1914 and January 1915 a government report published in the *Basler Nachrichten* showed that only 19 of the 236 foreign agents caught by the Basel police had worked for Germany.²³ The majority of the prosecutions were agents who had supposedly worked for France²⁴. A perceived bias regarding the Basel police force was highlighted in the French and francophone-Swiss press. The French newspaper *Paris-Midi* complained: We are told that the police force of canton Basel-Stadt does not hide its anti-French feelings.²⁵ News of accusations regarding the Basel police force reached President Hoffmann himself, who addressed his concerns publically in the canton's main newspaper *Basler Nachrichten*.²⁶ For Hoffmann, however, the key concern was not the crime itself but the perception of it abroad.

While the tone of the *Paris-Midi* article was spiteful and its accusations may have amounted to conjecture, diplomatic correspondence confirmed that a very close working relationship between the Basel police and the German police administrations had developed by 1916. For example, a letter from the cantonal police department to the *Politisches Amt* outlined the "daily contacts and frequent

²⁰ C.K. Elout, "De Nederlandsche oorlogspysche" in Brugman (ed.) *Nederland in den oorlogstijd. De geschiedenis van Nederland en van Nederlandsch-Indië tijdens den oorlog van 1914 tot 1919, voor zoover zij met dien oorlog verband houdt*. (Uitgevers-Maatschappij, "Elsevier", Amsterdam, 1920), pp. 353-369; Wim Klinkert, J.W.M. Schulten, Luc de Vos (eds.), *Mobilisatie in Nederland en België: 1870-1914-1939*. (De Bataafscche Leeuw, Amsterdam, 1991), pp. 67-73.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Arthur Hoffmann, "Bundesrat Hoffmann über die Basler Polizei", in *Basler Nachrichten*, 5 January 1915

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ "Comment la police bâloise pratique la neutralité", editorial, *Paris-Midi*, 12 January 1915, p. 1.

²⁶ Arthur Hoffman, *Basler Nachrichten*, 5 January 1915.

mutual visits" between the Basel and German police.²⁷ The letter explained how the German police inspectors stationed in Alsace often came to Basel to identify people hostile to Germany.²⁸ In a letter dated 14 April 1916 from Freiburg-im-Breisgau's senior lieutenant of German counter-intelligence to Basel Police Inspector Müller (referred to in the *Paris-Midi* article), the senior lieutenant asked for and later received information on a Swiss citizen, referred to as "a French-Swiss Jew from La Chaux-de-Fonds".²⁹ This man was suspected of being an agent for the French intelligence post across Lake Geneva in the French town of Annemasse. The German senior lieutenant's requests were exclusively focussed on francophone and Jewish Swiss citizens, who he suspected were francophone agents. Usually the Basel Police Inspector Müller complied with the German senior lieutenant's requests to monitor certain Swiss citizens and pass on information. Correspondence of June 1916 verifies that Basel police inspector Müller ordered a Swiss detective Vollenweider to investigate the innocent Swiss Jewish shoe seller in Basel called Salomon Geissmann. This was carried out at the request of the German senior lieutenant Hüglin. Reflective of the paranoia of the time, the reason for suspicion lay solely with the fact that Geissmann "could speak French".³⁰ However, in this instance the Basel police inspector disagreed and declared: "Like Geissmann, many people in Basel speak French and are Francophiles. But they have a good right to their preferences and opinions and it simply won't do to treat them right away as spy suspects."³¹ This would suggest that while often biased such Swiss police inspectors remained somewhat independent, especially when the image of unified neutrality was questioned in an international context. Nevertheless, internally they remained sympathetic to the suspicions of some belligerent powers.

3.2 L'Affaire des Colonels

While the high command focused its concern on espionage carried out by civilians, it was within their own ranks that the most serious incidence of espionage occurred. In December 1915, the military and state departments were made aware by cryptologist André Langie that since the beginning of the war, Colonels Friedrich Moritz von Wattenwyl and Karl Egli had been regularly passing on the daily bulletin of the Swiss general staff and decoded diplomatic dispatches of the Swiss diplomatic service to both German and Austro-Hungarian military departments³². This was what would become known as *L'affaire des colonels*. Contrary to J.J. Langendorf and Pierre Streit's brusque analysis of the affair, *L'affaire des colonels*, was a key event of the war for Switzerland.³³ It was not the first scandal which

²⁷ Staatsarchiv, Basel-Stadt, Politisches JJ3, Letter from Basel-Stadt Cantonal Police to Federal political department, Berne, Basel, 28 August 1915.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Staatsarchiv, Basel-Stadt, Politisches JJ3, Letter Oberleutnant Hüglin, Abwehrstelle Süd, to Police Inspector Müller, Basel, Freiburg-im-Breisgau, 14 April 1916.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Bundesarchiv, Bern, E4110A 1000/1801 291 *Egli und von Wattenwyl, Obersten. Diszipl. Bestrafung* (1916)

³³ JJ Langendorf and Pierre Streit, *Face à la guerre – L'armée et le peuple suisses 1914-1918/1939-1945*, (Infolio éditions, CH-Gollion, 2007), pp. 102-104.

compromised Swiss neutrality. It was, however, the first scandal of the war that involved Swiss officials which came to trial, and in which Swiss public opinion and outrage played a key role. Though Langendorf and Streit have argued that the military bulletin was not highly sensitive, as it was addressed to seventy superior officers and official, nevertheless these bulletins contained information regarding troop movements which were not meant to be known by the Germans. More significant than the information passed on is the regularity with which Wattenwyl and Egli passed over the information to the Germans, for it shows that an illicit chain of communication had been established. This communication had the potential not only to undermine Swiss neutrality but also to damage the allies' war effort.³⁴

The cryptologist, Langie, who worked decoding and translating Russian documents and correspondence into German for Colonel von Wattenwyl, suspected a leak. He informed the authorities 10 November 1915. By the end of November, frustrated with the apparent inaction of the authorities,³⁵ Langie decided to go to the press. Though Langie worked through German, it was to the francophone Swiss press that he chose to reveal his suspicions, reporting the matter to Colonel Edouard Secretan of the *Gazette de Lausanne* and Albert Bonnard of the *Journal de Genève*.³⁶

Both Langendorf and Streit echo the contemporary germanophone assessment of both journalists: "francophone journalists, fiercely germanophobic".³⁷ Both Secretan and Bonnard were editors in chief of the two largest francophone newspapers in Switzerland. Colonel Edouard Secretan was editor in chief of the *Gazette de Lausanne* since 1874. Albert Bonnard was editor in chief of the *Journal de Genève* since 1910. While they were francophone, possibly francophile, Bonnard and Secretan were far from the French partisan conspirators they have been hitherto portrayed as. Both men are better considered rivals than friendly co-conspirators. Bonnard worked under Secretan as editor in the *Gazette de Lausanne* until 1910, where an untenable disagreement³⁸ forced him to resign and take up work as rival editor in chief with the *Journal de Genève*. While Edouard Secretan was francophone, he could equally be described as a proud Swiss citizen, whose involvement in government, press and the military was testament to his patriotism. At the time of the scandal, he was a Swiss colonel, a deputy of the National Council, had worked as a secretary for the Department of Foreign Affairs, was editor in chief of one of the biggest francophone Swiss newspapers and worked as chief translator for the Council of States.³⁹ While Bonnard, by comparison, was less politically engaged, he had been a deputy of the Vaudois cantonal parliament until 1910. Both figures were committed federalists, and political and socially engaged Swiss citizens.

³⁴ Bundesarchiv, Bern, E4110A 1000/1801 291, *Egli und von Wattenwyl, Obersten. Diszipl. Bestrafung* (1916)

³⁵ Bundesarchiv, Bern, E4110A 1000/1801 291.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ "Journalistes romands, farouchement germanophobes", Langendorf and Streit, *Face à la guerre*, p.102.

³⁸ Marco Jorio (ed.) *Historisches Lexikon der Schweiz*, (Basel : Schwabe, 2002).

³⁹ The Swiss Council of States (Ständerat/Conseil des Etats) is the smaller chamber of the Swiss Federal Assembly.

Following their discussion in late November 1915, Langie, Bonnard and Secretan wrote of their concerns to Minister of Defence Decoppet on 25 November 1915.⁴⁰ Decoppet was an astute choice of politician. The sole francophone member of the seven member Federal Council, he was president of the dominant Radical Party and therefore was not part of the Genevan-based liberal or socialist opposition. He was the Minister of Defence, but as correspondence between Decoppet and General Wille, analysed in the previous chapter, reveals, he often disagreed with General Wille and the germanophone high command on crucial strategic issues, like the degree of threat France posed. By invoking his support for an investigation, the matter could not be dismissed as a plot by francophone delegates or by the socialist or liberal opposition of francophone journalists to undermine the germanophone military. However, what journalist Wagnière described as “an unfortunate twist of fate”,⁴¹ Decoppet fell seriously ill two days after his meeting with Langie. Undeterred, on 8 December Langie, Bonnard and Secretan informed the italophone Swiss president Giuseppe Motta of a suspected spying scandal. Once again the choice was astute. As a non-germanophone and member of the growing minority Christian Conservative Party, Motta was the only member of Federal Council who did not belong to the Radical Party. By this stage, however, rumours about the spying scandal had begun to swirl among the urban francophone public.⁴² Already public opinion was tense and divided. According to German diplomatic dispatches, from November 1915 onwards there was a worrying increase in the number of attacks on germanophone citizens and foreign residents, particularly in towns and cantons which straddled the linguistic divide such as Fribourg.⁴³ As discussed in the previous chapter, 1915 witnessed a dramatic spike in military prosecutions, which further indicated a heightened atmosphere of dissent and division. Yet, in December 1915 and the first weeks of January 1916, both the germanophone and francophone press’s annual reviews of the year 1915 seemed to ignore this.

Descriptions of national unity, written by the foreign affairs correspondent, Edouard Rossier, formed the basis of the francophone *Gazette de Lausanne*’s analysis of 1915. Rossier described a unified nation: “a well-guarded citadel”,⁴⁴ “bristling with bayonets”⁴⁵ and a “vanquished enemy”⁴⁶ (though he never defined what precisely this enemy was that either had been or would be vanquished). Given evidence of dissent and public division, the exuberant tone of the francophone review of 1915, appeared somewhat forced. The lack of critique was uncharacteristic for a press community whose reaction to the war had been defined by the quality of its investigative analysis and in-depth reporting. The germanophone *Tagesanzeiger*’s review of 1915 echoed the exuberant tone of the *Gazette de*

⁴⁰ Georges Wagnière, *La Suisse et la Grande Guerre : Notes et souvenirs*, (Payot, 1938), p. 99.

⁴¹ “Une fatalité déplorable.” Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts, Berlin, R11396, *Diplomatische Korps in Bern 1st July 1915 – 30th December 1918*.

⁴⁴ “Une citadelle bien gardée”, *Gazette de Lausanne*, 11th January 1916, p.1.

⁴⁵ “Hérissée de baïonnettes”, Ibid.

⁴⁶ “Ennemi vaincu” Ibid.

Lausanne, and like the reviews of its francophone counterparts could be seen to have wholeheartedly endorsed the policy of *Geistige Landesverteidigung* or spiritual defence. The *Tagesanzeiger*'s review of 1915 opened thus: "the wonderfully moving fact is that the neutrality of our fatherland can preserve peace for us despite the fact that we are surrounded by belligerent powers."⁴⁷ The reviews of 1915 were among the first since the invasion of Belgium where both the francophone and germanophone press seemed to agree. Given the context of the division that defined their response to the war thus far, and given statistical evidence of increased public division and dissent, such a sudden expression of unity should be attributed to the more coerced expressions of unity which would define a Swiss-styled *union sacrée*.

By 19 December 1915, von Wattenwyl was still passing on information to the Austrian and German military attachés based in Bern. By this stage, rumour of a Swiss spying scandal had reached Paris, via its military attachés in Switzerland. Military attaché Pageot was informed by a member of the French secret service that "every day a cyclist of the Swiss army high command delivers the daily information bulletin to the Austrian and German military attachés."⁴⁸ The apparently unwitting cyclist was a francophone Swiss youth who, when approached by the French agents, was reported to have been both amenable and cooperative, and he immediately allowed them to view the documents he was in the process of transporting to the embassies.⁴⁹ Such close cooperation with neighbouring belligerent powers was not entirely unusual in decentralised Swiss institutions like the Swiss cantonal police. However, it was generally not encouraged in centralised Swiss institutions like the military. The manner in which Pageot intercepted the cyclist reflected the ambiguous role of foreign military attaches, which extended to private investigation and spying as well as their traditional roles as military experts attached to a diplomatic mission. It was also revealing of the level of trust between the francophone Swiss citizens and francophone officials, be they from France or Switzerland. A formal complaint by France was issued to the Swiss government.⁵⁰ Germany also reacted to the allegations revealed by the *Affaire des Colonels* by accusing France and francophone Switzerland of espionage. German diplomatic correspondence viewed civilian francophone espionage as the significant problem, not military espionage. For both Germany and the Swiss high command, the acts of the Colonels were not a breach of neutrality but an inherent part of the intelligence gathering.⁵¹

While Bonnard and Secretan remained steadfast in their decision not to publish details of the affair until the government was notified, other newspapers began to hear of details of it from different

⁴⁷ wunderbar berührenden Tatsache, dass unser Vaterland seine Neutralität und damit den Frieden für sich bis heute hat bewahren können, obwohl es von kriegführenden Mächten ganz umgeben ist. *Tagesanzeiger*, January 1916, p. 1.

⁴⁸ "Chaque jour un cycliste de L'Etat-major de l'armée suisse allait porter aux attachés militaires autrichien et allemand le bulletin de Renseignements quotidien." de Weck, "Le service de renseignement", *Revue Militaire Suisse*.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Bundesarchiv, Bern, E4110A 1000/1801 291.

⁵¹ Bundesarchiv, Bern, *Federal Council debates*, Stenographic Bulletin (1916).

sources. An anonymous letter was reportedly sent to Charles Martinet, editor of francophone Swiss newspaper *La Suisse*. Martinet showed this to the Radical Party national councillor Willemin, who in turn sent it to Liberal deputy Frédéric Jules de Rabours of the Genevan Council, and to lawyer, writer and academic Marcel Guinand. While many Swiss secondary accounts have inaccurately defined Councillors Bonnard and Secretan as overtly “francophile”, the second set of whistle blowers, De Rabours and Guinand, were distinctly more extreme in their francophilia.⁵² By 1916 along with fellow academics⁵³, he had campaigned to form an especially francophile *Comité interuniversitaire suisse*. Guinand was a widely published writer whose works showed his allegiance to the francophone cantonal union of the “Rhodanie.”⁵⁴ Frédéric Jules De Rabours was a key Liberal Party candidate from Geneva. He had been narrowly defeated by Radical Party candidate Willemin in the Swiss cantonal elections of November 1914. As political rivals in a recent election, there was little evidence to suggest both councillors were friends. By revealing the scandal to a political but particularly francophile rival, perhaps Willemin could have gained because although germanophone spying would be revealed, De Rabours would suffer in the backlash. Known to the *Journal de Genève* as a proud francophile, during the war he consistently campaigned against the germanophone-dominated Swiss military and he was particularly vocal in his opposition to the election of Swiss General Ulrich Wille during the election of August 1914.

By mid January, reports which named Colonels Egli and Wattenwyl began to be published. The reluctance of the francophone press to report on a scandal, already known to reporters of the *Journal de Genève* and *Gazette de Lausanne* for over two months, may seem remarkable. However, given germanophone accusations against the francophone press, such wariness was no doubt prudent. Indeed, the francophone press’s reluctance was indicative of the self-censorship imposed by the culture of a Swiss *union sacrée*. It was the *Gazette de Lausanne*, which first published an article based on the information it had received about the affair with the *Journal de Genève* following five days later. The delay in the reporting of the affair seemed to have been strategic. Germanophone newspapers like the *Tagesanzeiger* had alluded to the scandal as early as 4 January when it described one reported case of spying as “one of the many spy cases that especially in recent time have occupied our Swiss military”.⁵⁵ The use of the word “beschäftigen” (to occupy or busy oneself with) in this context reflected a certain irritation on the part of the germanophone press regarding any criticism of the military. It implies that the military must busy themselves with such spy cases, which would, in effect, distract them from the main issue – defending Switzerland. The impatient indifference

⁵² “Un de ces francophiles genevois”, Cercle Ferdinand de Saussure, Société genevoise de linguistique, *Cahiers Ferdinand de Saussure* No. 43, Volumes 13-18, (Genève, Librairie Droz, 1990), p.126.

⁵³ Particularly in Charles Bally’s linguistic circle and that of de Saussure’s followers at the Genevan School of structural linguistics.

⁵⁴ Marcel Guinand, *Carnet d’un Soldat de 1914*, (Genève, Georg & Cie, 1915); *Déserteurs & Espions étrangers*. (Genève, Georg & Cie, 1915); *Heures tragiques*, (Genève, Georg & Cie, 1915).

⁵⁵ “Einer der vielen Spionagefälle, die besonders in letzter Zeit unsere schweizerischen Militärgerichte beschäftigen.”. “Spionage”, *Tagesanzeiger*, 4 January 1916.

with which the germanophone press reported on the scandal concurred with the attitude of General Wille, whose private personal correspondence to French Minister Decoppet concluded that mere "imprudence"⁵⁶ had been magnified into a scandal that was orchestrated by the "Welschland"⁵⁷. In Wille's opinion the whole affair was a sad reflection on Switzerland and its citizens, who "look at these things from the standpoint of their own personal sympathies".⁵⁸

Despite this growing public awareness of the scandal, the Swiss military showed no signs of investigating the accusations. Initially the high command had planned to suppress the scandal, and chose not to prosecute both colonels.⁵⁹ Such publicity, General Wille argued, would damage the vital image of Swiss neutrality abroad.⁶⁰ The Swiss parliament, with its proportional majority of Germanophone Swiss delegates, choose to follow suit. According to Langendorf and Streit, it was Theophile Sprecher von Bernegg who most strongly advocated preventing the public from hearing about the affair, as he sought privately to dismiss the two colonels involved.⁶¹ Editor of the *Gazette de Lausanne* Edouard Secretan's position as National Councillor allowed him access to this second set of whistle-blowers through Genevan deputy Frédéric Jules de Rabours, who already had heard of the affair earlier in the month via Charles Martinet of the francophone newspaper *La Suisse*. Marcel Guinand was also in contact with Edouard Secretan. His writings would become a key element of the campaign.

Both De Rabours and Guinand appear to have been particularly persuaded by the francophone community's outrage, and broke rank with the majority of Swiss councillors who had quietly agreed with Generals Wille and Sprecher von Bernegg's argument to suppress knowledge of the affair.⁶² Crucially, they cited Swiss public reaction to the violation of Belgian neutrality as their prime motivation for challenging their germanophone co-councillors' unwillingness to comment on the affair. In addition to the emergent coverage of the affair within the Swiss press, Marcel Guinand published his investigative analysis, *Un procès militaire. L'affaire des deux colonels*, in early January 1916.⁶³ This analysis sought to encourage political support for Egli and Wattenwyl to be brought to trial. Divided into two parts, the second part dealt with the effect of the violation of Belgian neutrality on the Swiss public. Guinand believed that response of the state to the affair was a direct result of what he

⁵⁶ "Unklugheit"

⁵⁷ A distinctly germanophone Swiss term for francophone Switzerland.

⁵⁸ "Sehen diese Dinge vom Standpunkt unserer persönlichen Sympathie an." Bundesarchiv, Bern, E 5330 1/466, *Le Général U. Wille au Président de la Confédération, C. Decoppet*, (11 January 1916).

⁵⁹ E4110A 1000/1801 291, Bundesarchiv, Bern.

⁶⁰ Bundesarchiv, Bern, *Federal Council debates*, Stenographic Bulletin (1915); Nr. 17 (6.12.1915) – Nr. 25 (23.12.1915).

⁶¹ Langendorf and Streit, *Face à la guerre*, (2007), p.103.

⁶² Bundesarchiv, Bern, E4110A 1000/1801 291.

⁶³ Marcel Guinand, *Un procès militaire. L'affaire des deux colonels*, (Georg, Genève, 1916).

saw as the morally corrupt response of the Swiss state towards the violation of Belgian neutrality. The events of January 1916 began with,

The political regime established by the Federal Council and Chamber [of deputies] of August 1914 [...] We should not place our trust in the appearances and assurances of a violator.⁶⁴

Revealingly, it was Guinand's analysis of the Swiss public's reaction to the invasion of Belgium that was published verbatim in the press,⁶⁵ and not his analysis of the affair itself. This offered an indication of the seriousness with which the affair was regarded by those who wished to suppress it. At that time such information, though low-level, was not dismissed as "nothing but banalities"⁶⁶, which was the contemporary argument made by General Theophil Sprecher von Bernegg in defence of the colonels, and by many subsequent Swiss historical accounts of the affair.⁶⁷

3.3 Press Coverage

Based on the number of words devoted to the scandal, the following graph depicts the percentages of daily press coverage that the *Journal de Genève* and the *Gazette de Lausanne* devoted to the Affair, from the first report on 18 January to the final series of reports on 19 March.⁶⁸ This case study of the *Gazette de Lausanne* reflected the overall francophone press coverage of the affair. As indicated, coverage of the scandal was relatively consistent throughout the period. But it did not dominate general francophone-press coverage, as the high command claimed in the subsequent trial.⁶⁹ In the Colonels' defence, General Sprecher von Bernegg accused the francophone press of manipulating the public with excessive press coverage. Many secondary accounts of the affair seemed to concur, and claimed that the issue "was disproportionately inflated by the francophone press, followed by the population".⁷⁰ However, such percentages, taken as proportion of the entire daily news coverage of two of the biggest francophone newspapers, indicated that with but a few exceptions coverage of the affair during its height averaged approximately 5% of total press coverage. Analysis of the content and reporting style of the *Gazette de Lausanne* and *Journal de Genève* did not indicate the bias and inflammatory tone its detractors accused it of. The *Gazette de Lausanne*'s first analysis, dated 13 January 1916, acknowledged its delay in reporting the affair:

⁶⁴ "On ne saurait se fier aux apparences, et aux assurances d'un violateur." Ibid, p.16. "le régime politique instauré par le Conseil fédéral et les Chambres en août 1914." Ibid, Introduction.

⁶⁵ *Journal de Genève*, January-February 1916.

⁶⁶ "que de banalités" Bundesarchiv, Bern, E 5330 1/468 *Hauptverhandlung in der Militärstrafsache der Obersten Egli und von Wattenwyl Stenographischer Bericht III*. (Zurich, 29. February 1916, 8 am)

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ See Appendix 1.

⁶⁹ Bundesarchiv, Bern, E4110A 1000/1801 291.

⁷⁰ "Être démesurément enflé par le presse Suisse romande, suivie par le population." Langendorf and Streit, *Face à la guerre*, p. 102; Bundesarchiv, Bern, E 5330 1/468 *Hauptverhandlung in der Militärstrafsache* (1916).

Out of discretion, we haven't spoken about it until now, but other newspapers, the *Tagwacht* of Bern, the *Démocrate* of Delémont, the *Tribune* of Lausanne, the *Revue*, of Lausanne, did not have the same reserve.⁷¹

The *Tagesanzeiger* was dismissive of the importance of reporting on military spying scandals.⁷² It article, on 4 January, focused instead on civilian spies, in particular how multilingual citizens were at most risk of falling into the trap of spying for money. According to the *Tagesanzeiger*, Swiss women were particularly susceptible to this vice, "as they seem better suited to spy work than men".⁷³ Alluding to the financial difficulties suffered by many Swiss women, whose men were mobilised at the Swiss "front", it outlined the main reasons for their susceptibility: "The good pay for this work is most tempting and many realise too late that they have gone down a dangerous path."⁷⁴ The article ended with a stark warning to those involved in spying: "In Switzerland we punish spying, not in favour of a foreign state as such but in the interests of maintaining our neutrality".⁷⁵ The targets of the penalties and prosecution the article outlined were exclusively civilian spies, and in particular women. The *Tagesanzeiger* warned of the penalty to be handed down to the women caught in this line of work: "3 months in prison, minus 38 days detention, a 400CHF fine and 10 years of exile. The proceedings would not be public".⁷⁶ Clearly, this did not apply to the Swiss spies within the military. For the germanophone press a veil of exceptionalism surrounded the army. An official in an institution like the military would have had access to far more compromising material than any civilian female, and so would be a greater threat. Yet according to the *Tagesanzeiger* any threat to Swiss neutrality would not come from the military, but rather from the public itself. Throughout January 1916, *L'Affaire des Colonels*⁷⁷ was referred to by the germanophone press as simply an unspecified "spying incident".⁷⁸ Often the articles avoided any reference to the military. By contrast, the francophone press was distinct in its definition of the scandal – "The affair of the military staff"⁷⁹ and showed no reluctance in defining the case in relation to the perpetrators involved.

⁷¹ "Nous n'en avons pas parlé jusqu'ici par discrétion, mais d'autres journaux, la *Tagwacht*, de Berne, le *Démocrate*, de Delémont, la *Tribune*, de Lausanne, la *Revue*, de Lausanne, n'ont pas observé la même réserve." *Gazette de Lausanne*, 13 January 1916, p. 1.

⁷² *Tagesanzeiger*, 4 January 1916.

⁷³ "Die sich offenbar für den Spionagedienst besser eignen als Männer", *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ "Die gute Bezahlung für diesen Dienst ist meist verlockend und viele sehen es oft zu spät ein, dass sie in einen gefährlichen Weg gegangen sind." *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ "In der Schweiz bestrafen wir die Spionage im Lande zugunsten eines fremden Staates nicht als solche, sondern im Interesse der Aufrechterhaltung unserer Neutralität." *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ "3 Monate Gefängnis abzüglich 38 Tage Haft, 400 CHF Busse und 10 Jahre Landes Verweisung. Die Verhandlungen waren nicht öffentlich", *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ The term *L'Affaire des Colonels* was not predominantly used until after the trials during February 1916.

⁷⁸ "Spionangefall", *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ "L'affaire de l'état-major"

The *Neue Zürcher Zeitung's* account of the affair⁸⁰ saw the affair as the expression of two conflicting viewpoints, "Westschweiz" (western Switzerland) and "Ostschweiz" (eastern Switzerland), and the *Ostschweiz*-based *NZZ* perceived the latter to have the moral high-ground⁸¹. It claimed that the Westschweiz had acknowledged that the "facts of the case"⁸² were not "publically known",⁸³ yet "in western Switzerland mere guesses start circulating".⁸⁴ Analysis of the francophone press reveals a reliance on officially-acknowledged hard evidence, which does not support these germanophone accusations. The *NZZ* attempted to mask the obvious linguistic divide by defining reaction to the affair geographically, but the references to Geneva throughout the excerpt made it clear where the target of the *NZZ's* criticisms lay. As with the germanophone press in general, the actions of the Swiss military in general or of the Swiss Colonels Egli and Wattenwyl in particular were not discussed or referred to. Instead the *NZZ* focussed their criticism on what they perceived to be the real issue: "the poisonous mistrust"⁸⁵ of the Ostschweiz by the Westschweiz.⁸⁶

The same *Ost-West Schweiz* narrative was reiterated in the *Zürcher Post*.⁸⁷ It elaborated further on why a general distrust of the Ostschweiz by the Westschweiz warranted more attention than the treasonous acts of the Swiss Colonels themselves. Such comments were in line with those of the predominantly germanophone military response. The *Zürcher Post* complained that "western Switzerland [...] could hurt the interests of the army"⁸⁸ and went further than the *NZZ* in its perception of the *Westschweiz* as a threat. For the *Zürcher Post* the division between "east" and "west" was widened by the affair and this division threatened national unity. It was a widening division which was perceived by the majority of Swiss citizens, according to the *Zürcher Post*, to be a greater threat than any spying scandal itself. The only solution according to the *Zürcher Post* was federal intervention: "we want neither a germanophone nor francophone settlement to this matter, but a settlement that would resolve the matter federally."⁸⁹

While the germanophone *Landbote* reiterated the attitude of *NZZ* and *Zürcher Post*, it saw the threat not exclusively in terms of francophone *Westschweiz* but added a political characteristic - the francophone "Social Democratic Press"⁹⁰. The Social Democratic aspect of what was perceived to be biased francophone-criticism of the military was a secondary accusation within germanophone

⁸⁰ *Tagesanzeiger*, 18 January 1916, p.4

⁸¹ Trans. Western Switzerland. Eastern Switzerland, Ibid.

⁸² "Tatbestand" Ibid.

⁸³ "Öffentlich bekannt" Ibid.

⁸⁴ "In der Westschweiz sind es nur Anlagen und Vermutungen die umlaufen" Ibid.

⁸⁵ "Das vergiftende Misstrauen" Ibid.

⁸⁶ Of Western Switzerland towards Eastern Switzerland, Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ "Westliche Schweiz [...] die Interessen der Armee gefährden kann" Ibid.

⁸⁹ Wir wollen weder eine deutschschweizerische noch eine westschweizerische Erledigung dieser Angelegenheit, [...] sondern wollen, dass [ste?]eidgenössisch erledigt werde. Ibid.

⁹⁰ "Sozialdemokratischen Presse" Ibid.

reaction. However, it did highlight the growing perception of a linguistically divided left. While a linguistic division emerged within the Swiss Socialist and Social Democratic movements from 1915 onwards, the extent of the division, as illustrated in the liberal *Landbote*, may have been exaggerated for political gain by rival political parties like both the Radicals and Liberals.⁹¹ The *Gazette de Lausanne* article which criticised these germanophone reports attempted to calm what it referred to as “popular conscience”⁹² troubled by “meddling rumours”.⁹³ The *Gazette* accused both francophone and germanophone newspaper coverage of inciting a divided and troubled Swiss public and thus asserted an objective quality of its analysis. It claimed that unlike other Swiss newspapers it waited to verify independently the names of those involved in the affair, before it published those names. Its more-dispassionate analysis of its sources and its wider criticism of other Swiss newspapers counters the well-publicised opinion of the germanophone media that francophone newspapers were simply the mouth pieces of France’s press organisation *Havas* and were the main agents of the *röstigraben* divide.

3.4 Germanophone Accusations of Francophilia

By January 1916, accusations of francophilia had intensified. There appears to have been little distinction between the degrees of francophilia. Increasingly, even contact with French refugees was cited as pro-French bias. For example, while confirmation of a germanophone Swiss military spying scandal emerged during January 1916, Germany complained that Fribourg councillor and director of the police Emile Savoy was spying for the French⁹⁴. The Germans seem to have suspected that Savoy had received telegrams from a French agent, which he was suspected of having forwarded to French military attaché Pageot, who it was alleged procured a Swiss passport for the agent. According to Hervé de Weck, there appeared to have been a French pharmacy situated in Geneva which “specialised in counterfeit identity papers destined for the agents of the SR (Service des renseignements)”.⁹⁵ While the procurement of fake passports certainly existed, there was no evidence to suggest Councillor Savoy was involved. He was later publically exonerated. However, one reason why such claims were entertained may have been the councillor’s connections with Belgium. Savoy had been particularly vocal regarding the invasion of Belgium, which may have attracted German attention and irritated germanophone officials who would have deemed such vocal criticism as a breach of Swiss neutrality. As director of the police and a councillor of the multilingual canton of Fribourg, which straddled the *röstigraben* divide, he was a senior official working in a strategically

⁹¹ Interestingly the Right wing conservative and farmer parties often sided with the socialists. Though politically opposed, their common aim to rout the dominant Radical party, allowed an mismatched alliance to develop. This was evident in the campaign to regulate banking secrecy which emerged during the war, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

⁹² “Conscience populaire” *Gazette de Lausanne* 13 January 1916, p. 1.

⁹³ “Des bruits fâcheux”. Ibid.

⁹⁴ Bundesarchiv, Bern, E4110A 1000/1801 291.

⁹⁵ “Spécialisée dans la contrefaçon de papiers d’identité à destination des agents du SR”, de Weck, *Revue Militaire Suisse*, p. 3.

sensitive region. In response to accusations reported in the germanophone *Basler Nachrichten*, Emile Savoy's letter published in the *Journal de Genève* stated:

I was profoundly shocked to learn through the press that the Federal Council is currently dealing with this matter. Newspapers accuse me of spying. I protest against such slander and am surprised at the attitude of the authorities towards me.⁹⁶

No concrete evidence was supplied in the *Basler Nachrichten* article which accused Savoy of spying. Significantly, the germanophone article rather pettily cited the fact that Savoy was married to a Belgian and that he was president of the *comité de secours pour les réfugiés* in Fribourg as being evidence enough of his supposed bias. The lack of distinction between francophone civilian affinity with France and mere contact with the interned was a divisive development. Revealingly, no germanophone official was accused of francophone bias because of his interaction with French interned or Belgian refugees. The manner in which the germanophone media and high command criticised perceived francophone civilian affinity yet ignored germanophone official affinity revealed their bias. However, by late January 1916, and it would appear later, reasoned interaction came to be perceived and defined as dangerous partisan bias. The German language press was focussed exclusively on this alleged spying scandal in January 1916, precisely when the news of the *Affaire des Colonels* broke. Any acknowledgement of Swiss military wrongdoing was set within the context of supposed francophone spying. The *Gazette de Lausanne* criticised germanophone socialist *Tagwacht's* coverage, stating; "the charges against Mr. Savoy are not as well established as the *Tagwacht's* note would imply".⁹⁷ The same article alluded to the role Swiss public opinion had played in uncovering the truth of such scandals, in particular in relation to the *Affaire des Colonels* despite Swiss officialdom's reluctance even to prosecute, let alone convict. The *Gazette* warned of the pressure it could exert on the military and on the political establishment to conduct a full investigation:

We hope at least to shed complete light [on the affair] because in the history of Savoy like that of *l'état-major* the Swiss people have reclaimed the light and will again reclaim the light.⁹⁸

3.5 The Trial

Public outrage, after Marcel Guinand's publication, was not confined to the Genevan press. In a kind of "name and shame" tabloid-style report, a Neuchâtel magazine published photographs of the two officers involved with a caption: "The two traitors!" The governments of each francophone canton sent telegrams to the Federal Council expressing their condemnation, and councillors from the three main

⁹⁶Je suis profondément étonné d'apprendre par la voie de la presse que le Conseil fédéral s'occupe actuellement de cette affaire. Les journaux m'accusent d'espionnage. Je proteste contre ces calomnies et m'étonne de l'attitude des autorités à mon égard. "L'Affaire Savoy", *Journal de Genève*, 21st January 1916, p. 5.

⁹⁷"Les faits reprochés à M. Savoy ne sont pas aussi bien établis que le laisserait supposer la note de la *Tagwacht*." "Encore une Affaire", *Gazette de Lausanne*, 19 January 1916.

⁹⁸Nous l'espérons du moins de faire la lumière complète. Car, dans cette histoire (of Savoy) comme dans cette de *l'état-major*. Le peuple suisse réclame de la lumière et encore de la lumière. Ibid.

francophone cantons, Geneva, Neuchâtel and Vaud, met with the Minister of Defence to demand an investigation.⁹⁹ On 11 January 1916 the Federal Council, in response to the predominantly francophone public outcry, ordered an official inquiry.¹⁰⁰ On 18 January Ulrich Wille accepted the participation of the accused Colonels in the military tribunal held in Zurich, but he refused to accept the conviction not because he questioned its validity but because he deemed it to be harmful to the Swiss public image abroad.¹⁰¹ By invoking a state of siege law, and contrary to public will and political order, Wille refused to punish Colonels Egli and Wattenwyl.

In a private meeting President and Minister for Defence Decoppet and the seven-member executive spoke candidly regarding the trial and the linguistic division it had exacerbated.¹⁰² Francophone reaction to General Wille's refusal to punish the Colonels was again defined by protest. Decoppet reported his deep concern regarding the "unrest in Lausanne".¹⁰³ There, a mob of francophone civilians destroyed the German flag, which had hung outside the German Consulate. This act of protest escalated into a riot. The Minister for Defence and the Federal Council (the executive) discussed General Wille's plan for the military to restore order by marching with Battalion 123 from Murten to Lausanne. On the advice of Lausanne State Councillor, Cossy, Decoppet argued against Wille's plan. For Decoppet, francophone public opinion was so enraged that the prospect of military intervention would only lead to the escalation of riots across francophone territory. The rest of the germanophone executive were sympathetic to Wille's proposal but argued instead to send a centrally-appointed police or military Commissioner who might be perceived as more independent. The francophone President disagreed and the meeting concluded with the most candid admissions of the failure of the Swiss union sacrée and of the existence of an extensive linguistic divide: "the francophone representatives of francophone cantons should sort out their own issues".¹⁰⁴

President Decoppet was the only francophone member of the executive, and he was also Vaud's most prominent francophone representative. Decoppet was held in particularly high esteem within francophone cantons. The *Journal de Genève*, described the celebratory atmosphere that greeted Decoppet's election on 15 December 1915. Lausanne representatives greeted the news with a regained sense of national belonging:

⁹⁹ Bundesarchiv, Bern, E 5330 1/466 *Le Général U. Wille au Président de la Confédération, C. Decoppet*, Bern, (11 January 1916).

¹⁰⁰ Bundesarchiv, Bern, E 1005 2/1 *Conseil Fédéral Procès-verbal de la séance du 11 janvier 1916 Neutralitätswidriges Verhalten der Obersten Egli und von Wattenwyl*, (11 January 1916).

¹⁰¹ Bundesarchiv, Bern, *Federal Council debates*, Stenographic Bulletin (1916).

¹⁰² Bundesarchiv, Bern, *Procès-verbal(-aux) des décisions 28.01.-28.01.1916, 10th Sitzung des Schweizerischen Bundesrates*, (Friday, 28. January 1916, 9 am)

¹⁰³ "Unruhen in Lausanne"

¹⁰⁴ "Die Regierungen der welschen Kantone gemeinsame Sache machen würden" Ibid

The whole canton of Vaud, proud to see one of its children occupy the highest office in the land, will seize this opportunity to show our confederates the sentiments of our unwavering patriotism.¹⁰⁵

Thus it was agreed that, should the situation escalate, President Decoppet rather than the military would be sent to the francophone canton to mediate and restore order.¹⁰⁶ However, the threat of military intervention quelled any further riotous protest.

In the trial both Colonels claimed that the nature of their work “had its own set of rules which placed it over and above morality and neutrality”.¹⁰⁷ This expression of military exceptionalism in relation to Swiss federal law was reiterated by General Sprecher von Bernegg.¹⁰⁸ In another show of exceptionalism, Colonel Egli’s defence chose to blame the system of intelligence gathering itself: “all intelligence gathering is against neutrality”.¹⁰⁹

During the trial, Colonel Theophil Sprecher von Bernegg was called as a witness and he fully endorsed these claims.¹¹⁰ Consistent with his Anti-Entente sentiment, he was of the opinion that:

The rights of the neutral [country] are being constantly violated, among others by the Entente especially; the neutral [country] may depart from its obligations.¹¹¹

Reiterating the colonels’ defence, he argued that officers assigned to intelligence services “can no longer strictly observe the notion of neutrality”.¹¹² However, unlike germanophone opinion, francophone public opinion did not agree with Colonel Sprecher. The previous Swiss president Hoffmann echoed public sentiment when he described the Colonels’ actions as a threat to Swiss security. A supporter of the accused, Colonel Bolli, did not endorse Colonel Sprecher’s argument, but attempted instead to put a positive spin on the trial:

¹⁰⁵ “Le canton de Vaud tout entier fier de voir l’un de ses enfants occuper la première magistrature du pays, saisira cette occasion de manifester à nos Confédérés les sentiments de son inébranlable patriotisme.” *Journal de Genève*, 16 December 1915.

¹⁰⁶ Bundesarchiv, Bern, *Procès-verbal*, (28. January 1916).

¹⁰⁷ “Possède des règles propres qui le placent souvent au-dessus de la morale et de la neutralité” Ibid; Langendorf and Streit, *Face à la guerre*, (2007), p. 103.

¹⁰⁸ Bundesarchiv, Bern, *Procès-verbal*, (28. Januar 1916).

¹⁰⁹ “Tout le service de renseignements est contre la neutralité.” Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Bundesarchiv, Bern, E 5330 1/468 *Hauptverhandlung in der Militärstrafsache* (29. Februar 1916).

¹¹¹ “Les droits du neutre étant sans cesse bafoués, entre autres par L’Entente, le neutre peut déroger à ses devoirs”, Ibid; Langendorf and Streit, *Face à la guerre*, (2007), pp. 103-104.

¹¹² “Peuvent ne plus observer strictement la notion de neutralité”, Ibid.

Only in Switzerland could a trial of this sort take place and be argued publically. Elsewhere an absolute silence would have been imposed on an affair of this order.¹¹³

At the end of the trial, on 28 February, the court declared both Colonels not guilty under criminal law and concluded "that they acted in the best interests of the country".¹¹⁴ However, the Colonels were handed over to the military authorities for a possible disciplinary decision. General Wille then condemned the Colonels to twenty days detention.¹¹⁵

In francophone Switzerland the trial and the leniency of the punishment aroused great disappointment, evidence of which could be seen in the francophone press.¹¹⁶ According to Langendorf and Streit;

There followed a veritable outburst against the germanophone community, against the majority of officers considered minions of the "Boches." Now, the country was truly "broken", a deep "trench" widened between francophone, germanophone and italophone Switzerland.¹¹⁷

The case questioned further the impartiality of high command, which had been an unresolved issue of contention since the election of Ulrich Wille in August 1914. What had been mainly of public concern now appeared to have filtered through to the political establishment as the case highlighted the profound differences between the Federal Council and Generals Wille and Sprecher von Bernegg.¹¹⁸ In an assertion of its authority, on 1 March 1916, the Federal Council overrode the Military's lenient sentence and imposed the suspension of the Colonels from their positions.¹¹⁹

¹¹³ "Ce n'est qu'en Suisse qu'un procès tel qu celui-ci pourrait avoir lieu et même se plaider publiquement. Partout ailleurs on aurait fait et impose le silence absolu sur une affaire de cet ordre." Bundesarchiv, Bern, E4110A 1000/1801 291.

¹¹⁴ "Qu'ils avait agi pour le bien du pays", Langendorf and Streit, *Face à la guerre*, (2007), p.104.

¹¹⁵ Bundesarchiv, Bern, E4110A 1000/1801 291.

¹¹⁶ The Cryptographer André Langie went on to work as a translator of Chinese, Japanese and Hungarian documents for the *chancellerie d'état*.

¹¹⁷ Il s'en suivit un véritable déchaînement contre la Suisse alémanique, et contre la majorité alémanique des officiers, considérés comme des séides des "boches". Désormais, le pays était véritablement "cassé", un profond "fossé" se creusant entre la Suisse romande et italienne et l'alémanique. Langendorf and Streit, *Face à la guerre*, (2007), p. 103.

¹¹⁸ Later some francophone journalists seemed to express a change of heart regarding the call for a public trial of the Colonels. General Pau told M. Eugène Couvreur according to *Journal de Genève*'s editor Georges Wagnière, "vous avez fait en Suisse beaucoup trop de bruit sur cette affaire." (Trans. You made too much of this affair in Switzerland.) Wagnière himself in hindsight seemed to agree: "Je pense aussi que l'autorité militaire aurait pu, par une plus rapide intervention, arrêter le scandale et rendre à l'incident les proportions qu'il devait avoir" (Trans. I also think that the military authority should have intervened more quickly to stop the scandale and to render the scandal the proportionate attention it warranted.), Wagnière, *La Suisse*, (1938) p. 99.

¹¹⁹ Bundesarchiv, Bern, E 1004 1/261, n 480.

3.6 Spy Networks after the Trial

Public reaction remained divided. While the affair and the trial were not examined any further by the germanophone public, on 23 March over three thousand men and women gathered at the cantonal assembly in Lausanne to discuss the implications of the affair and trial on their community. The intermingling of German and French terms in the francophone press's analysis of the event (*Landesgemeinde Lausannoise*) was a striking expression of the Swiss multilingual heritage that stood in stark contrast to Ulrich Wille's insistence on using specifically German terms when referring to francophone place-names and issues.¹²⁰ There was a sense of vindication for the francophone community regarding the stance they had taken since the invasion of Belgium. Reporting from Lausanne the *Journal de Genève* concluded that the francophone community's "patriotic defence had energised [support for] democratic federal principles and the precedence of civilian power over military power."¹²¹

Similarly to the assessment of the francophone press, the key whistle blowers saw francophone reaction to the affair as being in direct correlation with its reaction to the invasion of Belgium but also a broader sympathy for France and her allies. De Rabours' election campaign from early 1916-1917 was centred on Swiss official reaction to the invasion of Belgium. His campaign was reignited through his involvement in exposing the *Affaire des Colonels*. He saw the scandal as a product of the moral corruption of the Radicals and their overwhelming dominance in the Swiss government, a rot which he declared to parliament had its origins in the state's "morally corrupt"¹²² response to the violation of Belgian neutrality in 1914. Rabours' public criticism of notions of exceptionalism, which had crept into the centralised state, military and banking élites seemed to have struck a chord with the electorate. In 1917 he was elected and became one of the first National Councillors of the Liberal Party from 1917-1925, and subsequently a political director of the *Journal de Genève* in 1928. The Radical government's silence regarding the German invasion of Belgium revealed an inability to understand the internal division provoked by this invasion.

Shared intelligence between Switzerland and Germany, from February 1915 onwards, was Islamic in theme. It particularly related to the recruitment of Indian militants as part of a Pan-Islamic "Djehad" to be supported by the Central Powers.¹²³ For example, the meeting of the Indian Independence Committee in Geneva was closely watched. During this meeting a plan for smuggling revolutionaries,

¹²⁰ Bundesarchiv, Bern, E 5330 1/466 *Le Général U. Wille au Président de la Confédération, C. Decoppet*, (Bern, 11 January 1916).

¹²¹ "Patriotique défense énergique des principes démocratiques et fédératifs et des prérogatives du pouvoir civil sur le pouvoir militaire." *Journal de Genève*, 24 March 1916.

¹²² Guinand, *Un procès militaire*, (1916).

¹²³ Key Egyptian anti-colonial figure and subsequent first director of Cairo University Ahmad Lufti Al-Sayyid described his time and recruitment in Switzerland in Lufti Al-Sayyid, *Qissat Hayati*, (Dar Al-Hilal, Cairo, 1962), p. 35-36. Recruitment of Albanian figures is highlighted in Donald M. Mc Kale, *War by Revolution – Germany and Great-Britain in the Middle East in the Era of World War I*, (Kent State University Press, 1998), p. 117.

weapons and explosives to India was discussed, as well as a campaign of persuasion to encourage British-Indian troops to desert or mutiny.¹²⁴ Unlike the crackdown on British spy-networks working in Switzerland during 1915, there was no official Swiss investigation of German recruitment for military Jihad; nor was there condemnation from the francophone community. Despite press coverage of German military Jihad recruitment within Switzerland, general public awareness, and evidence of an active German spy-ring devoted to this cause, there was little official interest and crucially there seemed to have been no impetus to investigate what was a breach of Swiss neutrality. Clearly, the definition of what constituted a breach relied on an ethnic dimension or perception thereof. Francophone commentators viewed pan-Islamism through the difficulties of their experience of national Swiss identity. The *Gazette de Lausanne* alluded to the division which has beset the concept of Swiss unity which like jihad “aims to found, in our time, a compact bloc of dissimilar nations”,¹²⁵ and concluded that Jihad was “just as illusory as that of the fraternity of peoples of which the pacifists dream.”¹²⁶ This indicates, perhaps, that francophone reverence for Swiss militarism over the “illusory” nature of pacifism had not waned altogether.¹²⁷

This case would seem to illustrate that while the francophone community may well have been pro-French, this did not necessarily mean it was pro-Entente. Even allegiance to fellow neutrals like Belgium appeared to lack the same substance in 1915 as it did in 1914. Ottoman decrees on the definition of the targets of military Jihad clearly stated that neutral countries like Belgium would be a target,¹²⁸ yet there was little public or official acknowledgement of this. The majority of the francophone articles, like the *Gazette de Lausanne* article, defined this type of Jihad recruitment within Switzerland as a movement more in terms of self-determination of which all nations could be a target. There was no acknowledgement that this movement could incorporate a violent or militant dimension. Nevertheless, this small case would seem to indicate that German spy networks until the *Affaire des Colonels* could operate freely within Switzerland when their targets were communities,

¹²⁴ National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Washington, T-149/397/0550,0542,0563, *Nadolny to War Ministry*, (7 January 1915); *Mansur Ahmad (Indian committee member) to Auswärtiges Amt*, (1 January 1915); *Oppenheim, memo*, (9th January 1915). Maulvi Barkatullah, Har Dayal and Chattopadhyaya. NARA, t-149/397/0562,0590, 0662, *Washington German legation Stockholm to Auswärtiges Amt*, (9 January 1915); *German Embassy Rome to Auswärtiges Amt*, (18 January 1915); *Auswärtiges Amt to Stockholm legation*, (4 February 1915). “Le sultan de Turquie commande-t-il l’islam comme le pape commande la catholicité?”, “Djéhad”, *Gazette de Lausanne*, (7 February 1915), p. 1.

¹²⁵ “Vouloir de nos jours fondre en un bloc compact ces nations si dissemblables”, *Ibid*.

¹²⁶ “Aussi illusoire que celle de la fraternité des peuples dont rêvent les pacifistes”, *Ibid*.

¹²⁷ Interestingly, Swiss objections regarding the concept of military jihad centred on the potential involvement of women. The inclusive nature of the religion was cited negatively as an example of oriental barbarism.

¹²⁸ Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivleri (BOA), Istanbul, DH-ŞFR, box 47, file 290, “*Cihad fetvâsi*” telegramme to Baghdad, (2 December 1914) (Muslim clerics disagreed with what they viewed as a political rather than theological fatwa.).

persons or nations with which the Swiss public deemed themselves not to have an ethnic affinity.¹²⁹ It would not be until after the *Affaire des Colonels* that Swiss authorities began to attempt to crack down on German espionage. A month after the resolution of the trial, in March 1916, the Swiss arrested Heinrich Jacoby. In November 1916, in a combined French and Swiss operation, the key members of the Jacoby spy ring including two Armenians and one Irish journalist were also arrested.¹³⁰

3.7 War-Weariness

Despite the decline in military prosecutions from 1916 onwards, unofficial Swiss military magazines and drawings¹³¹ written by and circulated among ordinary Swiss soldiers indicated a clear sense of disillusionment following the *Affaire des Colonels* among both francophone and germanophone troops. Homemade magazines were produced and sold or distributed among the mobilised soldiers. The francophone *Bulletin* changed dramatically in tone from the optimistic accounts at mobilisation from 1914-1915, to angry criticism of the military high command from 1915-1916, to despondency regarding military mobilisation in 1917, to the overtly political tone of 1918 and a radicalisation of the lower-ranking military authors who displayed a keen awareness of the economic and social reality.¹³² By contrast, germanophone magazines, (a typical example of which was "Grenzbesetzung" (border garrison)¹³³ did not seem to vary as dramatically in tone or subject matter. The *Bulletin* was text-heavy in comparison, and *Grenzbesetzung* relied less on analysis of camp life or on issues of national importance and more on bawdy quotes, jokes and anecdotes. However, there are two key themes in both publications. While the issue of economic inequality appears as a major theme within both francophone and germanophone public opinion, it only developed as a key theme for the francophone soldiers' publication during the final two years of the war. By contrast in the germanophone soldiers' publication the problem of economic disparity appeared as a major theme from the first issue. Typical of the style of humour of the germanophone publication, a drawing titled "stocks-whore!"¹³⁴ displayed a worker throwing a punch at a pin-stripe suited, bowler-hat wearing man.

Both communities appeared united in their key complaints. The issue of continued mobilisation without home leave after the onset of trench warfare was a key gripe within both linguistic communities. In its styled *quote of the first year* of mobilisation, the *Grenzbesetzung* sums up this key gripe among its readers. Titled "Application for leave"¹³⁵ it commemorates a quote attributed to a soldier named

¹²⁹ Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts, Berlin, R21028, *Reichenau to Zimmermann from Stockholm*, (25 August 1914). Ibid, *Jagow to Stockholm*, 7 August 1914.

¹³⁰ Mc Kale, *War by Revolution*, (1998), p. 198.

¹³¹ Bundesarchiv, Bern, E27 14080, *Kompanie- (Batterie-) Zeitungen vom Aktivdienst 1914-1918*.

¹³² Ibid., *Kompagnie Zeitung*, *Etappenkompagnie* 1/103.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ "Stockhure!", Ibid.

¹³⁵ "Urlaubsgesuch", Ibid.

Rohrbach: "I should go home at least once. One can't do everything in writing".¹³⁶ While this quote captured the good-humoured frustrations of the mobilised Swiss soldier, by contrast francophone reported responses to the same predicament were less good-humoured. The sarcastic and bitter in tone can be detected in a poem published in the *Bulletin*, July 1916:

What awful guys these officers are,

For very little I stuff myself for them with their tripe.

[...] Yes, my Lieutenant !

It's very long indeed waiting for the end of military service.¹³⁷

The lack of respect expressed in this verse indicates a level of insubordination which had not been apparent six months earlier before the *Affaire des Colonels*. Other excerpts from the publication of 1916 were decorated with drawings in the margin of rifles lying idle and covered in cobwebs.¹³⁸ The palpable anger of the francophone poem contrasted with the mere irritation expressed in the jokey response of the germanophone quote.

The germanophone publications were considerably cruder in their humour. Throughout the war, their illustrations were consistent in their devotion to the depiction of bare bottoms, urinating dogs, beer swilling fusiliers and crude double-entendres.¹³⁹ The francophone publications' humour relied mainly on subtle word-play initially, which developed into sarcasm as the war progressed. The wide-eyed optimism of the francophone author Lucien Schenkel's account of mobilisation during the 1914-15 publication was expressed in his reaction to Mr. Fischer's lecture to the newly mobilised troops on Swiss history and neutrality:

After the traditional parade before the division, the battalion gathered to attend a lecture by Captain Fischer on the rights of man and the consequences of Swiss neutrality. The presentation was a little too rapid at first and related general facts of history to us that were mainly ignored by our troops. It must have passed over many heads, like an *aéro* in full flight. The rest of the lecture became more comprehensible and as a result more interesting. I cannot help but thank Mr. Fischer for the esteem which he incited within us with his talk.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁶ "Herrr (sic.) Komendant! Ich sollte einmal heim. Man kann ja nicht alles schriftlich machen." Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ces officiers, quels sales types!

Peur peu, je leur bouffe les tripes.

[...] Qui, mon lieutenant!

C'est bien long d'attendre la fin de service. Ibid.

¹³⁸ See Appendix, Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Après le traditionnel défile devant tel divisionnaire, le bataillon se rassemble pour assister à une causerie du capitaine Fischer sur: le droit des gens et les conséquences de la neutralité Suisse. L'exposé quelque peu rapide du début, relatant des faits d'histoire générale ignorés d'une bonne partie des troupiers, doit avoir passé au

By August 1916 the original Captain Fischer had become Colonel. Beneath an illustration of the Colonel read the cynical comment: "didn't he say not to be such a rake".¹⁴¹ The growing perception of the futility of the defensive neutral-front echoed mobilised soldiers comments that were expressed in other neutral countries. For example, a fairly common Dutch-soldier's song commented in 1916:

Piet spends months at the border,

Has nothing to do, sees no one;

Piet stands still there and vegetates

They say: Piet is mobilised!¹⁴²

However, in the case of the Dutch soldier, the position of the military high command was not criticised. The song related to Piet's predicament rather than to the army as a whole. The same angry, disillusioned sarcasm or criticism which dominated francophone soldiers' accounts did not appear to the same extent among other neutral soldier's accounts. Remobilisation during the final years of the war will be examined further in the final chapters.

3.3 Conclusion

The *Gazette de Lausanne*'s review of 1916 was written by the editor of the independent *L'Agence télégraphique suisse*, Pierre Grellet.¹⁴³ He summed up the year as distinct from 1914 and 1915 in terms of what he saw as the heightened unease and mistrust within the Swiss public of themselves but also of the Swiss state and of military officials: "It began with a sense of uneasiness. Public opinion was agitated by all sorts of rumour vagaries and worries."¹⁴⁴ The brooding tone of the analysis and examples given of Swiss disenchantment contrasted with the optimistic declarations of public unity which summed up the same newspaper's review of 1915. The review of 1916 broke with the optimism and expected declarations of unity during the height of the Swiss union sacrée. The review itself admitted to the existence of coercion: "One speaks in veiled tones of a scandal which is about to flare up regarding the General Staff".¹⁴⁵ The root cause of this sense of disenchantment and disunity according to the *Gazette de Lausanne* was, "the actions of colonels Egli and Wattenwyl".¹⁴⁶

dessus de beaucoup de têtes comme une aéro en pleine vol. Pour la suite il devint plus compréhensible, partant plus intéressant, je ne puis cependant m'empêcher de remercier Mr Fischer pour l'estime qu'il nous a témoignée Ibid.

¹⁴¹"Et il dit ne pas être râteau!" See Appendix, Ibid.

¹⁴²Dutch Magazine, *Het Leven*, 9 November 1915.

¹⁴³"1916", *Gazette de Lausanne*, 4 January 1917, p. 1.

¹⁴⁴Ibid. "Elle commence dans une malaise. L'opinion publique est agitée par toute sorte de rumeurs, de bruits vagues et inquiétants"

¹⁴⁵Ibid. "On parle à mots couverts d'un scandale qui serait sur le point d'éclater à l'état-major."

¹⁴⁶"Les agissements des colonels Egli et de Wattenwyl." Ibid.

During the war, it could be argued that the Swiss military increasingly usurped the role of the police, undermining their authority in dealing with cantonal unrest; for instance, the burning of the German flag outside the embassy in Fribourg in which the military threatened to occupy the town, or indeed the military's insistence on prosecuting of its own spying scandal, 1916. The Swiss military, but also, as shall be addressed in the next chapter, the Federal Council and Assembly and the Swiss National Bank were also examples of key centralised institutions during the war. In practice the evocation of Articles 3 and 4 of the Constitution increased the authority of these three institutions. All three functioned as the bastions of Swiss independence, security and national defence. Internal linguistically-defined division undermined the image of impartiality and national unity that institutions like the Swiss citizen militia army were supposed to embody, and cultivated a heightened sense of exceptionalism. As the *Affaire des Colonels* dramatically highlighted, such exceptionalism had the potential to corrupt; create unrest and division. The affair ushered in a new phase in the Swiss reaction to the war. Reactions to the affair highlighted a vocally-united francophone community, which ultimately exacerbated the linguistic divide. While evidence of growing dissent and linguistic division existed by the end of 1915, the *Affaire des Colonels* was the public escalation of dissent which by February 1916 had breached the defensive walls of the Swiss *union sacrée*. How would the image of Swiss neutral unity be maintained during the final two years of the war?

CHAPTER FOUR: Röstigraben Redux –Economic Mobilisation and Germanophone Exceptionalism

We are of the firm belief that the Swiss people will energetically assist military mobilisation
with a vigorous financial mobilisation.

Lettre au peuple Suisse, 13 August 1914 President Hoffmann and Chancellor of the
Confederation Schatzmann¹

President Hoffmann's letter to the public, published widely in the Swiss press upon the outbreak of war, revealed the primary concerns of the Swiss president and foreign minister regarding the war – military and economic mobilisation. Although Hoffmann was not a minister of finance, his concerns about the Swiss economy, particularly regarding Swiss economic mobilisation, were consistent throughout the war. These concerns shaped not only Hoffmann's foreign policy in general but specifically his perception of the magnitude of threat that the war posed for Switzerland. However, the linguistic division, and the French and German allegiances of the Swiss Home-Front, combined with Foreign Minister Hoffmann's inability to recognise the symbolic capital of Swiss neutrality, threatened to seriously undermine Swiss neutral defence in 1917. The fact was that though Switzerland was heavily reliant on imports neither belligerent powers controlled all the resources that the Swiss needed. 80% of food imports came from Allied powers while 90% of coal came from Germany.² Both sides relied equally on the manufactured goods that Switzerland exported and so a kind of symbiotic relationship existed. While threats from both sides existed and trade agreements often had to be renegotiated, the Swiss public did not starve and rationing was introduced as a cautionary measure rather than an urgent necessity during the final phase of the war. However, Hoffmann believed the war threatened to destroy the stability of the Swiss economy, and so, motivated by a distinctly germanophone interpretation of Swiss exceptionalism, he sought to negotiate peace between two belligerent nations: Germany and Russia. In doing so, he undermined Swiss neutrality and destroyed his political career.

4.1 Hoffmann's Fears - Banking Crisis and Deficit in the Balance of Trade

From the beginning, Swiss mobilisation required not just "a patriotic sacrifice"³ of its citizen militia but also "a considerable financial effort"⁴. However, as argued in the introduction financial difficulties before the war threatened to undermine this economic mobilisation before it had even begun. On the eve of the war Switzerland was not self-sufficient; for example, poor availability of arable land made

¹ Nous avons le ferme espoir que le peuple Suisse saura seconder énergiquement la mobilisation militaire par une active et vigoureuse mobilisation financière. *Gazette de Lausanne*, "Au peuple suisse", 15 August 1914.

² Georg Kreis, *Insel der unsicheren Geborgenheit, Die Schweiz in den Kriegsjahren 1914-1918*, (Verlag NZZ, Zurich, 2014), p.85.

³ "un sacrifice patriotique impose aux citoyens sous les armes" Ibid.

⁴ "un effort financier considérable" Ibid.

Switzerland reliant on imports to feed its population. Imports during the war, fell from 7.9 million tonnes in 1913 to 5.9 million tonnes in 1915 and 1916, to 4.2 million tonnes in 1917 and to 3.5 million tonnes in 1918.⁵ Switzerland's real wealth before the war was dependant on imports of low-value commodities which, following Swiss manufacture and processing, were exported as higher-value goods. However, by 1913 Switzerland had imported 2 billion CHF worth of commodities and exported 1.3 billion.⁶ Switzerland's traditional source of real wealth had already become insufficient; the figures recorded in 1913 revealed a deficit in the balance of trade of approximately 700 million CHF. In addition there were severe problems within the Swiss banking sector. From 1910 to 1913, 45 local and regional banks suffered total losses of 112million CHF. This figure was the equivalent of the federal government's entire budget for 1912.⁷ Switzerland was the last European state to have centralised its monetary policy. Indeed it was not until 1907 that the Swiss National Bank became operational, but even still its location was split between two cities over a hundred kilometres apart: Bern, which took charge of all legal affairs, and Zurich, which took control of administrative affairs.

Within this context of financial instability and banking crisis, President Hoffmann chose to frame his appeal to the nation in terms of both military and economic mobilisation. However, his proposals for economic mobilisation focussed inwards, and centred on appeals for public donations from Swiss citizens whose means "exceeded their normal needs".⁸ From 1914 to 1917, Hoffmann never acknowledged the key emergent sources of real wealth in Switzerland: foreign direct investment in Switzerland, multi-national trading abroad, and the potential opportunity for development the war offered. According to Christof Dejung and Andreas Zangger's analysis, *British Wartime protectionism and Swiss trading companies in Asia during the First World War*, Switzerland, Belgium and Great Britain were "among the most export-orientated countries in Europe".⁹ While the majority of Swiss exports went to the countries which surrounded it, according to Paul Bairoch's analysis of the volume of Swiss exports, as much as a quarter of all Swiss exports before the outbreak of the war went overseas.¹⁰ According to Béatrice Veyrassat's analysis Asia was a key market for Swiss manufactured goods¹¹. Swiss trading companies mainly imported raw materials like cotton from India

⁵Hans Bauer and Warren J. Blackman, *Swiss Banking: An Analytical History*, (MacMillian Press, London, 1998), p.186.

⁶ Ibid. p.184.

⁷ Hugo Bänziger, *Die Entwicklung der Bankenaufsicht in der Schweiz seit dem 19. Jahrhundert*, (Berne/Stuttgart, 1986), p. 30.

⁸ "dépassent leur besoins normaux", *Gazette de Lausanne*, 15 August 1914.

⁹ Christof Dejung & Andreas Zangger, "British Wartime protectionism and Swiss trading companies in Asia during the First World War", *Past and Present*, No. 207, (May 2010), p. 183.

¹⁰ Paul Bairoch, "Le Volume des exportations de la Suisse de 1851à1975", *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Geschichte*, XXVIII, (1978), pp. 29-50.

¹¹ Béatrice Veyrassat, "La Suisse sur les marchés du monde: Exportations globales et répartition géographique au XIXe siècle. Essai de reconstruction," in Paul Bairoch and Martin Körner (eds.), *Die Schweiz in der Weltwirtschaft (15.-20. Jh.)*, (Chronos Verlag, Zürich, 1990), pp. 287-316.

and rubber from the Dutch East Indies which was then exported to Europe¹². Francophone merchant companies appeared to have been less significant than their germanophone counterparts. Their trade existed almost exclusively with what became allied trade during the war and appeared to have continued mostly as they had done before the war. However, micro-analysis of key germanophone merchant companies during the war revealed how global economic interaction was influenced by foreign perception and national allegiance of Swiss firms. Swiss public reaction to the war, therefore, had the potential to undermine or promote, influence and shape Swiss global trade.

Analysis of the pre-war context indicated that foreign direct investment in Switzerland and multi-national trading abroad had already become key sources of real wealth for the Swiss economy. According to Bauer and Blackman's analysis, 1913's 700million budget deficit in the balance of trade appeared to have been offset by the flow of income from investments abroad "in terms of loans, credits and direct investments."¹³ While officially foreign direct investment amounted to roughly 200 million CHF in 1913, Swiss banking secrecy dictated that this figure did not account for the inflow of interest and income from such investment. However, according to Bauer and Blackman, "it must have been considerable, enough to more than account for deficit in the balance of trade"¹⁴ The fact that such interest and income was not openly declared revealed the influence of Swiss banking secrecy, which interfered with the regulatory capacity of the state. This created reliance on self-regulation which combined with the heightened nationalisation of commerce brought by the war, left the banking sector dangerously open to influence of potential public division the war could have provoked. Yet it could also be argued that the war offered potential opportunity for development in this burgeoning area of foreign direct investment in Switzerland. According to Youssef Cassis, "the financial centres in small, neutral countries like the Netherlands and above all Switzerland grew in importance during these times of monetary and political crises."¹⁵

Macro-economic analysis from 1913 to 1918 indicated that Swiss GDP rose consistently throughout the war.¹⁶ Andrist, Anderson and Williams's estimated index of nominal economic activity for Switzerland during the war indicated an approximate 116% increase in economic activity from 1914 to 1918¹⁷. On first glance, this rise could have been dismissed as due to the rapid inflation of the war. According to Bauer and Blackman, food prices rose by 123% from 1914 to 1918 and wholesale prices increased by 200%.¹⁸ The cost of living index of 100 points in 1914 rose to 229 points in 1918. Real

¹² Dejung & Zangger, *British Wartime Protectionism*, p. 184.

¹³ Bauer & Blackman, *Swiss Banking*, p.184.

¹⁴ Ibid. p.185.

¹⁵ Cassis, *Capitals of Capital*, p.143-144.

¹⁶ See Appendix 4. Swiss GDP 1913-1919.

¹⁷ Felix Andrist, Richard G. Anderson and Marcela M. Williams, "Real output in Switzerland: New estimates for 1914-1947", *Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis Review*, (May/June,2000), pp. 43-69.

¹⁸ Bauer and Blackman, *Swiss Banking*, (1998), p. 187.

wages fell from their pre-war level by 25% in 1914 and by 30% in 1918.¹⁹ Inflation during this period was significant but its impact was only severe during the final two years of the war.²⁰ From 1 October 1917 to 1 July 1918, price controls and rationing were introduced for the first time at a federal level. In April 1918, the government introduced a planned price increase in milk to reflect inflation. When taking inflation into consideration Andrist, Anderson and Williams's estimate of real economic activity showed a rise, between 1914 and 1916, that was not as significant as the rise in nominal economic activity. Thus, it can be concluded that Switzerland did experience growth in economic activity from at least 1914 to 1916, despite rapid inflation. However, the extent of this growth has been recently contested by Stefan Gerlach (Deputy Governor-General of the Central Bank of Ireland) and Petra Gerlach-Kristen, in their analysis of Swiss economic growth during the war. Their analysis offered a more comprehensive and varied range of data and analysis for the period.²¹ Gerlach and Gerlach-Kristen's principal and unobserved components index of economic activity showed that the Swiss growth rate contracted sharply shortly before 1914, but that growth recovered from 1914 to 1916.²² Gerlach and Gerlach-Kristen argued that such growth was related to "the increased import demand of the parties at war"²³. This raised the question, how much Switzerland traded with the belligerent powers around her? Unlike Andrist, Anderson and Williams, Gerlach and Gerlach-Kristen's data showed that during the final two years of the war there was a collapse in the growth rate. Gerlach and Gerlach-Kristen attributed this to "decreased external demand".²⁴ Exactly where this decreased demand lay needs to be ascertained.

While both analyses show that the Swiss economy could not have remained economically neutral, they neglect the historical context. For example, Andrist, Anderson and Williams's estimate of real output in Switzerland from 1914 to 1918 was calculated on an index based on railway transportation data both passenger and freight. From this they concluded Switzerland experienced consistent, rising growth during the war. However, during the war, passenger rail transportation was indeed consistent, as Switzerland was a key transportation hub for prisoners of war and refugees throughout the war. If such figures were used to estimate Swiss economic growth, they would certainly misrepresent the reality of Swiss growth during the period. Gerlach and Gerlach-Kristen's analysis was more varied as it was based on data related to beer and butter production, railway freight and passengers, trade, tariff revenue and stock companies.²⁵ Their analysis confirmed that while there was a decline in beer and butter production, 1914-1916 saw a rise in railway freight and passengers, trade and tariff revenue.

¹⁹Bundesamt für Statistik, Neuchâtel, *Bilanz der ständigen Wohnbevölkerung 1861-2006*, BFS, 2006; *Bevölkerungswachstum und Bevölkerungsbestand seit 1899*, BFS, 2008.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Stefan Gerlach and Petra Gerlach-Kristen, "Estimates of Real Economic Activity in Switzerland, 1886-1930", *Empirical Economics* Volume 30, Number 3, (9 July 2004), pp.763-781.

²² See Appendix 1, Real and Nominal Economic Activity.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ See Appendix 2, Growth Rates of Indicator Series and Principal Components Analysis.

However, the most dramatic collapse in the final two years of the war was in tariff revenue. While Gerlach and Gerlach-Kristen attributed this to collapse of demand abroad, such a collapse in growth could have been affected by internal events, within Switzerland, in particular the emergent cracks in the Swiss *union sacrée* from 1915-1916. Perhaps the *union sacrée* had artificially sustained growth only for it collapse with rising discontent and division. The lack of public confidence, following the *Affair des Colonels* and ultimately the general strike of 1918, exerted rising pressure on the economy which impacted on internal economic growth. So, while the traditional sources of economic growth and stability were in a state of flux, contrary to Hoffmann's claims, the Swiss economy remained strong and relatively stable throughout the war. Even the Swiss film industry appeared to have had the financial resources needed to continue and even increase their output at the same time as Hoffmann's premonitions of economic collapse.²⁶

A more comprehensive analysis including greyer, undeclared areas of growth, foreign direct investment at home and multinational trading abroad pointed to a more complex reason for the rise in inflation. There were two possible reasons why prices in Switzerland rose. First, a supposed scarcity of imports may have demanded increased money supply to pay for what had increased in price. But Swiss preparations before the war, discussed in parliamentary debates and reported widely in the Swiss press, indicated that in the event of a siege, Switzerland had at least enough food supplies to last two years. According to Georg Kreis's analysis, reports by the Swiss Trade and Industry Association throughout 1914 stated that national supply was of little concern.²⁷ While there may have been a reduction in imports, these reports provide further evidence that there was not a scarcity of imports, and so this does not adequately explain why Swiss GDP growth soared from -2.9 in 1914 to 18.6 in 1915.²⁸ The second possible reason for inflation may have been that it was the rapid increase in money supply particularly from Foreign Direct Investment which drove up the price of goods and services. According to Bauer and Blackman, throughout the war Swiss citizens never appeared to have lost confidence in the value of their currency.²⁹ By contrast, belligerent states, particularly Germany and France experienced widespread currency dumping. Many citizens transferred their money to Swiss banks for security but also to avail of the appreciating exchange rate. As result, the Swiss franc continued to increase in value. Even before the outbreak of the war, an article in the *L'Economiste français* actively encouraged this, when it rather ominously stated, "Switzerland is a country where neutrality has more of a chance to be effectively respected than Belgium, in the case of a big European war".³⁰ Evidence of an increased money supply was further verified by the ability of the government body, *Schweizerische Finanzgesellschaft*, to provide loans for importers which enabled them to finance their imports on credit. Evidence would suggest therefore that increased

²⁶ See Appendix 3, No. of Films produced and financed in Switzerland.

²⁷ Kreis, *Insel der unsicheren Geborgenheit*, (2014) P. 80.

²⁸ See Appendix 4. Swiss GDP 1913-1919.

²⁹ Bauer and Blackman, *Swiss Banking*, (1998), p. 188.

³⁰ "La Suisse est un pays dont la neutralité a bien plus de chance d'être effectivement respectée que la Belgique, en cas de grande guerre européenne." *L'Economiste français*, 14 June 1913.

money supply rather than a shortage of imports was a bigger influence on price inflation - But where did all this money come from?

4.2 Basel, Zurich and Geneva – the three main financial centres

According to Youssef Cassis, at the outbreak of the war “financial activities [...] were shared among Basel, Geneva and Zurich.”³¹ The war offered the opportunity for a “certain division of labour [to be] established between the three main financial centres”³². Hoffmann’s appeal to the Swiss public, regarding economic mobilisation, encouraged the centralisation of a Swiss financial centre. While Zurich was chosen as the administrative headquarters of the Swiss National Bank, this did not mean it was automatically destined to become the financial centre of Switzerland. That role was closely contested in 1914 by its biggest rival Geneva. According to Cassis “although smaller in size, Geneva was in many respects a more cosmopolitan financial centre than Zurich, largely on account of its [...] links with France.”³³ The previously cited *L’Economiste français* article confirmed the francophone public’s mutual awareness of the relationship, when it advocated Switzerland as a safe place to invest.³⁴ Geneva was part of the Parisian merchant bank’s *Paribas system*. Indeed, the general manager of *Paribas* from 1908 to 1918 was a Genevan citizen named Albert Turrettini. According to Cassis, Geneva not Zurich profited most from the Latin Monetary Union between France, Belgium, Switzerland and Italy.³⁵ The cosmopolitan character of its banking and trade confirmed the Genevan community’s emergent humanitarian and diplomatic roles on the international stage, which will be discussed further in chapter six.

By contrast, germanophone cities that were prospective financial centres seemed to have relied often exclusively on the German market. The expansion of lending to Germany and German customers during the war led to a “serious regional concentration of risk”.³⁶ For example, as creditor, the *Basler Handelsbank* relied dangerously on the Germany market. Characteristic of germanophone banking, its lack of diversification and the State’s inability to regulate this, due to banking secrecy, left it unable to reprimand and regulate when needed. The cosmopolitan nature of francophone banking, by contrast, insured francophone banking remained relatively unscathed in this regard following the outbreak of war, particularly regarding the external restrictions which were imposed. The strength of Genevan finance was further evidenced in its relative stability during the first years of the war. For example, while the London stock exchange ceased trading on 31 July 1914 and reopened 4 January 1915, and all remaining germanophone financial centres remained closed until mid-1916, the Geneva stock exchange was one of the first European stock exchanges to reopen when its transactions were

³¹ Youssef Cassis, *Capitals of Capital – The Rise and Fall of International Financial Centres 1780-2009*, (Cambridge University Press, New York, 2010), p. 127.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid. p. 128.

³⁴ *L’Economiste français*, 14 June 1913.

³⁵ Cassis, *Capitals of Capital*, (2010).

³⁶ Independent Commission of Experts (ICE), *Bergier Report 12*, (Pendo Verlag, Zurich, 2002), p. 230.

restored, 20 August 1914. However, what Zurich lacked in cosmopolitanism it made up for in holding companies. According to Walter Adolf Jöhr, by the end of 1914 Zurich's prominent holding bank *Eektrobank* had a share capital of 75million CHF, which equalled that of Zurich's largest bank *Schweizerische Kreditanstalt*³⁷ and neared that of the biggest bank in the country, Basel-based *Schweizerische Bankverein*, whose share capital, according to Hans Bauer³⁸, was 82million CHF. The cosmopolitan nature of francophone finance, appeared to have been a topic of research at Zurich University during the outbreak of the war. One particular doctoral thesis's analysis, on francophone Swiss finance, offered an intriguing possibility of development for germanophone finance: "[holding companies and] Swiss banks benefited from the country's neutrality, which facilitated and strengthened their relations with all countries."³⁹

Neutrality's symbolic capital in multi-lingual states like Switzerland especially meant, according to Serge Paquier: "national partnerships, which would have been inconceivable elsewhere (particularly those involving French and German groups)"⁴⁰ were feasible in the realm of Swiss finance both at home and abroad. However, the linguistic division which had emerged internally, following the invasion of Belgium, threatened to destabilise Switzerland's key asset – neutrality. In his appeals to the nation, President Hoffmann never appeared to have seen how the success of the Swiss economy in wartime relied more on the perception of its neutrality abroad than on overcoming the restrictions on trade through foreign peace negotiation. By contrast other neutral states like the Netherlands emphasised and publicly advocated the symbolic capital of their neutral status. Already, in 1905, Dutch neutrality was advocated by Queen Wilhelmina in terms of national defence. However, unlike in Switzerland, the Dutch military played a subordinate role in terms of importance to the economy during the war. Dutch poet Albert Verwey reiterated this sentiment in his account of the war published in 1916. In his account he declared that the Dutch economy was the primary line of defence, and that it would be "unnatural" for the Dutch military to hold such a role.⁴¹ In Switzerland, by contrast, officially, the military gained precedence in political addresses to the public. However, in reality, it could be argued, the strength of the Swiss economy, and more precisely the recognition of the symbolic capital of Swiss neutrality, played a more significant role in the defence of Switzerland. For example, although the Swiss poet Carl Spitteler had just come from a lecture in which he discussed

³⁷ During the war *Schweizerische Kreditanstalt* changed its name to the more allied friendly *Crédit Suisse*. The french name for the germanophone bank remains to this day. Walter Adolf Jöhr, *Schweizerische Kreditanstalt (1856-1956)*, (Zurich, 1956), p. 532.

³⁸ Hans Bauer, *Société de Banque Suisse (1872-1972)*, (Basel, 1972), p. 441.

³⁹ A. Mayor, *Le développement des bourses en valeurs mobilières de la Suisse française*, (University of Zurich doctoral thesis, Basel 1914), p. 49.

⁴⁰ Serge Paquier, "Swiss holding companies from the mid-nineteenth century to the early 1930s: the forerunners and subsequent waves of creations", *Financial History Review*, Vol. 8, part 2, (Cambridge University Press, October 2001), p. 166.

⁴¹ Albert Verwey, *Holland en de Oorlog*, (Maatschappij voor Goede en Goedkoope Lectuur, Amsterdam, 1916), p. 55.

Swiss political, social and economic problems posed by the war,⁴² he chose not to refer to the economic role of Swiss neutrality when he addressed the public in his speech *Unser Schweizerstandpunkt*, from the steps of the lecture venue, 15 December 1914. Unlike the Dutch poet Verwey, Spitteler's speech focused on the social unity needed to ensure successful military mobilisation. The defensive capabilities of a strong and dynamic Swiss economy did not feature.

The Swiss public's perception of their neutrality, their whims and decisions were not subject to what neo-liberal analysis would generally perceive to be the anonymous process of economic markets. In fact, the Swiss economy itself both reflected, was influenced by and in turn exerted an influence on public opinion. For example, Swiss customers' panic at the outbreak of war fuelled a run on Swiss banks in 1914 just as happened in warring states. While, the fear of instability may have driven the mass withdrawal of money, there was a more rational and considered need for such money. The panic grew as mobilised men prepared to go to their "front". Given that these mobilised men were not paid for their service, the women and families left at home would have required access to hard cash at home. Lack of political and social female emancipation would have made it difficult for Swiss women to easily withdraw such money from what were undoubtedly their husband's accounts. For women in predominantly rural areas, lack of access to banking facilities, required foresight on the part of their men in preparation for their absence in a war. The Swiss National Bank stepped in to prevent a drain on metallic currency which had the potential to destabilise the Swiss banking sector. A similar solution for the same panic was implemented in France, from the 1 August 1914, the French government instructed banks faced with the prospect of a run to limit withdrawals from deposit and current accounts.⁴³ A day later, 2 August 1914, a similar solution was sought in Switzerland to control the prospect of a Swiss run. Unlike France, however, it was the Swiss national bank and not the Swiss government which instructed Swiss banks that a maximum of 200 francs could be withdrawn from deposit accounts and 50 francs from savings accounts. Smaller banknotes of 5 and 20 francs were issued and seem to have satisfied public demand for cash withdrawals. The national bank was exempted by the Federal Council from redeeming its banknotes in silver or gold. While the effect of the Swiss public's panic, due to financial preparations for mobilisation, was contained by the policy of the national bank, their mutual influence upon one another was clear. The containment of dissent and division during the war depended to a large extent on relative Swiss economic stability but equally the stability of the economy relied on the cooperation of the Swiss public, the containment of the linguistic division and Swiss citizen's adherence to Swiss neutrality.

4.3 Symbolic Capital of Swiss Identity and Swiss Neutrality in Global Trade

Though it may not have been acknowledged by the political establishment or (as one suspects in the case of Arthur Hoffmann, understood), the Swiss public, in particular those involved in the Swiss financial sector appeared to have been conscious of the economic status of neutrality in wartime. The meeting of the Helvetic Society in Zurich, December 1914, indicated that from an early stage analysis

⁴² Une conférence de Carl Spitteler, *Gazette de Lausanne*, 16 December 1914.

⁴³ J. Rivoire, *Le Crédit Lyonnais: Histoire d'une banque*, (Paris, 1989), p.106.

of the role of Swiss neutrality in economic affairs was a popular topic of academic analysis. A more widespread confirmation of the Swiss public's awareness of the symbolic capital of Swiss neutrality was revealed in the rapid changes in Swiss business practices used to accommodate the constraints and opportunities of wartime. This was expressed in its rapid de-ethnicisation of Swiss financial dealings - what was once a germanophone affiliation had become Swiss and neutral. This seemed to contradict the free market principles of the so-called "first global economy" of the pre-First World War period. It also ran contrary to liberal economic analysis published during the period. For example, Swiss ethno-linguistic affinity and allegiance before the war contradicted, liberal economist Henry Mussey analysis, in a journal article published December 1914, of the sudden emergence of "nationalistic ideas of commerce"⁴⁴ which have destroyed a supposed Bastiatian equilibrium which had existed previously. During the height of laissez-faire global capitalism, it was paradoxically Swiss de-ethnicising of its global economic dealings that carved its niche of dominance and not purely the whims of market and profit during this period of supposed cosmopolitan economics.

Georg Kreis argues that while war conditions made it difficult to obtain raw materials and semi-finished products, the enormous demand for Swiss products like special parts, condensed milk, trucks and dyes for example provided Switzerland with a bigger market and also the opportunity to innovate and improve its operational organisation and distribution.⁴⁵ When compared with the pre-war period (1908-1913), big Swiss chemical firms like Ciba and Sandoz saw their average profits increase seven times and fifteen times respectively during the war.⁴⁶ Smaller industries, like Nestlé and Cailler, expanded dramatically. In the case of the chocolate industry, Nestlé and others capitalised on the fact that milk and cacao imports were not restricted and the export of chocolate to belligerent armies was not considered part of the war supplies and therefore was also not restricted. Exports to the central powers almost tripled from 399 million CHF in 1913 to 909 million CHF in 1916 while exports to the allied powers increased from 854 million CHF to 1358 million CHF during the same period. Exports to both sides continued to increase, though not as dramatically, until 1918 when exports to the Central Powers dipped to 614 million CHF, which was still high when compared with the pre-war export figures. Three quarters of these exports, machinery parts, watches, fuses, detonators, copperware, were integral to the war effort.⁴⁷ Public recognition of this seemed to have peaked around the end of 1916. Some newspaper articles even criticised the chocolate industry for their "esprit neutraliste, chèvre-choutiste".⁴⁸ This is a colloquial phrase which literally states between the goat and the cabbage but implies the duality of Swiss industry using their neutrality to play both sides. Basle based evangelist preacher Hans Baur began a public campaign to ban the export of bullets, projectiles and

⁴⁴ Henry Raymond Mussey, "The New Freedom in Commerce", *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 29, No. 4, (December 1914).

⁴⁵ Kreis, *Insel der unsicheren Geborgenheit*, (2014) p. 91.

⁴⁶ Alfred Bürgin, *Geschichte des Geigy-Unternehmens von 1758 bis 1939*, (Basel 1958), p.244.

⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 92

⁴⁸ *La libre parole*, 30 September 1916.

detonators. Revealing of the extent of the war industry in Switzerland, Baur's appeal was rejected by the Federal Council 20 February 1917:

If one is to be consistent and just, one must ban all industries involved in supplying the demands of the war. This would not simply mean the loss of 30 000 or 50 000 jobs but hundreds of thousands of workers would be without bread.⁴⁹

The tourism industry suffered but as will be discussed further in Chapter Five, was offset during the latter years of the war with considerable payments made by the belligerent powers for their soldiers interned in Swiss, hotels, guesthouses and hostels. However despite spectacular export growth food imports were of concern and by 1918 had fallen by almost 60%.⁵⁰

Without access to the sea, Switzerland had to exploit its links with Germany and France to gain access to global markets. When viewed as part of a neutral block, the combined might of Belgium, the Netherlands and Switzerland ranked fourth on the eve of the war in terms of stock of capital invested abroad.⁵¹ At a total of \$5.5 billion, this almost equalled the amount invested abroad by Germany before the war.⁵² By 1914 and during the height of nationalistically defined divisions of World War, Switzerland's neutral status and exceptionalism became symbolic capital in their own right – the key to success within the global economic trade which would prop up the country's finances, and thus ensured relative Swiss independence, during the war. According to Christof Dejung and Andreas Zangger's analysis, *British Wartime protectionism and Swiss trading companies in Asia during the First World War*, Switzerland, Belgium and Great Britain were "among the most export-orientated countries in Europe".⁵³ While the majority of Swiss exports ended up in the countries that surrounded it, according to Paul Bairoch's analysis of the volume of Swiss exports, as much as a quarter of all Swiss exports before the outbreak of the war went to overseas markets.⁵⁴ According to Béatrice Veyrassat's analysis, Asia was a key market for Swiss manufactured goods⁵⁵. Swiss trading companies mainly imported raw materials like cotton from India and rubber from the Dutch East Indies, which was then exported to Europe⁵⁶.

⁴⁹ Bundesarchiv, Bern, *Bundesratssitzung*, 20 February 1917.

⁵⁰ Roman Rossfeld and Tobias Straumann (eds.), *Der vergessene Wirtschaftskrieg. Schweizer Unternehmen im Ersten Weltkrieg*, (Zurich, 2008), p. 24-25.

⁵¹ See Appendix 5: Stock of Foreign Investment.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Christof Dejung and Andreas Zangger, "British Wartime protectionism and Swiss trading companies in Asia during the First World War", *Past and Present*, no. 207, (May 2010), p. 183.

⁵⁴ Paul Bairoch, "Le Volume des exportations de la Suisse de 1851 à 1975", *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Geschichte*, xxviii, 1978, pp. 29-50.

⁵⁵ Béatrice Veyrassat, "La Suisse sur les marchés du monde: Exportations globales et répartition géographique au XIXe siècle. Essai de reconstruction," in Paul Bairoch and Martin Körner (eds.), *Die Schweiz in der Weltwirtschaft (15.-20. Jh.)*, (Zürich, 1990), pp. 287-316.

⁵⁶ Dejung and Zangger, "British Wartime Protectionism", (2010), p. 184.

Francophone Swiss merchant companies appeared to have been less significant than their germanophone counterparts. Their trade existed almost exclusively with what became allied trade during the war and appeared to have continued mostly as they had done before the war. However, micro-analysis of key Germanophone Swiss merchant companies during the war revealed how global economic interaction was influenced by foreign perception and national allegiance of Swiss firms, which was influenced by the linguistic divide which had intensified following the invasion of Belgium. However, as Geoffrey Jones outlined in a working paper for Harvard Business School, nationalising or giving the perception of a national identity to what were in effect often multi-national companies operating on a global scale was ambiguous and often impossible⁵⁷. Many such multi-nationals chose to legitimise their new found national identity through head-quarters based in neutral countries, the majority of which were stationed in either the Netherlands or Switzerland. While in 1914 Great Britain, the US and The Netherlands accounted for between two thirds and three quarters of the total global foreign direct investment, throughout the war “the Swiss and the Swedes were also persistently large outward multinational investors⁵⁸”. As a bloc, neutral countries, not only grew in terms of foreign direct investment during the war but also held a larger stake of the global economy than many belligerent powers. While macro-analysis analysed this phenomena in terms of numbers of goods and services sold, parliamentary/cabinet decisions to deal with submarine warfare and naval blockade, micro-analysis provided the tools necessary to understand the embeddedness of the particular companies in their political, social and cultural environment which was more revealing of the extent of the röstigraben divide within the realm of public identity within global business and trading.

The two main centres of Swiss trade in Asia were India and Singapore. From the outbreak of the war, a perceived allegiance, often equated with nationality, of European merchants became crucial. Francophone Swiss involvement in global trade remained stable and relatively uncontested due to a perception of being on the “right” allied side. This confidence in the maintenance of their trade routes and consistency of capital flows contributed to a growing assertiveness on the part of the francophone community in general. The allies’ dominance in global trading networks made it more difficult for germanophone Swiss trading companies to operate. However, from 1914 – 1915, Swiss global trade routes remained consistent and in some cases grew.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, the reprisal orders of 11 March 1915 allowed England to confiscate what it perceived to be enemy goods under a neutral flag. These orders included both absolute (weapons) and relative (materials intended for use by enemy) contraband. This regulation did not seem to dent Swiss trade significantly during 1915 but a second law passed 23rd December 1915 imposed the more vague and thus more exploitable definition of

⁵⁷ Geoffrey Jones, *Nationality and Multinationals in Historical Perspective*, Working Paper for Harvard Business School, (2005), p. 8.

⁵⁸ Geoffrey Jones, *Multinationals and Global Capitalism. From the Nineteenth to the Twenty First Century*, (Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 7-8.

⁵⁹ John Mc Dermott, “Trading with the Enemy: British Business and the Law during the First World War”, *Canadian Journal of History*, xxxii, (1997), p. 207.

“enemy nationality” and “enemy association” which would be used to restrict neutral trade.⁶⁰

According to British diplomatic correspondence, a cover firm was set up in Switzerland and through its business dealings gained information specifically relating to the information regarding Swiss companies and their trade partners.⁶¹ While initially these restrictions sought to blacklist German or Austrian companies whose headquarters were now based in neutral countries, a ban was imposed by the British on Swiss companies with Austrian and German managers. This proved problematic in towns like Basel, which had a high proportion of resident German citizens. The fact that a large proportion of these Swiss residents had lived the majority of their lives in Switzerland and perhaps even identified themselves as Swiss was of course irrelevant to British supervisors. Writing in the *New York Times*⁶² Sir Edward Grey opportunistically portrayed the regulations as a chance for neutral states to cultivate trade relations with one or other belligerent powers. In effect he demanded that neutral powers take sides in economic warfare. It was when British officials began to attempt to ascertain the national origin of what had been multi-national companies, that the role of public perception, allegiance and assumption were expressed, often with devastating results in the case of the *Basel Mission Trading Company*.

4.4 The Symbolic Capital of Neutrality and the Real Value of the Linguistic Divide in Multinational Trade

Founded in 1859 by Basel protestant missionaries, the *Basel Mission Trading Company* was Switzerland's key trading company based in India and the Gold Coast (Ghana). Given both Basel's location and demographics, it was hardly surprising that a large proportion of the company's shareholders and employees were German citizens. However, the company went to considerable effort to acquiesce to British demands, removed or payed off their German shareholders, attempted to cut missionary ties with both the Basel mission and any links it may have had with the Protestant German South-West Mission. Nevertheless, from 1916 onwards the *Basel Mission Trading Company* was threatened with liquidation. It would appear that the *Basel Mission Trading Company* may have been particularly targeted. There appeared to have been evidence to suggest that Britain rather pettily wished to exclude the company from competition in a realm in which it was without question dominant – India. The altogether more neutral sphere of Swiss trading companies, based in Bangkok or Singapore perhaps, urged cooperation rather than confiscation. According to Margaret Gannon, after the war when the British confiscated the Company's overseas possessions (which it was later recompensated for by Britain in 1952) the motivations of the British appeared to have also included their wish to control the influence of germanophone Protestant missionary work in both India and the Gold Coast.⁶³ The imposition of British trade restrictions from December 1915 onwards pressurised both the Netherlands and Switzerland to develop national regulatory bodies of trade control: The

⁶⁰ The British Black List, *Harvard Law Review*, (1917), p. 279.

⁶¹ The National Archives, London, (TNA) FO382/429.

⁶² Sir Edward Grey, “Black List Legal, Britain Contends,” *New York Times*, 15 November 1916, p. 1.

⁶³ Margaret Gannon, “The Basle Mission Trading Company and British Colonial Policy in the Gold Coast, 1918-1928”, *Journal of African History*, 24, 1983, p. 503-15.

Société Suisse de Surveillance économique and the *Netherlands' Overseas Trust*. The neutrality and independence of these national trade control bodies were in effect compromised. The combined dominance of French and English overseas trade forced Switzerland and Holland to comply with allied trade restrictions. The loss of Swiss economic freedom in this regard was explored further by Max Ochsenbein in *Die verlorene Wirtschaftsfreiheit*.⁶⁴

According to Christof Dejung and Andreas Zangger, "Swiss merchants in Asia were affected not only because of what they did, but also because of who they were."⁶⁵ As early as the summer of 1915, the correspondence of two of the biggest Swiss trading houses, Zurich based *Volkart Bros.* and *Diethelm & Co*, had fallen foul of British postal control which had intercepted their employees' correspondence searching for anti-allied bias. The swift action, obedience and willingness to acquiesce to British demands was revealing. Two *Volkart* employees who were cited in the intercepted correspondence as having made disparaging remarks about the allies were immediately fired. The fact that one of the employees who had made these disparaging remarks was from a fellow neutral state, America, seemed to have been overlooked, so eager the *Volkart* company was to remain neutral, within the eyes of the British. *Diethelm & Co* paid off any remaining German shareholders within their company to avoid classification or suspicion of being a German and not simply germanophone company. 22 October 1915 a circular was issued by *Volkart Bros.* in Winterthur to its remaining employees mainly based in Colombo. The circular issued strict instructions that all employees were to cease any discussion of the war or politics in their personal and official correspondence.⁶⁶ Despite having fully complied with British demands, suspicion about what was perceived to have been the company's germanophone and thus German identity, the headquarters of *Volkart Bros.* in Colombo was searched. All documents in German were confiscated for a short period where they were translated and eventually returned. According to the British authorities and the minutes of the officials working in Colombo nothing suspicious was found.⁶⁷ The *Volkart Bros.* appeared to have made an extra effort to be seen as a loyal Swiss company among the Swiss public at home. 27 March 1916 the *Gazette de Lausanne* acknowledged receipt of 1000kilos of tea sent by the *Volkart Bros.* from Ceylon as a gesture of goodwill and national allegiance to be distributed among the Swiss military mobilised at the "front".⁶⁸ Many Swiss companies expressed frustration at the rigidity of British interpretation of their company's allegiance. Viktor Zollikofer of Rangoon based company *Zollikofer & Co* complained to Swiss Consulate's representative Ringger, based in Bombay that:

⁶⁴ Heinz Ochsenbein, *Die verlorene Wirtschaftsfreiheit 1914-1918: Methoden ausländischer Wirtschaftskontrollen über die Schweiz*, (Stämpfli Bern, 1971).

⁶⁵ Dejung and Zanger, *British wartime protectionism*, (2010), p. 196.

⁶⁶ Volkart-archiv, Winterthur (VA), Dossier 18 Winterthur: 1. Table of Events: Bombay, circular, 22 October 1915.

⁶⁷ Volkart-Archiv, Dossier 6 Colombo: 4. Table of Events.

⁶⁸ Confédération Suisse, *Gazette de Lausanne*, 27 March 1916.

Since the outbreak of the war, we Swiss have suffered greatly from English prejudice against German-sounding names, which are condemned without discretion as either completely German or at least German-friendly.⁶⁹

Analysis of the British Consulate's correspondence would appear to confirm the veracity of *Zollikofer's* claims of British prejudice. The memorandum of 28 September 1915 of the British Consulate in Siam to the British Foreign Office, for example, referred to the Swiss company *Diethelm Bangkok* in one paragraph as a "Swiss firm" while later on the firm was defined as a "German firm"⁷⁰. However, *Zollikofer's* claims of British prejudice did not appear to have been as blatant. Prejudice or a looser interpretation of what qualified a company as German, appeared to have been acted upon once a Swiss company was perceived to pose a competitive threat as was seen in the British blacklisting of the Basel Mission Trading Company.

While British restrictions on Swiss trade could have been seen from 1915 onwards, British interference and restrictions on company communications often began far earlier in areas of overwhelming British dominance, like India. For example by November 1914 Swiss company officials working for *Volkart* in India began to complain about the lack of or restrictions of their means of communication: "We have been fully transported back to the times of our ancestors who had to make do without telegraphy"⁷¹ British restrictions made it impossible for Swiss companies to encode telegrams even when discussing secret offers and pricing. The yearly report of the Swiss Bundesrat to the Swiss Bundesversammlung showed that this matter was significant enough to be debated politically. The figures quoted in the report show that on average throughout the war the volume of telegrams sent between Switzerland and British India dropped to a third of what it had been in 1913.⁷² By August 1916 British authorities restrictions threatened to intensify, when they informed *Volkart's* representatives in Liverpool *Ellison & Co* that *Volkart Bros.* would not be able to conduct business without the surveillance by the British Board of Trade.

Throughout August 1916 *Volkart Bros.* once again began a campaign of defence of its position as a neutral but a non-germanophile germanophone company. Evidence was produced which showed the company's full compliance with British trade regulations and demands. Suspicions were raised as to the motivations of the British Trade Board and *Volkart's* competitors who it was claimed were exploiting the fears of the British establishment and regulation loopholes in a campaign to undermine

⁶⁹ Bundesarchiv Bern, E2200.110 (Bombay), ref.no. 1, box 1, package 6: *Viktor Zollikofer, Zollikofer & co.*, Rangoon to K. Ringger, Swiss Consulate, Bombay, 31 July 1917.

⁷⁰ National Archives, London FO 371/2465, Paper 139987: Memorandum of 28 September 1915, British Consulate in Siam to the Foreign Office.

⁷¹ *Volkart-Archiv*, Winterthur, Dossier 42 Rechtliches, cotton Business Germany First World War: Gebrüder *Volkart*, Winterthur, to J.H. Reitz, Chemnitz, 18 November 1914.

⁷² Bundesarchiv, Bern, Schweizerisches Bundesblatt: Berichts des Bundesrates an die Bundesversammlung über seine Geschäftsführung, Vols 66-71 Bern 1913-1918.

and restrict the Swiss company's operations and ultimately squeeze out sizable Swiss competition.⁷³ However, it would appear pure competitive self-interest often transcended the Swiss national unity when rival Swiss companies began to exploit the British/Allied perception of germanophone allegiance to defame fellow Swiss rivals. For example, a memorandum dated 28 September 1915 from the British consulate in Siam to the Foreign Office reported that a rival Swiss company *Berli & Co* had complained to the British Consulate regarding what it deemed the "German-friendly behaviour"⁷⁴ of managers of their rivals – the major Swiss trading house based in Asia, *Diethelm & Co*. *Berli & Co* also suggested that such German affinity was further evidenced in *Diethelm's* delay in switching the company's consular protection in Bangkok from Germany to America.⁷⁵ As a result of *Berli & Co's* testimony *Diethelm* was blacklisted in 1915. However, the majority of defamation of Swiss companies came from non-Swiss predominantly rival companies of allied origin. *Volkart's* defence of its neutral identity during august 1916 appeared to have convinced the British political establishment in particular.⁷⁶ The Swiss government cemented its support for the *Volkart Bros.* by making the "chef de la maison"⁷⁷ Henri Frey the honorary consul of the newly created Swiss consulate in Colombo, Ceylon.⁷⁸ From 1916 onwards, *Volkart* was allowed to trade without British surveillance and barely a year later in 1917 made 4.9 million Swiss francs profit, in one of the highest net profits in its history. Such profits were dramatic, even considering the rapid inflation of 1917. It was just one small example which was illustrative of what Lorenz Stucki later defined as Swiss "secret empire" in his analysis of Switzerland's involvement in colonial trade.⁷⁹

The Swiss *Diethelm* company was another example of how Swiss trading companies could successfully capitalise from the plurality of their multicultural, multilingual identities. According to Dejung and Zangger, the Saigon branch of *Diethelm* fostered close links with French rubber manufacturers during the rubber boom period prior to the First World War, while its one German shareholder enabled trade connections with the German Reich. During the war, it was its ability to use the neutral status of its homeland to court fellow companies from neutral states like Holland, which allowed many Swiss companies to retain their small yet significant hold on international trade. The real value of a multiple identity often outweighed the fiscal disadvantages in the case of *Diethelm's* Dutch subsidiary *Hooglandt & Co*. In the private correspondence of W. H. Diethelm and Walter Ingold, *Diethelm's* manager in Singapore, demanded that *Diethelm* and its Dutch subsidiary should merge, due to the financial losses incurred in keeping books for two companies and consolidate the

⁷³ Diethelm-Archiv, Zurich, A 3.13 Correspondence Zurich Bangkok, 1915.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ The National Archives, London, FO 371/2465, Paper 139987 memorandum of 28 September 1915 from British Consulate in Siam to the Foreign Office.

⁷⁶ Jakob Anderegg, *Volkart Brothers 1851-1976*, Bd. 1, *Winterthurer Bibliotheken, Sonderslg.* 1979, 248.

⁷⁷ Tran. Head of the house.

⁷⁸ Confédération Suisse, *Gazette de Lausanne*, 28 June 1916.

⁷⁹ Lorenz Stucki, *Das heimliche Imperium. Wie die Schweiz reich wurde. Ein erstmals beschriebener Aspekt der Schweizer Geschichte*, (Bern, 1968).

link between supplier (*Diethelm*) and the insurer of its goods, which had bizarrely been the Dutch company *Hooglandt*. Head and founder of the Company W. H. Diethelm refused.⁸⁰

However, Swiss companies' publically declared neutrality often masked the linguistic bias which remained in private. During the war, it would appear that, while Swiss company employees were instructed to avoid displaying links with German based companies, and usually carried out their public affairs through English or French, privately predominantly germanophone Swiss employees and the managers themselves appeared to have socialised almost exclusively among the germanophone community. Singapore was the main trading post for Swiss trading companies in Asia. In 1914 membership of *Club Teutonia* had swollen to become one of Singapore's major social clubs, catering exclusively for German and Swiss high society business people based in Singapore. Though the club was perceived as German it would be more accurate to define it as germanophone, as Swiss members were heavily represented at the club. Since the 1890s tradition dictated that a Swiss citizen would always act as vice-president. However "Teutonia Klub" was commandeered by the British Custodian of Enemy Property of the Straits Settlements government. Testament, perhaps, to the close affiliation of both the Swiss and German communities, the evicted *Club Teutonia* members swelled the ranks of the Swiss Rifle Shooting Club which had been a pretty minor club until 1914. Essentially the club consisted of founder Swiss man Otto Adler and a few friends. According to Hans Schweizer-Iten the official articles of the club expressly stated that all associate members were required to speak German and refrain from conversing privately in French or Italian or English. While it continued to act as a de facto Germanophone club throughout the war, the club had changed its name to the Swiss Club after 1918, and had raised enough funds to build the present clubhouse which remains as part of the Swiss Embassy compound in Bukit Tinggi, Singapore to this day.

The case of Swiss merchant Robert Sturzenegger's affiliation during the war offered a less successful example of the chameleon-like ability of Swiss international trade. Robert's father Conrad Sturzenegger, though Swiss, founded the *German-Siamese Trading Company* in the 1880's. It was yet another example of the ability of certain Swiss businesses willingness to manipulate international perception accordingly, for when the company was seized upon the outbreak of the war, Conrad's son and heir, Robert Sturzenegger, collected his inherited share of the company and set up his own company along with his share of another seized German company *Rautenberg & Schmidt*. While the Schmidts of that company went on to form the Hamburg based *Schmidt & Küsterman*, Robert Sturzenegger founded his own Swiss Schaffhausen based company and its subsidiary in Penang, in an attempt to expunge the taint of perceived German affiliation. During the war the Swiss body of trade control with the Central Powers the *Schweizerische Treuhandstelle* or Swiss Trust Agency, concluded in its report, that Robert Sturzenegger's business in Schaffhausen and Penang were independent of German affiliation and involvement of his previous German business partners.

⁸⁰ Diethelm Archive, A 3.21 private correspondence of W. H. Diethelm with Managers: Roest to W. H. Diethelm, 29th December 1917 and Ingold to W. H. Diethelm 21 November 1917.

However, later bankruptcy files on Sturzenegger held at the Stadtarchiv Schaffhausen, describe how officials in Penang “couldn’t understand” why Sturzenegger insisted on doing his book keeping in Hamburg during the war.⁸¹ While this may not conclusively prove Sturzenegger’s continued involvement with black-listed German trading companies, it casted aspersion on the veracity of the Schweizerische Treuhandstelle’s claims of comprehensive neutral analysis. Indeed, it also seemed odd that a national body of supposedly unified, centralised trade control was called the *Schweizerische Treuhandstelle* (Swiss Trust Agency) in germanophone Switzerland dealing with the Central Powers, while the same institution was given the more stringent sounding *Société Suisse de surveillance économique* (Swiss Society for economic surveillance) in francophone Switzerland. Once again, it would appear two conflicting interpretations, of what was officially presented as a national institution, would emerge during the war.

The debate surrounding the *Affair des Colonels* in 1916 emphasised the division of interpretation of neutrality that had emerged between the two main linguistic communities – the francophone aloof detachment rivalled germanophone engagement which saw its role as neutral arbitrator. This contrasted with the more unified interpretation of the role of neutrality discussed in the Netherlands. Though different in their interpretations, the common focus of both countries centred on the role of exceptionalism within reinterpretations of Dutch and Swiss neutrality. According to Maartje Abbenhuis “[Dutch] neutrality became more than a recognised key to independence and profitable trade”. Neutrality began to “[symbolise] Dutch virtue in the popular mind.”⁸² But this appears to have been a reawakening of previous interpretation rather than something particularly new, as illustrated in Dutch involvement in the legalisation of neutrality in both Hague peace conferences of 1899 and 1907. Swiss interpretations of exceptionalism by 1916 brought the Swiss economy to the fore as a key issue of the war which echoed the Dutch view on the importance of the economy from the beginning of the war. However, both countries’ interpretations of its neutrality were similar in their interpretation of the role of exceptionalism in neutrality, that within neutrality lay the possibility of international significance.⁸³ For the francophone Swiss community the role of exceptionalism lay in the humanitarian movement – the Geneva based Swiss Red Cross. For the official Germanophone Swiss community similar to the Dutch, exceptionalism lay in neutral arbitration. However, while the Dutch press “were relatively consistent [in] encouraging international peace”⁸⁴ Swiss press response across the *röstigraben* divide did not encourage such intervention which was deemed a breach of Swiss neutrality. This explains the Swiss public’s condemnation and the swift resignation of Arthur Hoffmann as soon as the Swiss public were made aware of his attempts at peace mediation between Russia and Germany during the *Grimm-Hoffmann Affair*. Despite the fact that such attempts at

⁸¹Stadtarchiv Schaffhausen, D IV.01.34.01 Briefe.

⁸² Maartje Abbenhuis, *The art of staying neutral – The Netherlands in the First World War, 1914-1918*, (Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, 2006), p. 29.

⁸³Cornelis Boudewijn Wels, *Aloofness and Neutrality. Studies on Dutch Foreign Relations and Policy-Making Institutions*. (Utrecht: Hes Publishers, 1982).

⁸⁴ Maartje Abbenhuis, *The Art of Staying Neutral*, (2006), p. 224.

mediation were fairly common among all key neutral countries, the Swiss public as a whole, it would appear, saw Switzerland as the exception among other neutrals in this regard.

4.5 Neutral Arbitration

Declaration of war by America threatened to destabilise the import of vital food stuffs. The USA along with Russia was one of Switzerland's main sources of grain. The lack of political stability in Russia added to the sense of unease expressed by key political figures like Arthur Hoffmann. For Hoffmann, in particular the key concern was the economic impact of the war. Writing to the Swiss legation in St. Petersburg, in June 1917, he emphasised his view that trade and economic relations between states overruled ideology and national affinity or hatred: "Germany wants an honourable peace between itself and Russia based on its intimate commercial and economic interests."⁸⁵ However, Hoffman's viewpoint was myopically focused on goods imports at the expense of the thriving financial sector internally and international trade. Thus, in his view the Swiss economic situation was precarious and threatened further by prolonged war and the entry of America into the fray.

In the spring of 1917, a Socialist representative of the national council, Robert Grimm, went to St. Petersburg to negotiate a peace between Russia and Germany. Analysis of Grimm's correspondence revealed he was supported by the previous Swiss president of 1914 and current Swiss minister of foreign affairs, Arthur Hoffmann.⁸⁶ Any prospective neutral arbitration, especially of this magnitude, would have required at least approval by the seven-member Bundesrat. However, neither Hoffmann nor his colleagues in the seven-member Bundesrat, had publically acknowledged Hoffmann's tacit support of Grimm. When Hoffmann's involvement in the affair was made public on 18 June 1917, the seven-member Bundesrat claimed to have no knowledge of Hoffmann's involvement and Hoffmann would have appeared to have confirmed the Bundesrat's stance by resigning as result of his own "private actions".⁸⁷ However, analysis of the Swiss, German and Russian diplomatic correspondence during the spring of 1917 suggests a considerably wider awareness of Hoffmann and Grimm's peace plans existed than would later have been publically declared. Even non-political figures like French intellectual, Romain Rolland, appeared to have been aware of Hoffmann's involvement when his diary entry 16 April 1917 declared "Grimm communicated that he had held talks with federal councillor Hoffmann. [...] Hoffmann declared that it would be impossible for Allied governments to consider this approach a violation of neutrality."⁸⁸

⁸⁵ "Allemagne cherche avec Russie paix honorable pour les deux côtés avec intimes relations commerciales et économiques futures et appui financier pour reconstitution Russie." Bundesarchiv Bern, E 2001, Archiv-Nr. 765/1 *La Division des Affaires étrangères du Département politique à la Légation de Suisse à Petrograd Copie d'expédition Tn°90* Berne, 3 juin 1917, 12 h. 30

⁸⁶ Bundesarchiv, Bern, M28* Die Affäre Hoffmann - Grimm und ihre Folgen, 1917, J1.173* Grimm Robert (1881-1958), 1893-2000.

⁸⁷ Bundesarchiv, Bern, M28* Die Affäre Hoffmann - Grimm und ihre Folgen, 1917

⁸⁸ "Grimm communiqua qu'il avait eu un entretien avec le conseiller fédéral Hoffmann. [...] Hoffmann avait déclaré qu'il était impossible pour les gouvernements de l'Entente pourraient considérer cette démarche comme

The correspondence between the German representative and foreign minister indicated that the idea to intervene did not come from Germany but was entirely of Swiss origin⁸⁹. While both the German legation in Berne and the German Foreign minister welcomed Grimm and Hoffmann's intervention, it would appear Swiss peace negotiations were regarded in Germany as merely a welcome subplot within a main Russian narrative, which they had anticipated: "I would add here that we are gambling on the revolution resulting in Russian military disorganization."⁹⁰ On 14 April 1917 the German minister in Bern Baron von Romberg noted to German foreign minister Zimmermann assuring him of Swiss foreign minister Hoffmann's approval:

Although Hoffmann is a personal opponent of Grimm, of whose character he has a poor opinion, Hoffmann is inclined to recommend that permission be granted [for Grimm to travel through Germany to Russia via Stockholm].⁹¹

German minister von Romberg offered an explanation of Hoffmann's endorsement of his perceived "opponent", Socialist minister Grimm: "As far as his work for peace is concerned, Hoffmann considers him to be absolutely honest"⁹². According to German and Russian diplomatic correspondence, both the German and Russian foreign ministries were well aware of Grimm and Hoffmann's plans for peace over two months before the Swiss Bundesrat. Romberg saw Grimm's main reason for the trip to Russia as "the opportunity to conclude a separate peace [...] and that a general peace would then follow"⁹³. However, in his official request, Romberg stated Grimm outlined that his primary reason for the mission was to "procure permission, either official or at least from the Committee, for the Russian emigrés in Switzerland [...] to return to Russia through Germany."⁹⁴

While the most senior political instigator was Hoffmann, according to the Swiss and German correspondence, intriguingly the correspondence mentions both Hoffmann and briefly alludes to Swiss President and Bundesrat member Schulthess' motivation regarding the plan:⁹⁵

Both Hoffmann and President Schulthess appear to be particularly nervous as a result of the American declaration of war, and they seem worried that the opportunity of making peace with the Russians might not be exploited.⁹⁶

une atteinte à la neutralité." 14 April 1917, Romain Rolland journal des années de guerre 1914 - 1919 : notes et documents pour servir à l'histoire morale de l'Europe de ce temps, Paris : Albin Michel, 1952.

⁸⁹ Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts, Berlin, AS 1456 Baron von Romberg (German Legation in Bern) to Arthur Zimmermann (German Foreign Ministry) Telegram No. 663 sent 14 April 1917 Received 15 April 1917.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

While this did not suggest that President Schulthess was aware that Hoffmann had acted independently on such concerns it seemed to question the official Swiss response that no member of the Bundesrat was aware of Hoffmann's actions, when the affair was eventually revealed. The fact that Schulthess was not mentioned again in this context in German diplomatic correspondence suggested that while Schulthess may have been sympathetic to such peace negotiations, Hoffmann may have still acted independently of the Bundesrat.

While in Petrograd, Grimm began to masquerade as a diplomatic representative of the Swiss government which exceeded his official mandate. Officially, Grimm's role in St. Petersburg was to prepare the return of Russian migrants in Switzerland back to Russia.⁹⁷ Neutral Switzerland had been a key destination for asylum but it was also a key meeting point for the socialist movement. Both the towns of Zimmerwald in 1915 and Kienthal in 1916, hosted two of the most important international conferences of socialists during the war. While in Russia, Grimm embarked on a series of conferences and a reunion of the commission of the Socialist International. It was through this reunion that he developed contact with many key figures of the new political establishment. It seemed to have been through this contact that Grimm began to implement the second more covert mission – the negotiation of a peace settlement between Russia and Germany, who were still at war. Grimm's key motivations for this seemed to have been his ideological opposition to the Leninist interpretation of global class warfare⁹⁸.

According to Baron von Romberg's assessment, Grimm's perceived aims saw it "necessary to counteract Branting's activities against peace".⁹⁹ By 1917 tensions regarding Swedish sovereignty over the Åland Islands were increasing. Russian troops were stationed on the islands. Germany offered to support to Sweden in this matter in return for Swedish support for the German war effort. For Branting and other Swedish politicians, a German-Russian peace was not desired. The German ministry supported Swiss endeavours at brokering a peace with Russia, seeing it as a concret development amidst the turmoil of revolution: "we are gambling on the revolution resulting in Russian military disorganisation."¹⁰⁰ The German foreign ministry correspondence between von Romberg and Zimmermann revealed a certain wariness of Grimm, in particular, his potential to rouse further support among the German socialists. In an unwitting recognition of the strength of German socialism at this stage, von Romberg declared: "He [Grimm] [...] would be in a position to do us a great deal of damage through his connexions with the revolutionary camp in every country". Previously, Grimm had worked closely with Lenin and Trotsky as part of the Zimmerwald drafting commission. Grimm and Trotsky had drafted Zimmerwald Manifesto together, the manifesto both Grimm, Lenin, Axelrod, and Mark Natanson would become signators to. Highlighting a division between Russian and German Socialists, Romberg continued:

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

What is certain is that the Russian revolutionaries will listen to Grimm, a Swiss whom, as one of the men of Zimmerwald, they like and trust, rather than to the German Socialists, especially those of Scheidemann's group.

Indeed Romberg's assessment regarding the interaction of German and Swiss socialist groups during the war appeared to hint at the key factor which enabled the Swiss socialists to begin to bridge the franco-germanophone internal divide, in 1918.

From the beginning many Russian officials began to question Grimm's official position. Grimm often introduced himself as a diplomat but officially he was not anything of the sort. In a telegram labelled "very secret" sent 29 May 1917, Romberg revealed to the German foreign ministry and Bethmann Hollweg Hoffmann's fears regarding the perception of Grimm's perceived masquerading as a Swiss diplomatic official in Russia.¹⁰¹ Grimm requested that Hoffmann "inform [him] if possible about the [German] government's war aims known to [Hoffmann], since this would facilitate the conducting of negotiations."¹⁰² However, Hoffmann wrote to the German Legation in Bern asking them not to give Grimm specific data as he would perhaps "take on the role of semi-official mediator to which his position did not entitle him".¹⁰³ Instead Grimm was to be given "a few general points of view which he would utilise to strengthen the peace party in Russia".¹⁰⁴ However, seven days after this telegram and thirteen days before the scandal was publically revealed, Hoffmann appeared to have been consistently relaying information to Grimm regarding Germany's war aims, via the Russian Foreign Ministry:

Federal Councillor Hoffmann authorises you to relay the following verbal information to Grimm: Germany will undertake no offensive operations so long as there appears to be a possibility of concluding an agreement with Russia.¹⁰⁵

On the 26 of May 1917, Grimm sent a secret telegram to Hoffmann, in which he declared that, a separate peace "seemed possible"¹⁰⁶ and that he required further information regarding German war aims in order to negotiate a peace.¹⁰⁷ This telegram was intercepted by French socialist Albert Thomas who made it public. Grimm was forced to leave Russia immediately and by the 18 June the

¹⁰¹ Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts, Berlin, German Foreign Office, File 1499 fr. D627930

¹⁰² Robert Paul Browder and Alexander F. Keresky, *The Russian Provisional Government 1917, Documents, Volume II*, (Stanford University Press, California, 1961), Petrograd, 26/27 May 1917 Grimm telegram to Hoffmann, p. 1178.

¹⁰³ Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts, Berlin, D627930, German Foreign Office, File 1499 fr.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Вестник Временного Правительства, St. Petersburg, From the Provisional Russian Government Department to Mr. Odier in Petrograd, No. 70, 3rd June 1917, p. 1.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Bundesarchiv, Bern, M28* Die Affäre Hoffmann - Grimm und ihre Folgen, 1917; J1.173* Grimm Robert (1881-1958), 1893-2000.

Conseil Fédéral was aware of Hoffmann's involvement¹⁰⁸. The following day Arthur Hoffmann resigned from his position as foreign minister. Though Grimm and Hoffmann's correspondence declared otherwise, Grimm would later go to considerable lengths to contradict the perception of Hoffmann's involvement. In a review of the scandal, expressed in September 1917, published in the *Daily Review of the Foreign press*¹⁰⁹ Grimm declared "I spoke neither about special aims of the war nor the conditions of a separate peace. Previously there had been no agreement whatsoever to that effect between Hoffmann and me."¹¹⁰ Grimm's own primary reasons for the mission appear to have been consistent with his intent expressed in the early telegrams to the German foreign ministry: "our party, in agreement with the Zimmerwald resolution, has taken upon itself the responsibility of acting in favour of a general peace."¹¹¹ Though Grimm resigned as minister, he remained a political force, leading the General Strike of 1918. Hoffmann, however, would never again play a major political role in Switzerland. Unlike the *Affaire des colonels*, Hoffmann's immediate resignation showed that the Swiss political establishment were more aware of their accountability in relation to public opinion in a way that the Swiss military seemed unaware or unwilling to acknowledge.

While foreign press reaction may have been too quick to dismiss Hoffmann as a pro-German, the high-priest of supposed "pseudo-Prussian rule"¹¹² in Switzerland, the press reaction, widely contradicted this assessment. Though divided regarding the interpretation of Swiss exceptionalism, both the francophone and germanophone press were pretty much unified in their assessment of Hoffmann's professional record. Switzerland had lost a "an outstanding statesman"¹¹³ according to the *Tagesanzeiger*, "a true statesman"¹¹⁴ according to the *Gazette de Lausanne*. Unlike the *affaire des colonels*, there appeared to have been an increased sense of openness - a willingness to make reference to and discuss the perils of linguistic division. In agreed acknowledgement of the division, the *Tagesanzeiger* quoted the francophone newspaper *La Suisse* in the evening special report on Hoffmann's resignation that morning: "in our country a double standard of measure has been applied."¹¹⁵ Interestingly, both the francophone and germanophone press appeared to have viewed the divisions which had beset them since the outbreak of the war in terms of the Greek national schism. The analogy was a revealing one for both sides as it inadvertently acknowledged the German and French allegiances which had deepened the *röstigraben* divide. The pro-German allegiances of King Constantine I reflected the views of the Swiss centralised leadership – Ulrich Wille and Theophile von Sprecher, the commanders of the Swiss military, and former President and minister for

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ *Daily Review of the Foreign Press*, Ser. 4, No. 37, 13 September 1917, p. 344.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Pro-German Swiss mourn Hoffmann, *New York Times*, 22 July 1917.

¹¹³ "hervorragenden Staatsmann" Bundesrat Hoffmann demissioniert, *Tagesanzeiger*, 18 June 1917.

¹¹⁴ "un véritable home d'état" Lettre de Berne, *Gazette de Lausanne* 20 June 1917.

¹¹⁵ "in unserm Lande gelte zweierlei Mass und Gewicht." Bundesrat Hoffmann demissioniert, *Tagesanzeiger*, 18 June 1917.

foreign affairs Arthur Hoffmann. The Greek public represented by Prime minister Venizelos could have been seen to have represented the francophone and by default pro-allied allegiance of the francophone community who were beholden to the allegiances of germanophone dominance and control. The ex-King Constantine I's arrival in Switzerland happened to have coincided with Hoffmann's resignation and this may have influenced both communities choice of analogy. According to the *Gazette de Lausanne* "his resignation coincides with the arrival of former King Constantine in Switzerland, which whose situation he has a striking moral kinship",¹¹⁶ and the *Tagesanzeiger* declared: "the Swiss people do not want to become a second Greece."¹¹⁷ However, the references to the schism here revealed a subtle distinction reflective of how both communities saw the comparison.

The germanophone analysis of the affair tended to be more vague in the target of their criticism, the foreign press, the war in general, the socialists, were to blame for the "nefarious happenings which have befallen our country".¹¹⁸ The florid emotive tone reflected the frustration and disappointed shock at Hoffmann's resignation but provided little analysis of the perpetrators, the crime or of the suggested means to resolve the situation. A mere warning would have appeared to have sufficed – that Switzerland should not become like Greece. By contrast francophone analysis was more precise in its criticisms, the focus of which lay inward, targeting the Swiss political structure itself: "Is it a federal councillor or the federal council which governs Switzerland and who is responsible?"¹¹⁹ Reference to fellow federal council minister Schulthess's approval in German-Swiss diplomatic correspondence would appear to suggest the Bundesrat/Conseil fédéral did indeed have questions to answer regarding their knowledge of Hoffmann's actions. However, no other minister resigned or was investigated.

Reaction to the affair and the actions of the germanophone ministers themselves reflected an emerging division in the interpretation of Swiss exceptionalism, evidence of which can be also seen during the *Affaire des Colonels*. The francophone press consistently referred to the role of Swiss neutrality in humanitarian terms:

We are at the moment pressing Paris, London, Washington so that we should not be left to starve and thus remain steadfast loyal in our neutrality amidst the global conflict.¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ "Sa démission coïncide avec l'arrivée en Suisse de l'ex-roi Constantin, avec lequel il a une parenté morale frappante" L'affaire Grimm-Hoffmann, *Gazette de Lausanne*, 20 June 1917, front page.

¹¹⁷ "Das Schweizervolk will nicht, dass unser Land die Rolle eines zweiten Griechenlands spiele." Zum diplomatischen Zwischenfall Bundesrat Hoffmann, *Tagesanzeiger*, 18 June 1917.

¹¹⁸ "nefarius [which] ist heute über unser Land hereingebrochen." Ibid.

¹¹⁹ "Est-ce un conseiller fédéral ou le Conseil fédéral qui gouverne la Suisse et qui, par conséquent, est responsable?" L'affaire Grimm-Hoffmann, *Gazette de Lausanne*, 20 June 1917, p. 1.

¹²⁰ Nous sommes en instances pressantes à Paris, à Londres, à Washington pour qu'on veuille bien ne pas nous laisser mourir de faim et tenir compte de notre neutralité loyale dans le conflit mondial. Eduard Secretan *Gazette de Lausanne*, 1917.

The existential role of neutrality as a means of Swiss survival encircled by belligerent powers was emphasised in a way that the germanophone analysis appeared to have neglected. The editor of the *Gazette de Lausanne* acknowledged the Swiss need to incorporate an international role or aspect to its neutral policy. However, francophone editor Secretan echoed the francophone presses criticism of germanophone exceptionalism when it accused the germanophone community of a "desire to play the role and be known as the peace maker of the world"¹²¹ Offering the francophone alternative, Secretan declared "Switzerland, which suffers from the war yet at the same time serves the cause of humanity".¹²² The germanophone press, by contrast, appeared to have aligned themselves with Hoffmann's interpretation of the role of Swiss neutrality abroad. Throughout the subsequent articles on the affair Swiss neutrality appeared to have been consistently qualified with "and peace policy"¹²³ This appears to confirm the germanophone community's perception of Swiss exceptionalism - as both neutral state and neutral peace arbiter.

Unlike the military's evasive reaction regarding the *affaire des colonels*, the political establishment was acutely aware of public outrage both at home and abroad. The international attention regarding the Grimm-Hoffmann affair far outstripped that of the *Affaire des Colonels*. For example the *New York Times* coverage of the *Affaire des Colonels* amounted to one article during 1916. The coverage of the Grimm-Hoffmann Affair amounted to 4% of the *New York Times*' entire coverage during two months, June and July 1917.¹²⁴ Just as the *Affaire des Colonels* challenged the growing sense of impunity among the Swiss high command, the Grimm-Hoffmann affair revealed a similar sense of impunity within the Swiss government. The state of exception imposed from the outbreak of the war had allowed a second unregulated centralised institution to operate within its own state of unaccountability threatening the Swiss image of unified neutrality abroad.

In its most comprehensive analysis of the affair, *New York Times* journalist Julian Grande¹²⁵ saw the Grimm-Hoffmann affair as a product of the emergent linguistic division. From the first line of the

¹²¹ "désir de jouer un rôle et d'être appelé le pacificateur du monde" Ibid.

¹²² "La Suisse qui souffre de la guerre et de servir en même temps la cause de l'humanité" Ibid.

¹²³ "und Friedenspolitik", Bundesrat Hoffmann demissioniert, *Tagesanzeiger*, 18 June 1917.

¹²⁴ *New York Times*, 17 January 1917, Espionage angers Swiss (139 words); *New York Times*, 20 June Swiss Loses Office for Peace Move (531 words); 21 June Council Repudiates Swiss Peace Move (642 words); 8 July Harden attacked Kaiser's Power (271 words); 16 July Swiss Enquiry has begun (114 words); 22 July Pro-German Swiss mourn Hoffmann (1,699 words).

¹²⁵ Grande was a reputable American journalist who had previously worked as chief reporter on the Limerick pogroms of 1904, foreign correspondent for *The Times* (1910-1916) and war correspondent for the *New York Times* (1914-1923). He was also married to the eminent New Zealand journalist Constance Alice Barnicot. However, his assessment of Hoffmann did not reflect the attitude of the francophone Swiss community, who would have been openly critical of germanophone bias, had it existed.

article, Julian Grande presented his key angle on the affair: "None of the Allies must judge Switzerland by the attitude of the German-Swiss press."¹²⁶ According to Grande:

Before the war there were three Switzerlands – German Switzerland, French Switzerland, and Italian Switzerland. Since the war, however, the divergences between these three have been immensely more marked than before, and as it proceeds they become, generally speaking more marked still.¹²⁷

However, the *New York Times* attributed the majority of the blame to the Germanophone Swiss community, which it perceived to have threatened Swiss impartiality. Grande singled out the Swiss German press in particular:

In Berne there are four leading papers each one with a German or naturalized German in an important position on the staff, while the publisher of one paper is a German, not even naturalized.¹²⁸

This assessment of foreign allegiance was remarkably similar to the way in which some British investigators blacklisted certain germanophone companies. While it was true there was a high proportion of Swiss citizens of German parentage who held a variety high ranking positions in senior political and military administration and leadership, being of German parentage or naturalised Swiss did not automatically constitute support for Germany. In fact, many of these German-speaking citizens had for a variety of reasons chosen Switzerland over Germany as their homeland – a clear assertion of their allegiance. However, Grande's assessment of class allegiances towards Germany within Switzerland seemed to have been accurate.

If a large number of German-Swiss, particularly the less educated classes, cordially dislike the Germans, they do so not from any broad considerations of Germany's menace to their land, but from comparatively petty reasons, such as the frequently overbearing manners of Germans and the way in which they compete with the Swiss and are favoured by the many hotel keepers, shop owners and other tradespeople in Switzerland at the expense of Swiss subjects.¹²⁹

The higher echelons of Swiss officialdom, however, appeared by contrast distinctly pro-German – from official Swiss regulation and endorsement of High-German over Swiss German within schools and all aspects of political administration to the pro-German demonstrations of Swiss German political and military officials. One example was Ulrich Wille's endorsement of Prussian military drill in the Swiss army in 1914. However, the dramatic rise of the socialist party during the war threatened to loosen the dominance of these upper pro-German echelons of Swiss officialdom. Grimm's actions, offered little promise that the inward concerns of the lower class working Swiss man and their nationalist interpretation of Swiss exceptionalism would be addressed by this socialist party under his rule.

¹²⁶ Pro-German Swiss mourn Hoffmann, *New York Times*, 22 July 1917.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

Grande described a perceived dominance of Hoffmann in the Swiss seven-member council claimed that his period of office was known as the "Hoffmann system" or the "Hoffmann regime"¹³⁰. Even if there may have been claims of such in reality Grande displayed an inaccurate understanding of the Swiss political structure. Grande overestimates the power of the Swiss president in the Swiss federal system. As president in 1914 Hoffmann, held little power in what was a yearly rotating titular role. For the majority of the rest of his tenure, Hoffmann held the position of minister of foreign affairs. In a time of war this, of course, gave his position a heightened significance. However, as president Hoffmann could not act without consultation with the other six members of the council, a fact illustrated by Hoffmann's swift resignation once his private attempts at foreign mediation became public. While Grande's analysis of Hoffmann's allegiance was flawed, other sources indicated there were precedents for Hoffmann's previous attempts at foreign mediation, which were not revealed publicly. *Journal de Genève's* editor in chief Georges Wagnière's memoirs devoted a chapter on Swiss intervention shortly before and during the war.¹³¹ Swiss-French diplomatic correspondence revealed Hoffmann to have been a driving force regarding such intervention. Swiss ambassador in Paris, Charles Edward Lardy, sent an urgent request to Hoffmann to : "n'hésita pas à entreprendre une démarche courageuse et hautement honorable en faveur de la paix."¹³² The casual but urgent tone of Lardy's correspondence suggested that Hoffmann had perhaps negotiated previously and that Ambassador Lardy felt confident in requesting his intervention. According to Wagnière's memoirs the characteristic style of Hoffmann's negotiations was that "Il parlait le moins possible de ce qu'il faisait. C'était peut-être le secret de ses incontestables succès dans la carrière."¹³³ His tacit style did seem to have been consistent with his approach to his involvement in the Hoffmann affair. Swiss diplomatic correspondence confirms both Hoffmann's willingness to negotiate as arbitrator of peace but also his lack of bias regarding who he wished to negotiate peace with. On 31 July 1914 Lardy also telegraphed President Hoffmann to ask his permission to attempt to mediate where possible between Mr. Lahovary (Romania), Mr. Vesnitch (Serbia) and the French minister of Foreign Affairs. Hoffmann's reply was adamant "do all that you can to avoid war".¹³⁴ 11am, 1 August Lardy's telegram to Hoffmann read "my intervention came too late".¹³⁵

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Georges Wagnière. *La Suisse et la Grande Guerre: Notes et Souvenirs*, (Librairie Payot, 1938).

¹³² Trans. Do not hesitate to undertake a courageous and highly honourable approach towards peace. Archive du Ministère Des Affaires Etrangères, Paris, 1915 - Tome II: 26 Mai-15 Sept. Commission Des Archives Diplomatiques - Direction Des Archives T433, 646.

¹³³ Trans. He spoke as little as possible about what he did. This was perhaps the secret to the uncontested success of his career. Georges Wagnière. *La Suisse et la Grande Guerre*, (1938).

¹³⁴ "Faites tout ce que vous pourrez pour éviter la guerre", Archive du Ministère Des Affaires Etrangères, Paris, T433, 646.

¹³⁵ "Mon intervention est venue trop tard" Ibid.

Hoffmann's reaction seemed to comply with the germanophone community's more interventionist character. Such early attempts by Hoffmann to promote Switzerland abroad as a kind of as neutral arbiter between belligerents were typical. Within Hoffmann's reaction to Lardy was the origins of a pattern of intervention which would contribute to his downfall in the *Grimm-Hoffmann Affair*. While the public were unaware of such official Swiss intervention in foreign events, federal officials were, just as they were in the *Affaire des Colonels*. However, these federal officials were not encouraged or did not deem it necessary to reveal or address its publics' concerns regarding previous breaches of neutrality. Analysis of the diplomatic correspondence with Germany, in particular the correspondence of the German Diplomatic corps in Bern from 1915 to 1918, revealed that Arthur Hoffmann may not have been the only figure within the foreign ministry who displayed an affinity for the germanophone, interventionist interpretation of Swiss neutrality's exceptionalism. For the first time in forty-two years, Switzerland re-established diplomatic connections with the Vatican in 1915 in order to "supervise joint Swiss-Vatican humanitarian efforts" according to John F. Pollard.¹³⁶ The majority of the correspondence between Berlin and Bern during 1915 dealt with the perceived amiability, according to the Swiss diplomatic corps, of prominent officials, ambassadors and prominent figures within the Vatican administration towards Germany. Cardinal Pacelli (later Pope Pius XII) was consistently cited as "German-friendly" - a perceived asset to German aims.¹³⁷ While there was little threat to Swiss neutrality displayed by what could have been passed off as diplomatic banter, consistent reference to a certain "geschäft" between Germany, Switzerland and the Vatican was far more serious. The secret correspondence between German foreign minister von Jagow, Chief of General Staff of the Swiss army Theophil Sprecher von Bernegg, German ambassador in Bern Baron Gisbert von Romberg, and Swiss president Hoffmann seemed to confirm such concerns.

The "geschäft" would seem to refer to, according to the secret correspondence, the transfer of German money which serviced Vatican debt via Swiss banks. In a secret letter dated 30 July 1915 von Jagow advises Sprecher von Bernegg to maintain direct administrative connections with the Vatican and that the maintenance of the "an understanding"¹³⁸ of the Swiss Government "to continue the business with the Vatican"¹³⁹ was of high priority. Such money certainly allowed Germany influence in the Vatican. Such influence would seem to have encouraged the Vatican to exert pressure on Italy not to enter the war. This of course would have benefitted Switzerland, which did not want complete encirclement by belligerent powers. The secret correspondence of July 1915 between the German foreign ministry and Swiss military high command would seem to confirm this in the way the foreign ministry reiterated the importance of Swiss "understanding" for the "business" despite Italian entry into the war a month earlier.

¹³⁶ John F. Pollard, *Money and the Rise of the Modern Papacy, Financing the Vatican, 1850-1950*, (Cambridge University Press, 2005).

¹³⁷ "deutschfreundlich"

¹³⁸ "Einverständnis"

¹³⁹ "aus die Geschäfte mit dem Vatikan forzuführen"

The Berlin-Bern-Vatican "Geschäft" never became public knowledge. It was perhaps revealing of the German allegiance of the Swiss military, that von Jagow discussed a Swiss financial arrangement with the military high command rather than with the Swiss finance minister, Italian speaking Ticino politician Giuseppe Motta. It was understandable, perhaps, that the German foreign minister would be more likely to correspond with a fellow germanophone, but surely a politician rather than a military official would have been a more logical choice. While Swiss benefits from such a financial arrangement could well have been perceived as a threat to Swiss neutrality and thus a breach with Swiss state of siege law, such a threat could have been cancelled out if the Vatican could have prevented Italian entry to the war. By corresponding exclusively with the military high command, such a breach of neutrality could later be interpreted as a defensive matter, in the best interests of the state, thus complying with the state of siege law. While the Swiss finance minister certainly must have been aware of such a financial arrangement, the lack of correspondence between von Jagow and the government on this issue could have the effect of exonerating the government from the possible accusation that they had undermined Swiss neutrality.

4.6 Banking Secrecy

During the war, Catholic Germans were encouraged by the Vatican to donate funds to its charity *Peterspfennig* to aid the injured and interred prisoners of war residing in Switzerland. It seemed odd that for the duration of the war not a single mention the *denier de Saint-Pierre*, as it was known in francophone lands, could be found in the *Journal de Genève* from 1914-1918. It could be argued that the Protestant town of Geneva and, though secular, the *Journal de Genève*, would have little interest in catholic fundraising organisations like *Peter's Pence*. However, the *Journal de Genève* usually made reference to it at least once a year both before and after the war in an article or an advertisement. It seemed rather peculiar that given the large sums of money that was donated by German catholics to *Peter's Pence*, with the intention of providing for the war wounded, was not mentioned during wartime, when it was presumably most needed. Analysis of French diplomatic correspondence indicated the possible misappropriation of the Peter's Pence fund by the Vatican. Diplomatic correspondence between 30 July and 29 October 1918 referred to the practice of funds having been transferred "sous le couvert du denier de Saint-Pierre."¹⁴⁰ Further analysis of French diplomatic correspondence revealed that a total of "5 404 076 69 francs"¹⁴¹ were transferred through a *Crédit Suisse* bank account in St. Gallen between 3 August 1917 and 1918.¹⁴² It was difficult to confirm the flow of investment and nature of Vatican transaction in Switzerland due to the restrictions of current banking secrecy laws, but it remained suspicious. The size of the sum of money deposited in just one bank, gave an idea of the possible volume of funds which may have been transferred to Swiss banks during the war.

¹⁴⁰ Trans. Under the cover of the Peter's pence fund. Archives du Ministres des Affaires Étrangères, Paris., Canet vol. 33. Information du Vatican (information), 30th July and 29th October 1918.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Information, 24th August 1918 "trois lettres au Directuer du Temps on the war budget of the Holy Sea, 1920, Canet vol. 33 Archives du Ministres de Affaires Étrangères, Paris.

During this time there was debate surrounding another aspect of Swiss economic exceptionalism – Swiss banking secrecy. Through this debate there appeared to have been an odd union of sorts between the two parties, the Socialists and the far right conservatives, which vied to unseat the dominant radical party. Both before and after the publication of the *Bergier Bericht* in 2002, Jean-François Bergier reiterated in both the francophone and germanophone Swiss media that Swiss banking secrecy had “started with the First World War” and had a “formative influence on the generation of the Second World War,” one prime regret being that the *Bergier Report* could not cover this area¹⁴³ which has yet to be examined. During the war, Switzerland had no national banking law and thus no official banking secrecy. Before and during the War, banking secrecy existed as a kind of unwritten code of confidentiality, a relationship of trust between Swiss bankers and their clients. It was during the First World War that Swiss banking began to develop into a key Swiss industry. While the nature of Swiss discretion regarding their clients’ accounts may have been a key attraction for some foreign clients, the stability of the Swiss franc and Swiss neutrality would appear to have been the key factors which made Switzerland such an attractive market for investment. Arguably, it was the emergence of a strong banking system which helped sustain neutral Switzerland, surrounded by war.

In 1916, it was not a Swiss citizen but a Swiss-educated Polish economist and professor at Basel University, Julius Landmann, who submitted the first draft law which addressed the “banking collapse” of 1913.¹⁴⁴ The draft law addressed lapses in state and banking regulation in general, relating to creditor protection, the relationship between equity and debt capital, liquidity, accounting regulations and liability. Interestingly, the law did not refer to banking secrecy directly but to proposed rules regarding banking disclosure. Landmann’s draft legislation proposed that an independent Federal Banking Office be set up which would monitor the banking sector and report and advise the government on elements of concern and proposals to legislate and regulate the sector. According to the parliamentary debates of 1915 the organisation of such a body and its threat to Swiss banking secrecy appears to have been the most contested aspect of the proposed law. Reform regarding banking disclosure and secrecy was a key issue for the social democrats in the National Council debates both before and after the introduction of a Swiss war tax which was voted for unanimously on 6 June 1915. Bern Socialist Emile Ryser proposed on 14 December 1915 that legislation be put in place to urge Swiss banks to be forthright with the government regarding their financial dealings so that “a just assessment of the taxpayer” could be achieved.¹⁴⁵ In the debate which followed Ryser seems to have had little support even from his Socialist colleagues. Intriguingly the only public endorsement of Ryser’s request came from Radical party member, Emil Zürcher professor of criminal

¹⁴³ “Je suis heureux d’avoir pu et su corriger mon image de la Suisse.”, *Le Temps*, 3 September 2001 ; “Staatliche Kommission – unabhängige Wahrheit?”, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 1 June 2002.

¹⁴⁴ Julius Landmann, *Federal law on the operation and supervision of banking institutions/Bundesgesetz betreffend den Betrieb und die Beaufsichtigung von Bankunternehmen*, (Berne 1916).

¹⁴⁵ Bundesarchiv, Bern, Official Record of the Swiss Parliament/ Amtliches stenographisches Bulletin der schweizerischen Bundesversammlung (ASBdSB), 16 December 1915, p.417

law at the University of Zurich. Zürcher acknowledged that what he described as the Butzemann or “Bogeyman of capital flight” was a key concern.¹⁴⁶ Thus he acknowledged that banking secrecy was the sector’s key attraction, but maintained that capital flight due to a removal of anonymity was unlikely to threaten it due to the war.¹⁴⁷ From an early stage, it would appear, bank-client secrecy was acknowledged as a key and necessary feature of Swiss banking, even when it compromised the State’s ability to regulate taxation. The parliamentary debate on Ryser’s proposal showed that while support from members of the Radical Party was expressed, the Christian conservatives and the Liberal party were opposed to any legislation which threatened Swiss banking secrecy. In particular the Liberal party’s Vaud councillor and lawyer Aloïs de Meuron criticised Zürcher for his endorsement of what he saw as “the violation of professional secrecy” which was “enshrined in [Swiss] civil and criminal codes, [and] has always been viewed as a necessity to ensure the security of business and of financial and commercial transactions.”¹⁴⁸

As the socialist policy gained a groundswell of support in the latter years of the war, by 1917 the Sozialdemokratische Partei (SP) launched a citizens’ initiative for what was termed a “second war tax” a direct federal tax, in which banking secrecy would have to be addressed if the sector was to be taxed fairly. Unlike Ryser’s initial proposal the campaign to regulate banking secrecy was supported by the far right conservative Bauern-, Gewerbe- und Bürgerpartei (precursor of the current Swiss people’s party SVP). The primary motive for this unlikely alliance was the BGBP’s wish to strengthen its political influence. Speaking in parliament about the unlikely union with the Socialist party, the BGBP councillor Siegenthaler declared “I am pleased that the gentlemen of the left want to strengthen the state and its efficiency on such justified grounds. I am happy to stand by them on this matter, though to be on the safe side naturally I refrain from any further fraternization (laughter)”¹⁴⁹. However, contrary to the Radical Party’s aim of increased centralization in all other Swiss institutions it did not support the proposal to regulate Swiss banking secrecy. Though Siegenthaler declared this in 1920, the origins of such an unlikely alliance between both right and left minority parties had its origins during in shared opposition to the Radical party’s dominance as explored in chapter three. By 1917 both the far-right conservatives and the socialist party more than doubled their membership. Resentment of the Swiss banking establishment and a perception that it was not paying back to the state what it ought became a frequent feature of soldiers’ cartoons among the informal publications of Swiss men (see previous chapter) stationed on their “front”.¹⁵⁰

By 1918, fears escalated among the Swiss Bankers’ Association that growing support for reform of banking secrecy laws was gaining a groundswell of support. The minutes and subsequent report of the association’s meetings during the General Strike expressed deep concern regarding the strikers’

¹⁴⁶ ASBdSB, 16 December 1915, p. 420.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ ASBdSB, 16 December, 1915 p. 421.

¹⁴⁹ ASBdSB, 4 February 1920 p. 95.

¹⁵⁰ E27 14080 *Kompanie- (Batterie-) Zeitungen vom Aktivdienst 1914-1918, Grenzbesetzung 1914-1915*, *Kompanie Zeitung, Etappenkompanie 1/103*, Bundesarchiv, Bern.

desire to abolish or regulate Swiss banking secrecy. It would according to the organisation “shatter the confidence of domestic and foreign investors in the traditional discretion of Swiss banking”¹⁵¹. It was deeply critical of Germany’s revocation of its policy of banking secrecy which it described as a “temporary measure”. The minutes of the meeting suggest that “many deposits would be withdrawn and hidden away” in the event that legislation would be passed in the event of a socialist led government. Such a statement was revealing of the exceptional mindset which had developed within the banking sector during the war; that it somehow lay outside state or federal jurisdiction, a separate entity who could blatantly threaten to flout any law it disagreed with.¹⁵² The fact that these minutes were published by the Association show the extent of its sense of impunity and perception of its own state of exceptionalism.

4.7 Conclusion

While Grimm’s motivations clearly lay in his ideological opposition to global class warfare, why Hoffmann would put his own reputation and otherwise successful political career in jeopardy appeared less straight forward. According to historian P. Stauffer, Hoffmann’s decision to support Grimm was based on his own fears for Switzerland’s economic stability.¹⁵³ This was confirmed by Hoffmann’s defence published in the Swiss press: “I acted in the best interests of Switzerland.”¹⁵⁴ Hoffmann seemed to have been of the opinion that without peace Switzerland could not survive economically. While inflation due to food shortages was a feature of the final two years of the war, scarcity was not characteristic of the war experience in general. In fact the Swiss economy has been shown to have benefited from the war in terms of trade, foreign direct investment and banking. Hoffmann did not acknowledge this. In defence of his decision to support Grimm, Hoffmann explained that he had conceived of Switzerland’s role as neutral arbiter as a national security tactic, albeit a secret offence conducted behind the scenes by Swiss diplomats and politicians.¹⁵⁵ While Hoffmann’s fears seemed genuine, they were not warranted.

Hoffmann’s motive was influenced by his germanophone interpretation of Swiss exceptionalism which he saw as the ability of Swiss neutral power to resolve conflict through neutral mediation. This and other interpretations of Swiss exceptionalism will be examined further in the next chapter. Ultimately, Hoffmann’s actions undermined the most valuable asset which underpinned Swiss economic independence and stability – the symbolic capital of Swiss neutrality. The successful implementation

¹⁵¹ Vereinigung von Vertretern des schweizerischen Bankgewerbes 7th Annual Report of the Association of Representatives of Swiss Banking, Basel 1919, in Robert U. Vogler, “Swiss Banking Secrecy: Origins, Significance, Myth”, *Contributions to Financial History*, Volume 7 (Association for Financial History, Switzerland and Principality of Liechtenstein, 2006).

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ P. Stauffer, “Die Affäre Hoffmann-Grimm”, in *Schweizer Monatshefte*, Heft 1 No 53 (Zurich 1973/1974), pp.1-30.

¹⁵⁴ “[J’avais]agi dans l’intérêt de la Suisse”, Telegramm, *Gazette de Lausanne*, 18 June 1917.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

of this form of economic exceptionalism contributed to the success of the key sources of Swiss wealth – foreign direct investment, encouraged by Swiss banking secrecy at home and multinational trading abroad. Public consensus supported Hoffmann's resignation and further emphasised the gulf between public opinion and the key centralised institutions of power – the military and the political establishment. It was a unique moment of social and political public unity, where for the first time in the war the francophone and germanophone communities, even the socialist and far right parties, appeared to have found common ground in their rejection of the Radical party's dominance and the interventionist interpretation of the role of Swiss neutrality's exceptionalism.

CHAPTER FIVE: Red or White Cross - *Sonderfall Denken* and the Impact of Wartime Immigration on Swiss Public Opinion and the *Röstigraben* Divide.

The phrase “la croix rouge a sauvé la croix blanche” (the Red Cross saved the White Cross) was coined in 1917 by Max Turmann, a Swiss economics professor of the University of the multi-lingual canton of Fribourg.¹ He argued that through Swiss repatriation during the war and the internment of foreign soldiers in 1916 the humanitarian ethos of the Swiss state, embodied in the actions of the Red Cross, had contributed to the economic survival and sovereignty of the “white cross” or the Swiss state. In a lecture given earlier at the *Institut de France*, of which he was a member, in December 1916², Turmann had outlined what he saw as a direct link between Swiss international humanitarianism and the survival of the Swiss economy and independence. Reporting on Turmann’s lecture in Paris, the *Journal de Genève* emphasised the economic impact of the immigration Swiss humanitarianism had brought: “He expressed the hope that the governments of the Entente would accord Switzerland (who had been so generous to all victims) the facilities necessary to maintain its economic life”.³ Turmann views reflected Switzerland’s emergent role in international humanitarianism, which was an exceptional and had become a key feature of Swiss foreign policy.

5.1 Red Cross

Some 600,000 foreigners, roughly 15% of the population, lived in Switzerland on the eve of the war,⁴ however many of these German, French and Austrian nationals, resident in Switzerland, were called upon to return to prepare to serve, or volunteer to join, the lines of their respective fronts. The high rate of immigration often quoted for 1914 was not a surge, as is often depicted, but the result of a steady increase which stemmed from earlier events.⁵ Unlike the Netherlands, which had to contend with a surge of one million destitute refugees, who had fled the violence of the German army in Belgium, the vast majority of refugees in Switzerland during the early months of the war were political refugees who had fled earlier persecution and were relatively well established in Switzerland. Nevertheless, with the outbreak of the war, the francophone hierarchy of the International Committee

¹ Referred to in two major secondary sources from opposite ends of the polarised divide. Max Turmann, *La Suisse pendant la guerre, l’aide aux victimes, notes d’un témoin français. Les difficultés économiques d’une neutralité politique*. (Librairie académique Perrin, Paris, 1917); Peter Aleman, *Die Schweiz und die Verletzung der belgischen Neutralität im Weltkrieg 1914*, (Druck und Verlag Alemann, Buenos Aires, 1940).

² *Gazette de Lausanne*, 29th December 1916, *Journal de Genève*, 30 December 1916.

³ Il a exprimé l’espoir que les gouvernements de l’Entente, [...], accordent à la Suisse, si généreuse pour toutes les victimes, le plus de facilités possible pour assurer sa vie économique. *Journal de Genève*, 30 December 1916.

⁴ Willi Wottreng, *Ein einzig Volk von Immigranten. Die Geschichte der Einwanderung in die Schweiz*. (Orell Füssli Verlag, Zürich, 2001), Bundesamt für Statistik, Neuchâtel, *BFS Statistisches Lexikon der Schweiz*, “Ständige und nichtständige Wohnbevölkerung nach Geschlecht und detaillierter Staatsangehörigkeit”, 1910.

⁵ Bundesamt für Statistik, Neuchâtel, “Foreigners from the European continental area according to country of origin 1900-2003”, in *Ausländerinnen und Ausländer in der Schweiz*, Swiss Federal Statistics Office, 2004.

of the Red Cross (ICRC) prioritised planning and provisions for the care and repatriation of both civilian and military internees. By contrast the official Dutch response seemed to have been primarily concerned with military internees. As Dutch General Snijders declared in a telegram 9 October 1914, "civilian refugees are not a priority".⁶ During the first days, belligerent states ordered the immediate expulsion of enemy subjects from their territories. In the ensuing panic, many of these foreign civilians were often unable to leave due to their inability to obtain travel documents at short notice or were unable to find a means of transport, and so were interned.⁷ During the initial weeks of the war, the Swiss government offered to help France, Germany and Austria-Hungary to repatriate interned civilians.⁸ This multi-ethnic group were the first category of civilians to be repatriated through Switzerland. As a result of the invasion of Belgium and France, a second category of interned and repatriated civilians emerged. These French and Belgian inhabitants of the invaded French and Belgian territories were immured in camps under German control following their expulsion or capture by the invading German army. While the Red Cross affiliated *Agence internationale des prisonniers de guerre (AIPG)* had already been set up in Geneva a month earlier in August 1914,⁹ on 22 September, the Swiss Federal Council set up the *Bureau für die Heimschaffung Zivilinternierter* in Bern. It was run by a Bern citizen and history professor of Bogata University, Columbia, Prof. Dr. Ernest Röthlisberger and was responsible for returning "civilians not fit to bear arms"¹⁰ (the elderly, women, children and sick). The cost of transport was borne by the states of origin of the persons due to be repatriated. The cost of housing and entertaining those interned during their passage through Switzerland was borne by the Swiss state.

Initial francophone and germanophone responses to the preparation for these repatriation convoys once again were different. On 18 October, the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* reported on preliminary visits Dr. Schneeli to internment camps in Germany. The article reported the doctor's findings that there was "no difference" in the treatment given to Germans and enemy subjects who were injured. Writing for the *Journal de Genève*, Romain Rolland commented on this article. While he tentatively agreed with the Dr. Schneeli's findings he also stated he was eager to verify them by gathering testimony from prisoners who were due to be repatriated through Switzerland.¹¹ On 22 October 1914, the first French interned entered Switzerland. The largest germanophone city, Zurich, had little contact with this first wave of civilian repatriation. French evacuated and interned citizens entered Switzerland via

⁶ Nationaal Archief, The Hague, 2.13.70. Opperbevelhebber van Land- en Zeemacht Snijders to Commander of Division III, 9th October 1914, in, *Archieven van de Generale Staf, mede als onderdeel van het Algemeen Hoofdkwartier*, 1914-1940.

⁷ Historical Note by Eugène Pittard, in Noëlle Roger, *The Victim's Return*, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston and New York, 1918. p.119.

⁸ Ernest Röthlisberger, *Die schweizerische Hilfsaktion für die Opfer des Krieges und das Heimschaffungswerk*, Separatabdruck aus dem Politischen Jahrbuch der Schweizerischen Eidgenossenschaft, Berne, 1915.

⁹ Dieter Riesenberger, *Für Humanität in Krieg und Frieden: Das Internationale Rote Kreuz, 1863-1977*, (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992), p. 61.

¹⁰ Feuille Fédérale, 1914, IV, P. 127

¹¹ Romain Rolland, « Inter Arma Caritas », *Journal de Genève*, 30 October 1914.

Schaffhausen and left Switzerland at Geneva where they travelled, often via tram to the nearest French town which was usually Annemasse. Forwarding committees, who directed the reception, feeding and forwarding of evacuated and interned civilians, were appointed by the state. Calls for public donations of shoes and winter clothing appeared two days later in the Swiss newspapers. According to Pittard's account many of civilians had been "seized in the street and carried off without a chance of going home and getting a few clothes or underlinen".¹²

Germanophone Swiss public exhibited similar levels of public generosity. For example, the main entry point for French and Belgian civilians was the germanophone town of Schaffhausen. It had a population of approximately 15,000, a third of which were German citizens. Pittard's account noted that on a single day 600 packages of food, clothing and other necessities were handed in by local Schaffhausen residents. Even the local banks set up money-changing facilities at the station terminus of Schaffhausen and Geneva. Eleven days later, the first convoys of interned German and Austro-Hungarian citizens crossed the Swiss border at Geneva. The German citizens were sent via Winterthur to Singen in Baden and the Austro-Hungarian citizens were repatriated via Rorschach to Bregenz in the Vorarlberg.

By 21 December, the Federal Political Department (ministry of the interior) announced that the need for repatriation of interned civilians had come to an end and that the Supply Commission was to cease working by Christmas Eve. However, as Pittard pointed out, the repatriation convoys, though smaller in number, continued until March. This first phase, from September 1914 to March 1915, saw the repatriation of 20,475 civilians in 186 convoys. By March 1915 the Berne-based *Bureau für die Heimschaffung Zivilinternierter* was dissolved and from 6 March onwards any further convoys of evacuated civilians was put under military control of the Swiss Landsturm. Public donations of clothing and other necessities appear to have waned by this point and French citizens and the French state forwarded clothing packages to the relevant stopping-places on the way to Geneva.

While the germanophone public generosity towards the civilians was noted, the main hub of operations lay in francophone Geneva. At Schaffhausen there was no system of public kitchens like that of Geneva. In Schaffhausen the civilians had to be broken up into detachments which were distributed among the various restaurants and hotels in the town. In Zurich, the civilians did not enter the town itself, instead refreshments were provided in the station. Geneva, by contrast, organised the loan of army mattresses from the state and organised temporary sleeping quarters in the surrounding schools of the town.¹³ By the beginning of 1915, some committee reports began to describe the strain the repatriation convoys were putting on the local populace particularly in relatively small towns like Schaffhausen. One official Schaffhausen Committee report described the logistical problems encountered when two trains containing 578 and 739 internees respectively entered Schaffhausen station at the same time. Intriguingly, the report also alluded to the existence of some kind of tumult or

¹² Journal de Genève, 24th October 1914.

¹³ Lucie Achard, Extract from the 49th Report of the Central Committee of the Charitable Board, Geneva, 1915, *Le passage des internés civils à Genève*.

strife among the local Swiss populace; "chains of servants, containing representatives of all classes – workmen, professors, police and magistrates, brought closer together by kindly action than by any amount of patriotic talk."¹⁴ The report ended "it was one of the hardest days we had had, and we can say with satisfaction that everyone did his duty conscientiously and devotedly." The Genevan operation was more extensive. For example, the Genevan Prisoners' Agency, run by the Red Cross, was the main agency in charge visiting all prisoner camps, drawing up lists of the missing and providing information and lists of the missing to those travelling through Switzerland. The medical attention provided to the civilian convoys was more extensive and better organised in francophone Geneva than in the germanophone towns. For example, in Schaffhausen a receiving infirmary of four wards was established in the train station. In Zurich, doctors tended to the sick in the train carriages, while in Geneva, a fully equipped infirmary directed by a head doctor was established in the school buildings on Berne Street. Between October 1914 to January 1916, one doctor, Dr. Jean Késér, attached to the infirmary in Geneva, personally treated over 19 patients per day, ¹⁵ roughly 8% of the total number of persons repatriated.¹⁶

Both the Bern based *Bureau* and the Genevan based *Agence* played an important role in Switzerland's war-time humanitarian mission and could be viewed as two branches of the overall Swiss humanitarian apparatus. However, viewed within the context of francophone and germanophone public opinion, the difference in aim and outlook of both the *Bureau* and *Agence* becomes apparent. While the head of the germanophone *Bureau* may have added an air of cosmopolitanism the organisation was not. Within the germanophone context of increased xenophobia and rising hostility to immigration outlined in the previous chapters, it would appear no mere coincidence that the primary focus of the germanophone centre for war-time migration was repatriation; while the francophone based *Agence* reflected the internationally engaged outlook expressed by the francophone public, engaged in a the considerably less definite task of locating missing soldiers and families with their loved ones abroad. It was the francophone *Agence* which attended to the international issue of missing soldiers. During the war between 2,000 and 18,000 written requests were received per month by the *Agence*. Each written communication was meticulously documented on individual index cards, which by the end of the war totalled 4,895,000. Yet again a subtle disparity of aim and outlook would appear to have been expressed between both linguistic communities. The Bern based *Bureau's* work, by contrast, involved collecting civilians who had fled to Switzerland at cantonal border stations, whereupon they were transported, at the cost of their home state to their last place of residence. While the refugees did not appear to have been forced to return to their homeland, the repeated announcements of deadlines for the return of all foreign civilians, published in the local press, suggested a practise of coercion may have been encouraged or involved.¹⁷ From 24 September 1914 – 1 March 1915 the germanophone *Bureau* ran

¹⁴ Roger, Pittard, p. 129

¹⁵ p. 131

¹⁶ Total : 108,594

¹⁷ Bundesarchiv Bern, E 27 14040 *Reglement vom 22nd September 1914*; NZZ 135, Nr 1457 26th October 1914.

186 civilian repatriation voyages through Switzerland. In total 20,475 interned civilians were repatriated: 53% of whom were French, 37% German, 9% Austro-Hungarian with a final 1% (332 civilians) allowed to remain in Switzerland.¹⁸ Though undoubtedly a humanitarian enterprise, the germanophone *Bureau's* primary focus was returning recent migrants to their homelands and not searching for relatives, offering medical treatment, finding work or offering asylum. Perhaps this reflected the emergent hostility towards foreigners which emerged predominantly in germanophone urban areas. During the final month of civilian repatriation, February 1915, the germanophone newspaper *NZZ* reported that a convoy of French civilians which was travelling through Switzerland was stopped and was abused by the local germanophone population.¹⁹ While such expressions of hostility during the initial civilian repatriation between January 1915 and March 1915 was rare it may have been indicative of a disturbing increase in public xenophobia.

By March 1915, civilian repatriation was declared to have ended and the second more significant phase of Swiss humanitarian action began in 1916. However, civilian convoys, though smaller in number, continued until March 1916. Between October 1914 and March 1916, a total of 523 civilian convoys passed through Switzerland. The vast majority contained French and Belgian citizens but 28% of the total number of convoys also contained German and Austro-Hungarian citizens. During this period a total of 97,753 French and Belgian citizens were repatriated through Switzerland while 13, 686 German and Austro-Hungarian citizens were also repatriated.

5.2 Military Repatriation

The second phase focussed on the repatriation of ill and wounded prisoners of war, which was negotiated, at the suggestion of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), through reciprocal agreements mainly between France and Germany. By treating and repatriating mainly ill and injured prisoners of war, the ICRC sought to fulfil its humanitarian mission while attempting to avoid aiding the war effort. Travelling assessment teams of Swiss doctors visited prisoner of war camps to select potential internees. Once selected a panel made up of two Swiss army doctors, two doctors from the country holding the prisoner and one representative from the prisoner's own country, made the final decision on the repatriation of the selected prisoner. Once brought to Switzerland the prisoner was interned and was usually repatriated within eighteen months. The wounded and severely ill were interned and treated in Switzerland. By 1918, 67,726 prisoners of war had been admitted to Swiss hospitals for treatment. Between 1916 and 1918, a total of 68,000 prisoners of war were repatriated through Switzerland. Thus, the largest number of interned prisoners of war were interned in and repatriated through Switzerland.²⁰ For prominent francophone Swiss military personnel directly involved in internment operations in 1916, Swiss humanitarianism was not simply exceptional but

¹⁸ Ibid, *Schweizerisches Bureau für Heimschaffung internierter Zivilpersonen in Bern, Bericht an das Politische Departement betreffend die Heimschaffung franz. Internierter und Evakuierter* 22nd March 1915.

¹⁹ *NZZ* 136, Nr 151 8 February 1915; *NZZ* Nr. 850 4th July 1915.

²⁰ Annette Becker, *Oubliés de la Grande Guerre : Humanitaire et culture de guerre 1914-1948, Populations occupées, déportés civils, prisonniers de guerre*, (Hachette Littératures, Paris, 2003), p. 208.

pioneering. For example, Major Edouard Favre's first official report on the initial year of internment deemed the concept of internment itself to have originated in Switzerland: "this institution (internment) originated in Switzerland during the present war".²¹ Germanophone public opinion, by contrast, remained comparably quiet on the impact of Swiss international humanitarianism but significantly vocal in their reaction to the wave of immigration that Swiss international humanitarianism ultimately brought to the country.

As the introduction outlined, while there were other germanophone and francophone predominantly Christian organisations which provided humanitarian assistance in both the Franco-Prussian and First World Wars, the International Committee of the Red Cross exerted a more substantial presence and thus came to define Swiss humanitarianism internationally in the pre-war period. However, in Switzerland itself, the ICRC was generally perceived as being a Genevan rather than a Swiss organisation. The fact that the committee itself was made up exclusively of Genevan citizens from the upper echelons of the city's protestant, patrician élite, endorsed this perception. However, as also examined in the introduction, the writings of founding figures of the Red Cross, Moynier, General Dufour and Ferrière, revealed how the aims and the ethos of the organisation were influenced by the history of the Swiss military and the tradition of the citizen militia.

The considerable involvement of the Swiss military in supposedly non-governmental humanitarianism during the war would seem to support John Hutchinson's argument that during the war the ICRC had deviated from its original aims and had moved towards the championing of militaristic nationalism.²² In Switzerland, the divide between national and non-government organisation's medical staff was obscured by the fact that the teams of doctors who tended the interned soldiers were military doctors in the Swiss army. The Red Cross operation was run by the medical wing of the Swiss military – which was characteristic of the trait of militaristic nationalism of which Hutchinson highlighted as a feature belligerent nation's Red Cross societies.²³ In many cases, the Red Cross worked in conjunction with what were teams of each nation's military medical staff. However, Hutchinson argued that national Red Cross Societies, for example in Germany and Japan, were successful due to the fact that they had been institutionalised within the state apparatus. This conclusion though true in most cases was not as universal as Hutchinson presented.²⁴ For example Dutch Red Cross medical aid was administered by local municipalities and charitable organisation. While the Dutch military's involvement in this case may have been negligible, the incorporation of the Red Cross within the

²¹ "Cette institution [L'internement], née en Suisse au cours de la guerre actuelle." Edouard Favre, *L'internement en Suisse des prisonniers de guerre malades ou blessés. Trois volumes fait par l'ordre du colonel Hauser, médecin d'armée*, (Geneva/Lyon/Bern, 1916).

²² John F. Hutchinson, *Champions of charity: War and the rise of the Red Cross*, (Westview Press, Boulder, 1996).

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

Dutch state apparatus was significant.²⁵ However, this is not to say that the Swiss Red Cross was either an agent of the Swiss state or a particularly biased entity. A more complex reality existed. Heather Jones²⁶ and Gradimir Djurovic²⁷ rightly point out that despite such structural bias, analysis of Swiss and International Red Cross correspondence confirms that “the Geneva base of the ICRC remained determinedly neutral”.²⁸ This multi-layered identity and interconnectedness of its administrative structure suggested that during the war the Red Cross in Switzerland had become in practice a national institution. The close involvement of the ordinary public in its work emphasised this point further.

It seems strange that the Swiss government and the Swiss Red Cross did not centre their operations in the traditional relief base of the Franco-Prussian War and central transit point for both civilians and military migration in 1914 – the germanophone town of Basel. The original *Bureau of the International Agency of Information and Assistance to the Sick and Wounded* was located in Basel. Members of the agency, a precursor of the Red Cross Agency set up in Geneva 1914, were informed of the bureau's location by Red Cross founding member Moynier via a circular dated 18 July 1870.²⁹ The half-canton of Basel-Stadt had traditionally experienced one of the highest levels of immigration both before and during the war. Equidistant to both the French and German borders, situated on the Rhine, surrounded by both francophone and germanophone cantons, its financial clout could rival that of Zurich or Geneva. A more cosmopolitan city than Zurich, it rivalled Geneva as an international meeting place having hosted the Second International in 1912 and First Zionist Congress in 1897. It was the closest and geographically the most accessible entry point for civilian and military migrants. However, it was the sleepy inland Swiss capital, Bern, which was officially chosen as the nominal central bureau, and in practice, it was the city of Geneva which actually operated as the administrative hub regarding the treatment and repatriation of civilian and military migrants. It is not known why Basle was not selected, but intense xenophobia had begun to develop among Basel public opinion which may have been a decisive factor in the decision to bypass the city administration of the canton of Basel.

5.3 Swiss Exceptionalism

²⁵ Maartje Abbenhuis, *The art of staying neutral – The Netherlands in the First World War, 1914-1918*, (Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, 2006) p. 96.

²⁶ Heather Jones, “International or transnational?: Humanitarian Action During the First World War”, *European Review of History*, 16, Nr.5, (2009), p. 698.

²⁷ Gradimir Djurović, Dissertation : *L'Agence Centrale de Recherches du Comité International de la Croix-Rouge. Activité du CICR en vue du soulagement des souffrances morales des victimes de guerre*, (Institut de Hautes études internationales Geneva, 1981).

²⁸ Jones, “International or transnational?”, (2009), p. 698.

²⁹ Comité international de secours aux militaires blessés. *Actes. Recueil annoté de toutes les pièces importantes du Comité international depuis son origine en 1863*, (Soullier and Wirth, Geneva 1871), pp. 171-173.

As discussed in the introduction, Swiss exceptionalism (*Sonderfall Schweiz*) was very much part of the Swiss national outlook before the war. Internal and external expressions of Switzerland as geographically, politically and structurally exceptional coincided with the early development of Switzerland itself. By the 19 and early 20th century, such views became described in the germanophone lexicon as *Sonderfalldenken*³⁰ – the development of an internal discourse which saw Switzerland as an exceptional case. This was seen as distinct from the German *Sonderweg*³¹ or exceptional path and its allusion to destiny. In terminology, the germanophone Swiss saw themselves as distinct in their perception of their *Sonderfall* from that of the germanophone world in general. But during the First World War, francophone media analysis never appeared to have used the word *Sonderfall*, while their germanophone counterparts did. A diversity of definition and terminology was characteristic of francophone expression of Swiss exceptionalism. While the germanophone community tended to be more rigid in its more precise definition and interpretation, the francophone community characteristically blended multiple interpretations, drawn from both francophone and germanophone sources. The war exacerbated the linguistic divide and what began as a slight difference in interpretation and terminology had developed into two opposing precepts of *Sonderfall Schweiz*. For the francophone community a relaxed approach to immigration and the image and humanitarian actions of Red Cross aided Switzerland economically but more importantly it affirmed Switzerland's role internationally. However, for the germanophone community, the resulting influx of foreigners threatened its perception of the *Sonderfall Schweiz*, with its communal tradition and homogeneity of citizenry. This divide found expression in the Swiss public's reaction to immigration caused by the war.

5.4 Rising Xenophobia

Despite the fact that the number of foreigners fell during the war, hostility towards these so-called *Fremde* increased dramatically, reaching a dramatic climax in 1917 which saw the creation of a specially assigned *Fremdenpolizei* (Immigration Police) along with the introduction of federal legislation which dramatically changed Swiss immigration law and policy. However, this new found hostility seemed not to have been universally expressed but divided between the increasingly xenophobic response of the germanophone populace and what could be described as the more traditionally Swiss reaction of acceptance which was expressed in predominantly francophone areas of Switzerland. For the Germanophone public the key threat was what was known as *Überfremdung* or over-foreignisation – foreign migrations into Switzerland caused by the war. Swiss survival thus depended on isolation – Secret banking as argued in the previous chapter and restriction of all immigration. For the francophone public, Swiss survival lay in international engagement - soft power, through the development and influence of Swiss international humanitarianism. Despite coming to

³⁰ Trans. Special-way-thought

³¹ The term *Sonderweg* was first used by German conservatives during German Kaiserreich to define their proposal of German middle way between eastern (Tsarist) authoritarianism and western (British, French and Swiss) democracy.

two very different conclusions both francophone and germanophone public debate sought to answer the same question – how a small neutral state, surrounded by belligerent powers since May 1915, could ensure its survival and maintain its independence. The parallel public debate which ensued during the war was a continuation of the pre-war public narrative of Swiss exceptionalism – *Sonderfall Schweiz*.

According to the Duden German dictionary the term *Überfremdung* or overforeignisation was first used in 1929 and was originally an economic term used to describe the foreign loans acquired by post-war Germany.³² The narrative maintained that the NSDAP hijacked the term and used it, for the first time, in relation to their perception of the supposed imposition of imagined “foreign races”. However, evidence indicated that the origins of the term *Überfremdung* lay not in the economic sphere of 1929 but, almost thirty years earlier, among a burgeoning germanophone far-right in Switzerland. According to Swiss historian Patrick Kury, the term was first used in 1900 in an essay titled “Our foreign question (problem)”³³ by secretary of the Zurich cantonal poverty department, Carl Alfred Schmid.³⁴ From the beginning Schmid’s term directly referred to immigration. The term first appeared officially in a report by the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, 30 May 1914 which raised the proposal of tighter immigration controls. Throughout the war the *Überfremdung* was defined by each community’s perception of what was defined as the more general term “foreigner” and not the more specific term “immigrant”. This was reflective of the peculiarity of Swiss legislation itself which did not and does not to this day have an immigration policy but a law on “foreigners” or “Fremde”. What was termed *Fremde* encompassed prisoners of war, economic migrants, political and civilian refugees, foreign residents – anyone who was not Swiss by blood-based descent.

In germanophone pre-war discourse, comparisons were often made with the South African Transvaal Republic. Prominent advocates of the Zurich and Basel far-right perceived the influx of immigration as a threat to national sovereignty and consistently referred to recent immigration as the prospective “Engländer” (English) who would do the same as what “the English did in the Transvaal”.³⁵ A hardening of Swiss immigration policy developed during the First World War due to “a modification of the political culture”³⁶ enhanced by “a reinforcement of the discourse of patriotic identification”. Germanophone towns like Basel, which had previously been open and welcoming, according to Arlettaz’s analysis, became more inward looking and xenophobic as a result of the war.³⁷ While Arlettaz attributed this atmosphere of national unease to economic instability before the war and the

³² Duden *Deutsches Universal Wörterbuch* 3. (Expanded Edition, Duden, 2006).

³³ Carl Alfred Schmid, *Unsere Fremdenfrage*, (Rascher, Zürich, 1900).

³⁴ Patrick Kury *Über Fremde reden – Überfremdungsdiskurs und Ausgrenzung in der Schweiz 1900-1945*, (Chronos Verlag, Zurich, 2003).

³⁵ “die Engländer in Transvaal getan haben”, Schmid, *Unsere Fremdenfrage*, (1900), p. 20.

³⁶ “une modification de la culture politique”, Ibid.

³⁷ Gerald Arlettaz, *La Suisse une terre d'accueil en question*, (L'École française de Rome, Rome, 1991), pp. 139-159.

dramatic rise in immigration to Switzerland between 1890 and 1914,³⁸ he neglected to discuss the impact the linguistic division had on this crisis of Swiss national identity. Arlettaz's analysis did not acknowledge that this hostility was not a collective Swiss phenomenon but a reaction which appeared to have become particularly dominant in germanophone Swiss public discourse, which notably increased as the war progressed. In this germanophone dominated discourse two new terms *Überfremdung* (overforeignisation) and *indésirables* (undesirables) defined their right wing stance.

A series of photographs held in the *Höflinger Fotoarchiv* in the State archives in Basel show, following the announcement of the outbreak of the war, a series of make-shift check points were set up on the main road from Basel to the Alsace.³⁹ No policemen or soldiers appear to have either officiated at or could be seen guarding the barricades of kitchen furniture and farm yard carts which seemed to have been presided over by men sporting straw boater hats and their shirtwaist-dressed and Gibson-girl coiffed ladies. The particularly outmoded yet well-tailored style of the Basel ladies, in particular, would seem to indicate that the group who maintained the barricade, preventing refugees fleeing via Alsace in August 1914, were from a conservative and well-off echelon of Basel society. While primary evidence indicated a consolidation of xenophobic expression of the Basel bourgeoisie, further analysis suggested that growing xenophobia within police officials and administration may have affirmed public expressions of xenophobia. Analysis of official opinion in Basel, for example, revealed that, the most intolerant and xenophobic comments came from the upper echelons of Basel's cantonal administration, the cantonal police force and local government.

Barely thirteen months into the war, before the influx of interned prisoners of war, officials in Basel had already begun to voice their objections to what they perceived to be the *Überschwemmung* and *Überfremdung* of Basel. Despite Basel's historic engagement with the Jewish community, anti-Semitic rhetoric appeared commonplace among officials in a way that it did not appear in the correspondence of francophone and indeed many other germanophone officials. 18 September 1915 in a letter from the *Conseil d'État* of Basel-Stadt to the *Conseil fédéral*, officials complained of the "the most unwelcome increase" of Galician and Russian Jews who were "difficult elements to assimilate".⁴⁰ However, the question must be asked to what degree were these officials' responses indicative of public opinion in Basel? Unlike Zurich, prominent Basel's citizens were not as vocal in their anti-*Fremde* agitation before the war. Zurich city superintendent Rudolf Bollinger had a regular column in the conservative mainstream newspaper the *NZZ* in 1912. His series of articles entitled "the status of the foreign question"⁴¹ called for immigration restriction but the metaphors of contagion and infection

³⁸ Presence of foreigners residing in Switzerland according to Arlettaz (p. 141) 7.9% in 1888 doubled to 14.7% 552,000 people in 1910.

³⁹ Fotoarchiv Höflinger, Staatsarchiv Basel, C 22658 *Improvisierte Grenzsperrre bei Lysbüchel*, 31 Juli 1914, Appendix 2.

⁴⁰ "höchst unerfreuliche Zunahme", Bundesarchiv, Bern, E 27/13934, *Letter from the Regierungsrat of Basel-Stadt to the Federal Council*, 18 September 1915.

⁴¹ "Der Stand der Ausländerfrage".

used by Bollinger⁴² firmly situate his analysis within the context of far-right, biological racist discourse. 12 December 1912, Bollinger was one of the chief architects of a relatively significant petition in Zurich which called for "relevant measures against the over-foreignisation of Switzerland".⁴³ One of the most crudely anti-Semitic and xenophobic reactions during the war came from Max Koller who hailed from a more rural area of the canton of Zurich. His publications and many public lectures in both Basel and Zurich during the war appeared to have been well attended and publicised.⁴⁴

The Swiss police during this period were highly decentralised. They had never been a barracked police force⁴⁵, and as a result a particularly close rapport existed between the Swiss police and the public they served. In his analysis of the Swiss police force, Liang argued that this close rapport could often give expression to the conservative outlook of many of the canton's citizens: "as their executive agents, [the cantonal and communal police] had to espouse conservative attitudes."⁴⁶ Correspondence between Basel political officials concurred with the xenophobic anti-Semitism expressed by Basel police correspondence. Indeed the Basel-Stadt police department's letter to the *Regierungsrat* was more pronounced in its xenophobic and anti-Semitic tone:

We will have to keep them here, because to expel them will be regarded as "inhumane". Next we will have to grant them citizenship too. We shall thereby experience a highly obnoxious increase of our citizenry because it will largely consist of Galician and Russian Jews, in other words elements which the Swiss people find very difficult to assimilate. What is more, these people will bear the stigma of deserters for the rest of their lives.⁴⁷

Among the Genevan police force, the same xenophobia was not widely expressed. Genevan city council member Paul Pictet also perceived immigration in Switzerland to have been analogous to English immigration in the Transvaal Republic.⁴⁸ He was the sole francophone member of the *kommission* who submitted the 1912 petition which called for immigration to be restricted but his status as city councillor was not comparable to that of the other germanophone members of the *kommission*. Equally Pictet did not feature prominently in francophone discourse. However, there was one prominent francophone contributor to emergent far-right discourse - Gonzague de Reynold. From the multilingual canton of Fribourg, de Reynold worked as a lecturer on French literature at the University of Bern. A count of the Fribourg aristocracy, his snobbish tone and bizarre pronouncements, which advocated that Switzerland revoke its democratic tradition in favour of an

⁴² "Flau!" English trans. Queasy. Rudolf Bollinger, *NZZ* No. 90, 92, 93 30 March, 1 & 2 April, 1912, p.1.

⁴³ "betreffend Massnahmen gegen die Überfremdung der Schweiz". Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Referred to as *casernes gendarmerie* or *Kasernierte Polizei*.

⁴⁶ Hsi-Huey Liang, *The rise of modern police and the European state system from Metternich to the Second World War*, (Cambridge University Press, New York, 1992), p. 37.

⁴⁷ Stadtarchiv Basel-Stadt, Politisches JJ3, *Letter Polizeidepartement Basel-Stadt, to Regierungsrat Basel-Stadt*, Basel, 16 September 1915.

⁴⁸ Bundesarchiv Bern, AR E 22 544 *Resolution der Zentral Kommission an den Bundesrat* 22 November 1911.

autocratic state run by the Swiss aristocracy, could hardly have been described as a representative of francophone conservative opinion let alone francophone public opinion in general. Though a founding member of the nationalistic *New Helvetic Society*, he was a comparably lone francophone voice and not representative of general francophone opinion.

In wider francophone discourse, the word *Überfremdung*, like the phrase *Sonderfall Schweiz*, first appeared as imported terminology. The term was translated as “overpopulation by foreigners”⁴⁹, in the *Journal de Genève*, and was set within the context of a meeting of the *assemblée fédérale*, which quoted germanophone Swiss Minister for Foreign Affairs, Arthur Hoffmann, who used the term in favour of immigration control⁵⁰. However, for the *Journal de Genève* the problem of “Überfremdung” lay in the restrictive nature of Swiss laws of naturalisation which impeded foreigners’ ability to become Swiss – “the inconvenience of obligatory naturalisation”.⁵¹ For the germanophone politicians they reported in the article, the problem of “Überfremdung” had nothing to do with Swiss law but lay with the influx of foreigners themselves. For germanophone Hoffmann, reported in French, “this inconvenience is less grave than the danger of overpopulation by foreigners”.⁵² Within this context of rising xenophobia in germanophone cities like Basel, Geneva, as headquarters of the International Committee of the Red Cross was more keeping with the international outlook of the organisation.

Dutch officialdom, particularly the military high command, appeared rather hostile to civilian refugees: mayors were instructed to exert “gentle force”⁵³ on refugees to return home.⁵⁴ Similar to the repatriation deadlines set by the germanophone Bern based *Bureau* by October 1914 a Dutch timetable for the return of refugees was circulated. Military officials urged that recent accounts of mass executions of young Belgian men should not be reported on in the Dutch media, as such accounts could not be verified but more crucially it would deter the refugees from returning home.⁵⁵ What may appear to be a harsh example of anti-immigration policy similar to that expressed in germanophone Switzerland, was in fact a relatively considered response to what had become critical. The Dutch central commission estimated that by October 1914 alone a total of 1,026,000 refugees fled to the Netherlands.⁵⁶ Analysis of the correspondence of the provisional governor in Utrecht revealed the considerable effort that was made to accommodate the refugees. However, the sheer

⁴⁹ “surpopulation étrangère”

⁵⁰ *Journal de Genève*, 10 June 1915.

⁵¹ “l’inconvénients de la naturalisation obligatoire” Ibid.

⁵² “ces inconvénients sont moins graves que le danger de la surpopulation étrangère”, Ibid.

⁵³ “zachte drang”

⁵⁴ Martin Bossenbroek & J.B. C. Kruishoop (eds.) *Vluchten voor de Groote Oorlog. Belgen in Nederland 1914-1918*. (De Bataafsche Leeuw, Amsterdam, 1988), pp. 25-26.

⁵⁵ Nationaal Archief, The Hague, A 2.13.16, 151 OLZ to Commander Division III 12 October 1914 Chief of Division III Staff, “Rapport aan den Divisiecommandant” 15 October 1914, Commander Division III to CV 25 October 1914.

⁵⁶ Anne Morelli (ed.) *Belgische Enmigranten, Oorlogsvluchtelingen, economische emigranten en politieke vluchtelingen uit onze streken van de 16e eeuw tot vandaag*. (EPO, Brussels, 1998), p. 23.

scale of the war and volume of refugees had clogged up transport routes and rendered southern Netherlands difficult to access.⁵⁷ It would have been a grave error of judgement to simply ignore the vulnerable position this would have put the southern Netherlands in. While, xenophobic discourse rooted in pseudo-scientific terminology was very much the reaction of a small few on the fringes of Dutch society, such racist reaction was comparatively common among the germanophone Swiss public.

While germanophone officials, the high command in particular, were reluctant facilitators in the ICRC mission, Swiss francophone political officials like ICRC President Gustave Ador, were exceptional in their concern for civilian asylum seekers and prisoners of war. The francophone community and the francophone president of the ICRC did not shy away from distinguishing between civilian and military internees.⁵⁸ For example, in September 1917, Gustave Ador publically expressed his irritation at the lack of distinction and delayed repatriation of civilian prisoners, at a conference of neutral Red Cross societies held in Geneva:

“Civilian internment is a novel feature of this war; international treaties did not foresee this phenomenon. At the start of the war it seemed logical that enemy civilians might be retained as suspects; a few months should have been enough to separate the chaff from the wheat. [...] These civilians have been deprived of their liberty and their treatment hardly differs from that of prisoners. [...] we demand that these different categories of civilian detainees should become the object of special consideration and that their situation, which in some respects is even more cruel than that of military prisoners, should be properly discussed before the fourth winter of the war.”⁵⁹

Concerns were raised by both francophone and germanophone officials that some of the foreign soldiers and civilians, who were entering the country, could possibly be deserters and thus exert a negative influence on internal Swiss military mobilisation and morale. Though both communities were concerned by the same issue, yet again two distinctly different reactions emerged. While the germanophone response debated whether or not foreign deserters should be allowed in the country, the francophone response was more moderate. In an editorial addressed to the *Conseil Fédéral*, the *Journal de Genève* appealed that all who wished to seek asylum should be allowed to do so; “We make this demand to the Federal Council: Respect the rights of Asylum”;⁶⁰ any harm could be minimised by confining “the undesirable deserters in concentrated camps”.⁶¹

⁵⁷ Nationaal Archief, Utrecht, 2.13.70, 74, *OLZ to Provincial Governor in Southern Holland*, 19 October 1914, p.133.

⁵⁸ Archives of the International Committee of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, Geneva, 411/10, “Introduction sommaire à la question concernant les civils” Septembre 1917, p. 1.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ “nous demandons au Conseil fédéral: de faire respecter le droit d’asile” *Journal de Genève*, Déserteurs et espions étrangers 14 April 1916, p. 1.

⁶¹ Ibid.

As the war progressed, it became clear that such division of opinion towards recent immigration would manifest itself in the often diametrically opposed interpretations of what qualified as a refugee, asylum seeker or prisoner of war, which varied from canton to canton. As a result of the state's policy of decentralisation, it was left to each individual canton to qualify and grant the right of asylum. In a Federal Council circular, the Federal Council expressed concern at the xenophobia which had developed among the Basel authorities. According to the Council, Basel authorities' attempts to instigate the right of cantons to expel anyone they wished, threatened to undermine central federal authority, which had called for restriction on civilian migration to be eased. The emergent xenophobia of Basel authorities was deemed to potentially undermine Swiss neutrality.⁶² On 9 January 1916, the divide came to a head when on the Basel-Alsatian border, Basel police arrested an Alsatian refugee who had failed to produce sufficient documentation (incorrect papers and insufficient funds apparently required to reside in Basel). It was assumed by the Basel police that the refugee, Léon Lallemand, was a deserter of the German army and thus they promptly handed him over to the German authorities across the border for redeployment. While germanophone public opinion did not appear to have seen the event as worthy of comment, the francophone public and official media did. Two months later the francophone media chiefly *Gazette de Lausanne* and *La Liberté* revealed the details of what had happened to the Swiss public in March. Both the francophone press and the francophone public were outraged and declared the actions of the Basel police force to be a "grave violation du droit d'asile".⁶³ A petition campaign in protest at Basel's actions, which also called for the return of Lallemand to Switzerland, was launched and was signed by 12,000 Swiss, predominantly francophone, citizens. The Basel political authority's defensive response concluded that the Basel police force had merely acted in the "public interest".⁶⁴ It was acknowledged that national legislation was needed to prevent further division and the Federal council on 30 June 1916 issued an immediate ban on the repatriation of deserters. The general germanophone community's response mimicked the predominant attitude of its belligerent linguistic brethren when it sought not to distinguish between civilian and military POWs. By contrast, the francophone community advocated directly on the part of the rights of civilian POWs and asylum seekers.

5.5 Repatriation of Military Prisoners of War

By September 1914 the onset of trench warfare on the Western Front confirmed public fears of a more protracted conflict than was initially supposed. From October 1914 onwards, Genevan councillor and senior member of the ICRC, Gustave Ador, pioneered the idea of an international but Swiss based repatriation programme. During October, he wrote a series of letters to President Hoffmann in which he urged the Swiss government to support his plan. Following deliberation on the issue at the end of October 1914, the Swiss *Federal Council* agreed that the programme proposed by Ador should

⁶² Bundesarchiv, Bern. *Circulaire du Conseil fédéral à tous les gouvernements cantonaux concernant le traitement des déserteurs et réfractaires étrangers*, 29 October 1915.

⁶³ *Gazette de Lausanne* 23 March 1916; *la Liberté* 30 March 1916.

⁶⁴ Bundesarchiv, Bern, AF E 2001 (A)/835 *Procès-verbal du Conseil fédéral*, 19 May 1916.

start with the initial transfer of equal numbers of French and German citizens. This was considerably more restricted and less international than Ador had campaigned for. Following official state endorsement, the ICRC wrote to the respective Red Cross societies based in Berlin and Bordeaux, hoping to negotiate further but for reasons unknown neither the Red Cross in Berlin or Bordeaux replied. Ador then decided to rally official help to negotiate the terms of the proposed programme of repatriation. His continued correspondence with President Hoffmann, in particular, emphasised the positive political impact humanitarianism could make if presented on an international stage.⁶⁵ This aspect was a defining angle of official francophone discourse. In a frank account of the potential for political gain and international influence, Swiss representative in Paris, Charles Eduard Lardy, supported Ador's plan and declared in a letter to President Hoffmann: "there is not only a general humanitarian task but it is also a political interest for our country; to alert public opinion to the humanitarian service rendered by the Swiss state during the present war".⁶⁶

Unlike the germanophone and state run *Bureau*, both the francophone *Agence* and ICRC campaigned internationally, often through the Vatican diplomatic representatives, for an international programme of internment and repatriation to be set up among neutral border countries like Switzerland and Denmark. However, the germanophone central administration's focus was considerably more introspective. It campaigned and responded exclusively to individual cases, rather than coordinating a broader national or international response. For example from October 1914 to January 1915, President Hoffmann responded to individual requests by British and German representatives to accommodate and treat certain injured officers in Swiss hospitals and retreats provided such officers refrained from wearing military dress. Correspondence between Swiss representatives and the German Consulate was more direct than British requests.⁶⁷ In a letter to the Swiss resort *Kurort Moosegg*, the German consulate asked that a group of convalescent German soldiers be allowed stay at the resort to recuperate for four weeks before being redeployed.⁶⁸ The germanophone Swiss representatives agreed, and declared in a press statement that provided the soldiers were dressed in civilian clothing there was no reason why they could not avail of Swiss medical expertise and rest and recuperation in Swiss alpine resorts and sanatoriums.⁶⁹ The insular manner, of the germanophone approach to humanitarianism displayed, differed from the francophone *Agence* and the francophone representatives of the ICRC who were considerably more international in outlook.

⁶⁵ Bundesarchiv, Bern, E 27 14044 *Letter from Gustave Ador to President Hoffmann* 12 November 1914.

⁶⁶ Il y a là, non seulement une tâche humanitaire d'ordre general, mais il ya aussi un intérêt politique, pour notre pays, à essayer de frapper un peu l'opinion publique sous la forme d'un service rendu par la Suisse à un cause humanitaire pendant la guerre actuelle. Ibid.

⁶⁷ Bundesarchiv, Bern, E 2001 (A) 1000/45 Nr. 817 *Letter from the British ambassador to President Hoffmann*, 24 November 1914.

⁶⁸ Ibid, *Letter from Kaiserlich Deutschen Konsulats tot he Kurort Moosegg*, 2 November 1914.

⁶⁹ Ibid. *Pressemitteilung "Aufenthalt verwundeter Kombattanten in der Schweiz zu Heilungszwecken"*, 19 October 1914.

It was francophone Gustave Ador and not the minister for foreign affairs or President Hoffmann, who carried out international diplomatic negotiation regarding the programme of treatment, internment and repatriation of military and civilian migrants. In December 1914, he travelled to Berlin to secure German agreement to the proposed repatriation of French and German soldiers through Switzerland. Satisfied that he had achieved the necessary support both at home and abroad to organise the repatriation of the *grandes blessés* (seriously injured), Ador continued to push for more prisoners of war to be repatriated. In January 1915, he raised the issue of the repatriation of the lightly wounded with French war minister, Alexandre Millerand.⁷⁰ Correspondence between the Red Cross and other non-governmental agencies abroad during January and February 1915 revealed a sense of frustrated resignation at the protracted negotiations to allow the hospitalisation of prisoners of war, which had, according to Swiss diplomatic correspondence, began in the first trimester of 1915.⁷¹ The genuine eagerness to help the interned was clearly displayed throughout the Red Cross correspondence, along with the frustration at the often arbitrary impositions imposed on the Swiss Red Cross in the interests of the belligerent perception of neutrality. For example, equal numbers of soldiers and civilians from both sides had to be admitted, regardless of the seriousness of the injuries suffered. One such example of the sense of Swiss exasperation regarding the restrictions imposed was the declaration of an official following the relaxing of the rule to restrict the interned to equal numbers from each side, "finally sense has prevailed."⁷²

5.6 Repatriation and Internment - A Catholic Conspiracy?

The *Neue Zürcher Zeitung's* analysis of the proposal of treatment, internment and repatriation was both sarcastic and critical. 7 January 1915 one article entitled "prisoner exchange", appeared to view Ador's proposal as catholic inspired imposition mediated by Belgium, France and the Holy See.⁷³ The francophone Swiss media, by contrast, and the protestant francophone committee of the ICRC had not deemed the programme to have any catholic affiliation whatsoever and did not appear to comment on such protestant germanophone speculation. Ador's account of International Swiss humanitarianism, in a letter to President Hoffmann dated February 1915, dispelled such accusations by declaring "it was me who suggested the idea".⁷⁴ Many germanophone accounts failed to acknowledge the role played by francophone Switzerland, in particular the ICRC, who not only negotiated the agreement but were the key instigators of it.⁷⁵ The predominantly protestant *Schweizer*

⁷⁰ Richard B. Speed III, *Prisoners, Diplomats and the Great War: A Study in the Diplomacy of Captivity*, (Greenwood Press, New York/Connecticut/London, 1990), p. 33.

⁷¹ Archives of the International Committee of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, Geneva, CG1A43-03/01 *Le traitement des internés* 07.12.1916-12.08.1918.

⁷² Caroline Moorhead, *Dunant's Dream: War, Switzerland and the History of the Red Cross*, (Harper Collins, London, 1999).

⁷³ NZZ 136, Nr. 21 7 January 1915, Gefangenenaustausch.

⁷⁴ "j'ai suggéré alors l'idée", Bundesarchiv, Bern, E 27 14044 *Letter from Gustave Ador to Bundesrat Hoffmann*, 4 February 1915.

⁷⁵ "Austauschgefangenen", *Schweizer Illustrierte Zeitung* Nr. 6, 5 February 1916, p. 84.

Illustrierte Zeitung declared in a thinly veiled barb to Calvinist Geneva: "this act of human love has come from the pope and so after their arrival in Davos, the Germans telegraphed their thanks to the holy father in Rome".⁷⁶

Germanophone protestant Switzerland may have felt somewhat threatened by what was perceived to have been a recent reassertion of Catholic influence and representation in Swiss political life. Two Swiss presidents, during the war, were Catholics; germanophone Arthur Hoffmann and italophone Giuseppe Motta. Such fears stemmed from the Swiss civil war, in which the armies of the predominantly protestant Swiss confederation triumphed over the Catholic *Sonderbund*. The Swiss *Kulturkampf* which followed further isolated catholic representation in Swiss political life. As a result of the *Kulturkampf*, the Papal Nunciature was expelled from Switzerland in 1873, followed by the Jesuit Order a year later.⁷⁷ Despite the fact that neither Ador nor Hoffmann made any public attempt to re-establish papal diplomatic representation, it was sometimes assumed or suggested in germanophone public opinion and the germanophone media that in their support for the internment and repatriation programme both Motta and Hoffmann were plotting to re-establish the papal nunciature in Switzerland.⁷⁸ According to the NZZ internment and repatriation was "Pope Benedict XV's proposed exchange".⁷⁹ However, Annette Becker's analysis of Vatican correspondence revealed that Vatican international negotiation was an attempt to temper the potential influence and power of what was regarded as the protestant ICRC. In a letter to Pope Benedict XV from Mgr Beaupin, who ran a parallel catholic mission serving prisoners of war in the multilingual town of Fribourg, Beaupin described the Vatican as "the only really important catholic work on behalf of prisoners of war in contrast to the International Red Cross of Geneva whose ties and direction are protestant".⁸⁰ While the Vatican did play an important diplomatic role, it was called upon to do so in conjunction with the ICRC who, as a supposedly non-governmental organisation, could not be seen to be heavily engaged in political negotiation.

Such an inaccurate perception of the perceived cooperation between the Vatican and the Red Cross did pose an important question: To what extent could the Swiss Red Cross and ICRC be defined as

⁷⁶ Dieses Werk der Menschenliebe ging vom Papste aus und so beeilten sich die den auch die Deutschen, nach ihrer Ankunft in Davos, dem Heiligen Vater in Rom telegraphisch ihren Dank abzustatten. Ibid.

⁷⁷ J. Candrian, Quelques réflexions sur les relations diplomatiques de la Suisse avec le Saint-Siège : Diplomatie et Religion au service du règlement pacifique des différends bilatéraux, in M.G. Kohen (ed.) *La promotion de la justice, des droits de l'homme et du règlement des conflits par le droit international*, (Liber Amicorum Lucius Cafisch, Leiden, Koninklijke Brill NV, 2007), p. 1065.

⁷⁸ Karl Kistler, *Die Widererrichtung der Nuntiatur in der Schweiz* 1920, (Herbert Lang, Bern, 1974), p. 94.

⁷⁹ "Der von Papst Benedikt XV. vorgeschlagene Austausch". NZZ 136 Nr. 21, Gefangenaustausch, 7 January 1915.

⁸⁰ La seule œuvre catholique vraiment importante en faveur des prisonniers de guerre en face de la Croix-Rouge international de Genève dont les attaches et la direction sont protestantes. Archivio Segreto Vaticano, Vatican, 244, Nr. 35982, Letter from Mgr. Beaupin to Pope Benedict XV, 1917, in: Annette Becker, *Oubliés de la Grande Guerre*, (2003).

two separate non-governmental organisations? A series of Swiss postcards from the period emphasised the duality of purpose of both the Swiss state and the Genevan Red Cross.⁸¹ *Helvetia*, the *Marianne* of Switzerland, was depicted holding the Red Cross banner aloft over the backdrop of the St Pierre Cathedral in Geneva. The use of Latin, the Swiss legal *lingua franca*, in the phases which accompanied the images, avoided having to give preference to one Swiss language over another, while Calvin's adopted home-church, the Cathedral de Saint-Pierre, emphasised the Christian, more specifically protestant, ethics of the organisation. Such depictions authorised by the national post office would seem to depict the integration of what was a Genevan organisation within the national Swiss context. Structurally, however, the links between the Genevan hierarchy of the ICRC and the Swiss military's administration of the Red Cross's mission within Switzerland suggested an interconnectedness which made it difficult to see the organisation as a separate non-governmental organisation. Throughout the war, the president of the ICRC, Gustave Ador, worked as an elected politician for the Liberal party. From 1889-1917 he was a member of the Swiss National Council and from 1917-1919 was elected President. The repatriation convoys, the treatment of *les grandes blessés* and the administration of the interned soldiers, which would develop later, were all entirely run by the medical wing of the Swiss military. Even prosecution of misdemeanours by the interned were administered under military law.

5.7 Public Reaction to the War Wounded

Initial repatriation convoys generally passed without incident. Photographic evidence from the ICRC archive collection showed that large groups of Swiss citizens tended to gather to greet the trains that stopped or passed through. A wide variety of ages and economic classes of both genders were represented in these photographs in which the onlookers handed out food packages and bunches of flowers to the occupants of the repatriation carriages. Often the trains would be greeted with an official welcoming party. Germanophone commentary in newspapers like the *NZZ*, expressed a sense of shock at the accounts of violence suffered by the men and their injuries and mutilations.

This spectacle belongs to one of the episodes of this war which is not lacking in drama. It shakes one to the bottom of one's heart, and it is one of these war phenomena which will probably remain indefinitely.⁸²

The increased accounts of horror served to affirm Swiss exceptionalism, standing as a nation apart from the inhuman barbarity into which those who surrounded Switzerland had descended. However, the number of ordinary citizens who gathered would appear to have been far higher in the

⁸¹ Appendix 4.

⁸² Das Schauspiel gehört zu den Kriegsepisoden, die an Dramatik nichts vermissen lassen, die einem das Herz bis in die Tiefe erschüttern und wohl zu denjenigen Kriegerscheinungen gehören, die unauslöschlich bleiben. *NZZ* 136 Nr. 190, 17 February 1915.

photographs documenting the trains leaving Geneva main station than they were documented in the photographs of Zurich main station.⁸³

Correspondence between the germanophone Swiss military high command and the Swiss government revealed that the Swiss military opposed the increase of such humanitarian engagement. Throughout 1915, they claimed that they could not afford to spare the troops needed to control and organise the proposed internment camps and repatriation convoys. Despite this, increased involvement in the organisation of Swiss internment and repatriation was encouraged by the Federal Council. During the first repatriation of prisoners of war, the head of Swiss railways recorded that during March 1915, 2579 badly wounded prisoners of war were transported through Switzerland.⁸⁴ However, the Swiss army continued to voice their concerns regarding their perceived "the weakening of national security"⁸⁵. Similar to germanophone public opinion, the germanophone high command feared that Swiss troops would be exposed to foreign elements; that the presence of deserters in Switzerland could weaken the mobilised mind-set of the citizens' militia.⁸⁶ The avocation of a supposed purity of nationhood expressed by the germanophone far-right was echoed in the concerns of the germanophone military high command. The military was really the only centralised institution that was sufficiently mobilised to effectively run the programmes of repatriation and internment. In a bid to appease such fears, and mobilise the support of military, Swiss representative in Paris Lardy wrote to the Swiss government in April 1915 and proposed that both internment and repatriation would come under Swiss military jurisdiction - "under Swiss military code".⁸⁷ Lardy's proposal was subsequently adopted and this offered the military considerably more control and enabled them to prosecute or remove unruly, or undesirable elements.

5.8 Internment

In April 1915, following Ador's negotiation through the diplomatic wing of the Holy See and the international committee of the Red Cross, it was decided that badly injured prisoners of war, those who were not fit to continue service, could be repatriated through Switzerland. The Swiss, French and German governments agreed to admit equal numbers from both armies for treatment and repatriation. These 701 prisoners of war began Switzerland's role as centre for repatriation and treatment of civilian and military prisoners during the war. A similar system, negotiated through the ICRC, was put in place among fellow neutral states; Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands and Norway. However, according to Annette Becker's analysis the largest number of interned prisoners of war were interned

⁸³ Archives of the International Committee of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, Geneva, V-P-HIST-03529-15A.

⁸⁴ Bundesarchiv, Bern, E 27 14044, *Letter from the Swiss Federal Railways/Schweizerische Bundesbahnen (SBB) to the Political Department*, 31 May 1915.

⁸⁵ "Schwächung der Landesverteidigung"

⁸⁶ Bundesarchiv, Bern, E 27 13981, *Letter from Chefs des Generalstabes der Armee to President Hoffmann*, 29 March 1915.

⁸⁷ "sous le code militaire suisse", Bundesarchiv, Bern, E 27 13981, *Letter from representative Lardy to the Department of Foreign Affairs*, 3 April 1915.

in and repatriated through Switzerland.⁸⁸ Despite the reluctance expressed in official and unofficial germanophone quarters, francophone aims to extend the fledgling internment and repatriation programme were endorsed once again, by the Federal Council. On 5 May 1915 Gustave Ador's proposal to include what was referred to as *les petits blessés* was put before the *Bundesrat*; after two days of debate it voted in favour of the motion provided the main belligerent parties were in agreement.⁸⁹

While germanophone newspaper editorials often complained at what was sometimes expressed as an imposition, the *Journal de Genève*'s editorials centred more on informed reports on the practicalities of the internment and repatriation programmes.⁹⁰ Tuberculosis patients were the initial target and in January one hundred infected soldiers from the French and German armies were admitted to Swiss hospitals. The German soldiers were sent to the mountain retreat of Davos, in the multi-lingual multi-denominational canton of Graubünden while the French soldiers predominantly stayed in the small town of Leysin in Catholic Vaud. Both Davos and Leysin were renowned for their tuberculosis sanatoriums but their rural setting left these foreign soldiers isolated from the larger city dwelling populace who were more likely to have French and German citizens resident and among Swiss city dwellers who perhaps had developed a stronger affinity with either the French or German side during the years of the *röstigraben* divide. The fact that many of the prisoners were treated in rural retreats, sanatoriums like Davos, for example, exposed the rural populace to the horrors of war arguably to a more immediate degree than the urban city dwellers whose main interaction may have been to have merely gawked at and waved the convoys by. Photographic evidence and newspaper accounts from 1915 to 1916 indicated that the numbers of Swiss citizens who greeted these convoys at urban train stations were large.⁹¹ Other primary written accounts showed that the response was generally enthusiastic and many privately recorded comments were quoted and commented upon in the press. While predominantly urban areas experienced the first civilian wave of migration, the experience of internment would possibly have been the first time during the war that the brutal reality of disease and disfigurement of these *grands blessés* were encountered by such a large swath of the Swiss populace.

5.9 Wider Public Reaction

The strength of this francophone affinity for and identification with international humanitarianism could be seen even in public events not directly connected with the Red Cross or Swiss humanitarianism. For example the proceedings of the centenary celebrations of the *Société helvétique des sciences naturelles* (Helvetic Society of Natural Sciences), focussed on the geological research in Switzerland. It was held in the Aula of Geneva University, on 14 September 1915. Decorated with native flora

⁸⁸ Annette Becker, *Oubliés de la Grande Guerre*, (2003), p. 208.

⁸⁹ Bundesarchiv, Bern, E1004.1/1000/9 Nr. 259/1915: 42 *Sitzung des Schweizerischen Bundesrates*, 7 May 1915.

⁹⁰ *Journal de Genève* 8 May 1915; 24 September 1915; 28 October 1915; 21 December 1915.

⁹¹ Archives of the International Committee of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, Geneva, V-P-HIST-03529-15A.

and festooned with Swiss flags, the celebrations struck a rather patriotic tone and attracted a delegation from the *Conseil fédéral* headed by President Giuseppe Motta. Entrance was free and widely attended by the Swiss, predominantly Genevan, public. Though the celebrations were to commemorate geological research, Swiss mobilisation was the consistent theme throughout the speeches, the tone of which was remarkably similar to the bellicose declarations of a belligerent power. In one of the opening speeches, francophone Professor Emile Yung declared that the scientists present were “ready to give their blood in order to conserve their independence”.⁹² According to Swiss press coverage of the event, no germanophone federal delegates attended. Despite being a Helvetic Society both the members attending and the official state representatives appeared to have been exclusively francophone. It is all the more remarkable then that on unveiling the commemorative book entitled *Livre du Centenaire* the first speaker of the celebration, Professor Emile Yung, opened his speech praising the influence of germanophone academia, citing the contribution of Bern Pasteur Samuel Wyttenbach as a “disciple” of the germanophone poet of the Swiss *Sonderfall* - Albert von Haller.

Two and half hours later, the presidential delegation made an official visit to the *Agence des prisonniers de guerre de la Croix-Rouge*. At the entrance to the *Musée Rath*, President Motta gave a short speech, the contents of which were widely reported in the francophone press. Unlike previous germanophone officials, which failed to publically acknowledge the work of the agency, Motta's praise for the agency and its work was warm. Motta declared that the Genevan Red Cross were founders of an international movement which he declared had “has lifted the morale standing of our country”.⁹³ For Motta, Swiss humanitarianism was a component of Swiss mobilisation in general but more importantly the work of the ICRC affirmed Switzerland's moral role internationally: “You have helped us transform our neutrality into a neutrality that is active, charitable and helpful to all the unfortunates affected by the war”.⁹⁴ This was precisely the kind of declaration which would not have concurred with germanophone interpretations of the Swiss *Sonderfall*, whose strength came from isolation, more aloof in the practise of its neutrality.

Following the visit to the *L'Agence* the delegation paid homage to a key emblem of Swiss protestant identity - *Le monument de la réformation* before attending an official banquet, thus asserting a key feature of what was perceived to be mainstream Swiss identity – the victors of the Swiss civil war. The toasts at this banquet outlined some of the key features of the francophone vision of the Swiss *Sonderfall*. At dessert, a Genevan chemist, Amé Pictet, who had recently returned from his doctoral research in Bonn, offered a toast to “this country, the only oasis of peace among a Europe at war”.⁹⁵ His fervent patriotic zeal lay in his conclusion that; “the commitment of all to maintain intact the federal

⁹² “prêt à donner leur sang pour conserver leur indépendance.” Le centenaire de la société helvétique des sciences naturelles, *Journal de Genève*, 14 September 1915, p. 5.

⁹³ “relevé le niveau moral de notre pays.” Ibid.

⁹⁴ “Vous nous avez aidés à transformer notre neutralité en une neutralité active, charitable et secourables à toutes les infortunes de la guerre.” Ibid.

⁹⁵ “Cette patrie, seule oasis de paix, au milieu de l'Europe en guerre.” Ibid.

pact, [which we define as] our love for our native land which is the strength of our national army, the wisdom and vigilance of our federal authorities".⁹⁶ He acknowledged the perceived damage that his profession had inflicted through the war and implored his fellow scientists: "our duty is to ask him not to find the means to kill but the means to live".⁹⁷ For Pictet, Swiss salvation lay in engagement with the international community - "we must make every effort to renew ties between nations shattered by war".⁹⁸

After this speech Bonjour, a francophone politician on the National Council, situated Pictet's speech within a more precisely Swiss context and perhaps in acknowledgement of the deep divisions which had developed during the first year of the war: "despite the differences of language and ideas, all Swiss people are of the same race".⁹⁹ Bonjour's declaration advocating linguistic unity came at the same time as Winterthur based engineer Max Koller was whipping up germanophone support in Zurich and Basel for linguistic segregation: "Observations of franco-german border areas in Switzerland, the Alsace, Belgium, etc, are strong evidence against the desirability of intermingling."¹⁰⁰ Francophone delegates, by contrast, commended international engagement and saw the empathy shown by organisations like the Red Cross as exemplary.

According to Koller, the misfortune inflicted on Alsace-Lorraine and Belgium was predominantly due to increased interaction between their separate linguistic communities and the blurring of their "Franco-German border areas".¹⁰¹ Right wing nationalist views like these were not exclusive to the period of the war nor were they exclusive to one particular group before the war, but the division of interpretation along linguistic lines that emerged during the war was. Right wing rhetoric was pervasive in moderate Swiss political discourse which seemed to advocate a return to the nationalist sentiment of the pre-war period. Shortly before the war, Zurich University's germanophone professor of Romance literature, Ernst Bovet, campaigned to define *homo alpinus* as a separate racial category. In his riposte to the linguistic segregation advocated by the likes of Max Koller, at the same centenary celebrations of the *Société helvétique des sciences naturelles* in Geneva, francophone *Conseil nationale* M. Bonjour, unfortunately, looked to the racist conception of *homo alpinus* to inspire unity: "despite the differences of language and ideas, all Swiss people are of the same race".¹⁰² While such racist rhetoric pervaded the discourse of both communities the speeches of the Francophone political

⁹⁶ "La ferme volonté de tous de maintenir intact le pacte fédéral, à notre amour du sol natal qui fait la force de notre armée nationale, à la sagesse et à la vigilance de nos autorités fédérales." Ibid.

⁹⁷ "notre devoir est de lui demander non pas des moyens de tuer, mais des moyens de vivre." Ibid.

⁹⁸ "Nous devons faire tous nos efforts pour renouer entre les nations les liens brisés par la guerre" Ibid.

⁹⁹ "Malgré les différences de langues et d'idées, tous les Suisses étaient de la même race." Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Beobachtungen, die man in den französisch-deutschen Grenzgebieten, in der Schweiz, im Elsass, Belgien usw. machen kann, sprechen entschieden gegen die Wünschbarkeit einer Vermischung. Max Koller, *Die Fremdenfrage in der Schweiz*, Zürich 1915, p. 27.

¹⁰¹ "französisch-deutschen Grenzgebieten".

¹⁰² "malgré les différences de langues et d'idées tous les Suisses étaient de même race." , *Journal de Genève*, A l'Agence des prisonniers de guerre, 14 September 1915, p. 5.

delegation reveal a more compassionate outlook. In a speech which claimed to outline the francophone “the idea of homeland”¹⁰³ Councillor Calonder declared at the same celebration that “charitable Switzerland which is Geneva, the first rank of all the cantons in terms of its beautiful spirit of compassion, which draws the respect and sympathy of all countries to our homeland”.¹⁰⁴

5.10 Work Programmes

In January according to Major Favre’s report on the internment of sick and injured prisoners during 1916, 13,000 prisoners were initially interned. That figure rose to 26,000 by December 1916. Despite germanophone public pressure to restrict the number of foreigners, the number of the interned rose consistently from January 1917 until the figure peaked at 33,000 in June 1918. By April 1916, the original four Swiss regions allocated for internment had increased to fifteen designated regions spread throughout Switzerland.¹⁰⁵ As ill and wounded soldiers recovered and the repatriation of able bodied POWs increased, the neutral Swiss humanitarian effort was faced with the dilemma that their efforts may also have been aiding the war effort. In addition many of the soldiers themselves were reluctant to be repatriated for the same reasons. By September 1916, the first reports reached the Swiss government that some Swiss doctors were accepting money from prisoners of war in order to manipulate medical records which would prevent repatriation and likely redeployment and allow such men to remain interned in Switzerland.¹⁰⁶ However, the Swiss officials did not prosecute or investigate those involved. Instead an alternative to suit both Switzerland and the interned was offered. In the same month Major Polentz, the German war ministry’s representative in Bern, published an article in the German internment magazine which circulated through the germanophone Swiss camps. In the article Polentz declared

You must be at one with me on this issue, so that you don’t leave your hands lying in your lap doing nothing but you should wish to get involved. [...] I’m up for the strongest and healthiest among you to establish yourselves in factories of the iron and wood industry.¹⁰⁷

Swiss military doctors compiled a list of categories of ability from one to four which dictated to what degree each interned soldier was able to work. By the end of September 1916, *Pro Captivitis*, the Red Cross affiliated organisation run by Swiss General Sprecher von Bernegg’s wife, began its

¹⁰³ “L’idée du patrie”, Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ La Suisse charitable doit à Genève, au premier rang des cantons dans le bel élan de compassion qui attire de toutes parts à notre patrie estime et sympathie. Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ E. Favre, *L’internement en Suisse des prisonniers de guerre malades ou blessés, 1916*, premier rapport, (Genève, 1917), p. 19; *Second rapport*, (Berne, 1918), p. 37; *Troisième rapport*, (Berne, 1919), pp.33-34.

¹⁰⁶ Bundesarchiv, Bern, E 27 13971 *Swiss Bundesanwaltschaft to the Swiss political department* 21 September 1916.

¹⁰⁷ Sie werden (sic) alle mit mir einig sein, dass Sie nicht die Hände in den Schoß legen dürfen, um nichts zu tun, sondern dass Sie sich auch betätigen wollen. [...] Ich werde für die Kräftigsten und Gesundesten unter Ihnen Fabrikbetriebe für Eisen- und Holzindustrie einrichten. “Polentz Mitteilungen der Kais. Deutschen Gesandtschaft in Bern”, *Deutsche Internierten Zeitung*, (A. Franke, Bern 1916), 15. September 1916, p. 1.

programme of assigning work to the able-bodied interned. These new workers were predominantly engaged in manual labour and were paid a small fee, much lower than the general wage. According to the minutes of the National Council, concerns were raised by the socialist party regarding the perceived threat able-bodied foreign POW's posed towards Swiss citizens' job opportunities. The focus of francophone concern was that the low wages paid to foreign POW workers would drive down the wage of domestic workers engaged in similar forms of work. Germanophone discourse was equally concerned regarding this issue, but their analysis tended more to incorporate xenophobic terminology, which had developed a parallel narrative of sorts within public opinion. For the germanophone public there was a need to protect native Swiss workers from what were referred to as "inferior foreign elements".¹⁰⁸ Indeed among germanophone discourse such xenophobic terminology appeared to have transcended the political divide. Germanophone representatives of the Radical Party also referred to the interned as "inferior foreign elements",¹⁰⁹ and campaigned vigorously for parliament to place draconian restrictions on immigration under the germanophone campaign slogan of "end the holding back of good workers."¹¹⁰ Francophone officials did not share the same fears. In the introduction to his report on internment in 1916 (published in 1917), francophone Major Favre warned that the "strong presence of internees"¹¹¹ had recently become a contentious issue with the Swiss public who "misunderstood" the situation.¹¹² For Favre "the industry of foreigners",¹¹³ which had developed from Swiss charity, had exerted a positive influence on the Swiss economy. According to one example given by Favre, the internment and repatriation of prisoners of war benefitted the Swiss state by propping up the "the interests of the hotel industry threatened by a dive in tourism".¹¹⁴ The Swiss high command may have recognised this positive influence when it called for an increase in agricultural production to build up depleted reserves in preparation for continued war. On 2-3 March 1917 a proposal was brought forward to the *Bundesrat* which sought to help the demand for increased agricultural production. It recommended that interned soldiers could be employed to carry out manual labour on farms around the vicinity of their camps. The rise in inflation during this period was factored in and as a result by May 1917 the small wage paid to the working interned increased by a franc (seven francs for officers and five francs per soldier per day). These new work programmes delayed repatriation and hindered redeployment but they also posed an additional problem.

By the latter half of 1916, the dominant topic of discussion among germanophone public opinion was the fear that young Swiss women "who were not better able to protect their dignity" and could marry

¹⁰⁸ "minderwertigen ausländischen elementen", Kury, *Über Fremde reden*, (2003), p. 151.

¹⁰⁹ "minderwertigen ausländischen elementen"

¹¹⁰ "Zweck der Zurückhaltung guter Arbeiter." Gérald Arlettaz & Silvia Arlettaz, "Die schweizerische Ausländergesetzgebung und die politischen Parteien 1917-1931", in: Aram Mattioli (ed.), *Antisemitismus in der Schweiz 1848-1960*, (Zurich, 1998), pp. 327-356.

¹¹¹ "forte presence des internes"

¹¹² Favre, *Premier rapport*, (1916), p.V-VIII.

¹¹³ "L'industrie des étrangers"

¹¹⁴ "les intérêts de l'industrie hôtelière menacée par la chute du tourisme", Arlettaz, *La Suisse une terre d'accueil*, (1991), p. 143.

one of the interned foreign soldiers.¹¹⁵ Widely discussed among the germanophone newspapers, the *Verband der Schweizer Freundinnen Junger Mädchen* urged Swiss women to be vigilant. The *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* feared that able-bodied interned men were courting Swiss women, whose men were stationed at the "Swiss front".¹¹⁶ The fear of intermarriage and perceived need to occupy the interned was also a recurring theme in the correspondence of senior germanophone political figures like Bundesrat Hoffmann.¹¹⁷ For Swiss women who did marry a non-Swiss citizen, the consequences in times of war were severe. Under article 54 paragraph 4 of the modified Swiss constitution of 1874, Swiss women acquired the nationality of their husbands thus losing their Swiss citizenship. As immigration restrictions increased, many such women were deemed foreign or even stateless citizens and were expelled following armistice often with little possibility of return.

Arlettaz argued that national cohesion took advantage of the humanitarian actions which were deemed "necessary to the moral mission and independence of a neutral country".¹¹⁸ Paradoxically, while the influx of prisoners of war contributed to the perception of national cohesion, according to Arlettaz it proved internally divisive. By 1917 a right-wing engineer from germanophone Winterthur, Max Koller, toured Switzerland in a lecture series which advocated that the three dominant linguistic communities in Switzerland be kept as separated as possible and advised that interaction between Italo-, franco- and germanophone Swiss publics be limited.

The narrow boundaries enclose three cultural areas; the more purely they can be maintained the more beautiful and better established our culture will be. The whole image of our culture is held together by the common bond of our democratic freedom.¹¹⁹

Koller's proposal for a kind of linguistic segregation was rooted in reaction to and fears invoked among the Swiss public during the war. For some right-wing commentators such insularity retreated beyond the usual fear of foreigners from other countries to Swiss citizens who spoke French and Italian rather than German. Zurich pastor Eduard Blocher declared in the Deutschschweizerische Gesellschaft meeting in autumn 1917: "The francophone citizens were originally German; they have become romanised and semiticised, in other words they've become bastards."¹²⁰ The heightened

¹¹⁵ "die ihre Würde nicht besser zu wahn (sic) wissen", NZZ 137 Nr. 845 27th May 1916

¹¹⁶ NZZ 137 Nr. 1584 6th October 1916

¹¹⁷ Archives of the International Committee of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, Geneva, CG1A43-03/01 *traitement des internés* 07.12.1916-12.08.1918.

¹¹⁸ "nécessaires à la mission morale et à l'indépendance d'un pays neutre."

¹¹⁹ "Die engen Grenzen Umschließen drei Kulturgebiete; je reiner sie sich erhalten können, umso schöner und gefestigter ist das gesamte Bild unserer Kultur, die durch das allen gemeinsame Band unserer demokratischen Freiheit zusammengehalten wird. ", Max Koller, (Speech) *Die kulturelle Überfremdung der Schweiz* Winterthur 31st May 1917 later published, Zürich 1918 p.27.

¹²⁰ Die Welschvölker waren ursprünglich Deutsch, sie haben sich romanisiert und semitisiert, ja sind Bastarde geworden. Trans. Archiv für Zeitgeschichte (AfZ), Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule Zürich, Nachlass Eduard Blocher, II., Deutschschweizer Gesellschaft, *Protokoll der Brugger Tagung der Deutschschweizerischen Gesellschaft am 23. Herbstmonat 1917* im roten Haus in Brugg.

xenophobia expressed in 1917 culminated in an attack at the end of 1917: a group of 15 germanophone men beat up two interned soldiers, one of which was suspecting of having had relationship with a local woman.¹²¹ However, despite the xenophobia of many officials, the Swiss men were prosecuted in 1918 for their actions.

On 14 November 1918 in the germanophone town of Meiringen the local population gathered together in the town square to celebrate the end of the war. The interned French soldiers who were stationed near the square attempted to join the celebrations but were turned away from the town square as according to the local representative, since 1917 the internees were forbidden from gathering together in large groups near public houses. The interned French returned and attempted to break into the town square chanting "O we are not internees we are tourists".¹²² The main farmers of the town gathered together and beat the interned out of the town square.¹²³

5.11 Conclusion

During the conflict a total of 67,726 civilians and soldiers were interned in Switzerland. Historian Uta Hinz argued that such humanitarian action was part of an "international sphere" of humanitarianism.¹²⁴ It could be argued that viewed from this perspective the experience of and reaction to migration saw a similar convergence, to that of the immigration control policies of other industrial democracies. This was due to convergent interdependence between mutual socioeconomic and foreign policy factors, according to Hinz.¹²⁵ However, Becker questioned the universality and independence of such an international sphere of humanitarianism, when she raised the issue of outside pressure on neutral states which attempted to persuade such countries to abandon neutrality.¹²⁶ While this was successful in Italy and perhaps a factor in the sympathies expressed in other neutral states, Switzerland's neutrality but also its humanitarian action remained mutually beneficial for the surrounding belligerent states and so there were few overt attempts by belligerent powers to court Swiss participation in the war. While symbolic capital of the ICRC's humanitarian action helped ensure Swiss independence during the war, encounters with foreign civilian and military prisoners of war further emphasised the division between the two main linguistic communities. While francophone Swiss public opinion

¹²¹ Bundesarchiv, Bern, E 27 14022 *Oberst Beyerlin* 4th December 1917 Verfügung Kontr. Nr. 98/1310 9th July 1918.

¹²² "O, nous ne sommes pas des internés, maintenant nous sommes des touristes." Ibid. *Rapport an den Kommandanten der Internierungsregion O.B.A.* 14th November 1918

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Uta Hinz, "Humanität im Krieg? Internationales Rotes Kreuz und Kriegsgefangenenhilfe im Ersten Weltkrieg." In: Jochen Oltmer (ed.), *Kriegsgefangene im Europa des Ersten Weltkriegs*, (Munich/Paderborn/Zurich/Vienna, 2006), pp.216-38.

¹²⁵ J. Widgren, *The Key to Europe: A Comparative Analysis of Entry and Asylum Policies in Western Countries* (International Centre for Migration Policy Development [ICMPD], Vienna, 1994); *International Migration Review*, 29:3, 1995, p. 765-93; Carol Schmid, "Gastarbeiter in West Germany and Switzerland: An Assessment of Host Society Immigrant Relations", *Population Research and Policy Review*, 2:3, 1983, pp.233-52.

¹²⁶ Becker, *Oubliés*, (1998).

appeared to have been consistently more supportive of the French cause and the ICRC's mission, germanophone public opinion though supportive of the German cause became increasingly nationalistic. From 1916 onwards, recorded public's attacks by germanophone Swiss and reports of germanophone verbal abuse hurled upon repatriation convoys and prisoners of war interned in Switzerland increased.¹²⁷ Attempts by right wing germanophone Swiss commentators to codify *homo alpinus* as a separate racial category offered an albeit extreme example of how the germanophone Swiss community saw itself as distinct.

According to Arlettaz "the rising pressure"¹²⁸ of a growing majority of Swiss citizens on Swiss politicians to restrict immigration was due "not only due to the closure of the borders, but also due to the construction of a society that had become more and more nationalistic, protecting itself from the supposed foreign peril".¹²⁹ This interpretation links the dramatic rise in xenophobia to mobilization and the *union sacrée* examined in earlier chapters. However, Arlettaz neglects what this chapter has illustrated as being the defining division in Swiss reaction to the war. The defining division in Swiss reaction was not political but linguistic – between the francophone and germanophone communities. Swiss parties across the political spectrum campaigned for the restriction of immigration. Representatives from both linguistic communities made xenophobic statements. However, the germanophone community were consistently more extreme in their xenophobia. Nevertheless, the rising voices of alternate political parties of both the right and left suggest that perhaps during the final year of the war Socialist and nationalist manifestos, along with economic concerns, may have transcended the linguistic divide. The final chapter will seek to explore this further.

¹²⁷ NZZ, 137, Nr. 213, 9 February, 1916.

¹²⁸ "la pression croissante", Arlettaz, *La Suisse une terre d'accueil*, (1991), p.146.

¹²⁹ "pas seulement en vue d'une fermeture des frontières, mais également en vue de l'édification d'une société de plus en plus nationaliste, entendant se préserver d'un peril étranger." Ibid.

CHAPTER SIX: Sortie – The Social Divisions of Wartime and the General Strike 1918

"The most important event since the Swiss Civil War, in 1847"¹

"[...] the nationwide general strike of November 1918"²,

"A major event in the history of Switzerland"³

"The General Strike was no joke. A little more heat here, a little more intransigence there, and a bloody civil war would have occurred."⁴

The Swiss General Strike, November 1918, is prominent in the historiography of Switzerland and the war. Far more has been written about it than any other wartime event and it is no exaggeration to say that it has been seen as the focal point of Swiss experience of the conflict. Generally the strike has been seen as a "landesweit" or canton-wide revolt. In this conventional view, the 'widespread' unrest threatened not only democratic institutions but the very stability of the country as the war ended. If this interpretation is true, it would suggest that by 1918 the economic and social strains of the war led to a language of class displacing other wartime divisions, like the linguistic divide.

Social tensions certainly arose in Switzerland as in other wartime states in Europe, whether belligerent or neutral. From 1914 to 1918, food prices increased by 123% and wholesale prices increased by 200%.⁵ Inflation was of major concern among the general public and as the Hoffmann affair showed, it also concerned politicians. However pre-war parliamentary debates confirmed press reports that Switzerland had at least enough food supplies to last two years, in the event of a siege. Moreover, despite reductions, imports continued. Furthermore, Swiss GDP growth soared from -2.9 percentage points in 1914 to 18.6 percentage points in 1915.⁶ As Chapter Four has shown, Swiss banking thrived during the war, particularly in Zurich, in the areas of foreign direct investment and multi-national trading abroad. According to Bauer and Blackman's analysis, any deficit in the balance of trade was offset by the flow of income from investments abroad "in terms of loans, credits and

¹"Le tournant le plus important depuis la guerre de Sonderbund, en 1847" Marc Vuilleumier, "Le mouvement ouvrier en Suisse pendant et après la première guerre mondiale. Bilan historiographique", *Le mouvement social*, No. 84 July – September, 1973 (Editions L'Atelier, 1973), p. 97.

²"[...] Den landesweiten Generalstreik vom November 1918" Historisches Lexikon der Schweiz (HLS), (Schwabe AG, Basel, 2002-) <http://www.hls-dhs-dss.ch/textes/d/D16533.php> [Accessed: 7 October 2013]

³"Un événement majeur de l'histoire Suisse" Charles Heimberg, "La garde civique genevoise et la grève générale de 1918, un sursaut disciplinaire et conservateur", *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 44 Nr.3, (July-September 1997), p. 424.

⁴ Jonathan Steinberg, *Why Switzerland?*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996), p. 59.

⁵ Hans Bauer and Warren J. Blackman, *Swiss Banking: An Analytical History*, (MacMillan Press, London, 1998) p. 187.

⁶ See Chapter Five, Appendix 4. Swiss GDP 1913-1919.

direct investments.[...] considerable, enough to more than account for deficit in the balance of trade.”⁷ Thus the data presented in Chapter Five indicates that inflation was also due to a rapid increase in money supply, which drove up the price of goods and services. Evidence of an increased money supply was further verified by the ability of the government body, *Schweizerische Finanzgesellschaft*, to provide loans for importers which enabled them to finance their imports on credit. Nevertheless, Gerlach and Gerlach-Kristen’s data show that during the final two years of the war there was a collapse in the growth rate. They attributed this to “decreased external demand”.⁸ In the context of a divided public opinion, high inflation, rising xenophobia, economic boom and the threat of bust, the atmosphere would appear to have been ripe for fringe political movements of the right and left to thrive.

6.1 Swiss Industrial Development

Unlike Germany or Britain in 1900, for example, Swiss industrial development was characterised by geographically delocalised manufacturing industries and a lack of large centralised industrial agglomerations. Consequently, Swiss social movements in the nineteenth century developed according to a distinctive pattern driven by the middle and skilled working class. According to Schumacher and Lorenzetti, the “Swiss working class never formed a proletariat analogous to that of other countries.”⁹ Given the state’s policy of exporting its lower classes abroad, it could be argued that conditions within Switzerland perhaps prevented the formation of a politically active working class. According to statistical analysis by Francesco Kneschaurek the three main Swiss industrial sectors before the war were engineering, textile manufacturing and the watch and clock industry. They employed 70% of the industrial labour force which made up approximately a third of the economically active population.¹⁰ The textile industry was the catalyst of nineteenth century Swiss industrial development along with Swiss global trade, as was discussed in Chapter Four. As the textile sector grew, the Swiss engineering sector developed in conjunction with it. The turn of the century saw the rapid expansion of sophisticated engine design and development aimed for foreign export. Lack of raw materials and a culture of self-reliance meant Swiss industry was fuelled predominantly by hydraulic power. This further influenced delocalisation, which was characteristic of Swiss industrialisation because most factories needed to be situated near rivers, often in rural areas. Such factories were generally small in scale. Statistical data regarding the distribution of workers between the industrial, farming and private sector, in 1911, revealed that until 1910 factory workers were a minority among the industrial population. By contrast over 50% of industrial workers defined themselves as employed in the areas of home industry, craft and construction. This remained static

⁷ Bauer and Blackman, *Swiss Banking*, p. 184- 185.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Reto Schumacher and Luigi Lorenzetti, ““We have no proletariat”: Social Stratification and Occupational Homogamy in Industrial Switzerland, Winterthur 1909/10-1928”, *International Review of Social History*, No. 50, (2005), p. 67.

¹⁰ Francesco Kneschaurek, “Wandlungen der schweizerischen Industriestruktur seit 1800”, *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Volkswirtschaft und Statistik*, No. 100, (1964), p. 155.

both during and after the war. The industrial sector continued to employ less than half the Swiss work force.¹¹ Averaging at approximately 45% from 1900-1920, the number of factory workers within that statistic was less than half of the overall number employed in the industrial sector.¹²

Swiss industry specialised in high-quality luxury goods aimed for export. This meant the majority of workers, whether in factories or workshops, were highly-skilled. Workers had a high degree of literacy, notably in protestant areas where most of the industrial activity was concentrated. There was, by consequence, no large scale unskilled labouring workforce.¹³ The most vulnerable sector to mass produced foreign competition was the cotton industry. Swiss cotton production contracted sharply between 1870 and the outbreak of the war, due to the international economic crisis of the 1870s and the emergence of cheaper competitors abroad. Cotton spinning was particularly strongly affected. In 1872, 21,000 spinning operatives existed in Switzerland, by the outbreak of the war, only 83 factories remained.¹⁴ Yet by redirecting the focus of its production on signature products and highly skilled production, directed at the luxury market the Swiss cotton industry successfully adjusted and remained a stable source of employment. Hand-woven, marketed Swiss satin-stitch cloth became a key export in this period. Luxury textile manufacture thrived. In 1914, silk was Switzerland's third most valuable Swiss export.¹⁵ The textile industry's small scale, the skilled and engaged abilities of its workforce, and rising American and European middle class purchasing power allowed it to thrive and compete among diversification of international markets.

The domestic/workshop system integrated and increased interaction between the urban and rural work force, which lessened the incidence of significant urban rural divide. The silk industry, centred in Basle, is a good example. The silk industry's key export was ribbons. Not only was it an example of the domestic/workshop system, but it was a trans-national industry in which manufacture and production extended across the border into Germany (Baden). In this transnational sphere, national distinctions between native Swiss workers and the foreign German counterparts in the Basel silk industry were blurred somewhat. Mindful of increasing competition from cheaper manufacturers abroad, Basel's silk industry increased skilled manufacture and developed new and distinctive techniques. As a result, a thriving chemical industry grew as an outgrowth of the dye works industry required by up-market ribbon production. The co-dependency of the Swiss factory system, traditional crafts, and the sub contraction of work to domestic out-work in rural areas, allowed a fluidity of identity to develop which prevented the development of isolated social groupings defined by a homogenous

¹¹ Appendix 1, Bundesarchiv, Bern, *Statistische Jahrbuch der Schweiz; Handbuch der Schweizerischen Volkswirtschaft*, Bern 1911.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Schumacher and Lorenzetti, "We have no proletariat", (2005), p. 69.

¹⁴ Madelyn Holmes, *Forgotten Migrants: Foreign Workers in Switzerland before World War I*, (Associated University Presses, Inc. London and Toronto, 1988), p.82.

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 83.

sense of class consciousness and identity. None of this means that socialism was absent but it was as distinctive as the Swiss labour movement, and reflected the social conditions outlined above.

There was a general awareness among the public of working people as a social class.¹⁶ However, conservative historiography perceives such concepts and ideology as alien to Switzerland and argue that they were imported from abroad. While the influence of foreign socialist movements was indeed significant, Wolfgang Schieder's history of the German workers' movement argues that during the 19 century German workers' associations played an influential role in fomenting awareness of socialism within Switzerland.¹⁷ For Marc Vuilleumier and Jost, "early-socialist intellectuals" particularly influenced the political elite of 19 century francophone Switzerland.¹⁸ For Jost it was the "economic crisis of 1845-47 [which] heightened social sensitivity towards the economically disadvantaged sections of the population."¹⁹ Therefore, for Jost, this economic crisis was one of the first examples of a maturing of the social movement within Switzerland; an unmediated, uniquely Swiss response to an international event.

6.2 Class Consciousness and the Swiss Worker

For Jost, the role of the workers' movement has been marginalised in the dominant historiographical narrative. The dominant narrative espoused by the so-called bourgeois radical party refused to acknowledge the existence of *la société de classes* in Switzerland.²⁰ The rhetoric of class struggle was never a feature of the radical party's political manifesto and this did alienate a fraction of its previous voters. However, as outlined above regarding Swiss industry, the language of class was not prominent in Swiss politics. The rapid decline in public support for the radical party during the First World War stemmed more from its failure to acknowledge or accommodate the growing support for other political ideologies, socialist and otherwise, which had developed during the war. This complacency was reflected in the radical party's notion of Swiss exceptionalism, defined by Jost as a bourgeois interpretation which saw itself as a unified national block after the civil war of 1848. It was, he wrote,

¹⁶ Hans Ulrich Jost, "Switzerland", in Marcel van der Linden and Jürgen Rojahn (eds.), *The Formation of Labour movements, 1870-1914: An International Perspective*, (E. J. Brill, Leiden 1990), p. 271.

¹⁷ Wolfgang Schieder, *Anfänge der Deutschen Arbeiterbewegung. Die Auslandsvereine im Jahrzehnt nach der Julirevolution von 1830*, (Stuttgart, 1963).

¹⁸ Jost, "Switzerland", p 271 ; Marc Vuilleumier, "Le Saint-simonisme en Suisse, Economies et Sociétés," *Cahiers de l'ISEA*, Vol. 4, No. 10 (1970), pp 485-534.

¹⁹ Jost, "Switzerland", p 271.

²⁰ Hans Ulrich Jost, "l'historiographie du mouvement ouvrier Suisse," *labour/le travail, Revue d'études ouvrières canadiennes*, No. 37, (Spring 1996), p. 276.

Confirmed by the fact that Switzerland is among the few countries that have already introduced universal [male] suffrage, semi-direct democracy (popular referendum) in the nineteenth century.²¹

In his analysis of visual representation of the worker in Switzerland both before and during the war, Philippe Kaenel concluded that visual representations were “exclusively devoted to the war, leisure and work in the Swiss countryside” and did not feature representations of the worker.²²

It was perhaps most revealing that one of the first visual representations of the worker during the war, in illustrated Swiss periodicals like; *Le Mois Suisse*, *Rivista Illustrate*, *Tribune de Lausanne*, *Die Schweiz*, *Schweizerische illustrierte Zeitschrift*, *Le Patrie Suisse* and *Le Papillon*, was that of the Swiss worker as a striking bank employee. Representations of the worker of course did appear in Swiss photography, which was predominantly engaged in documenting newsworthy events. However, the worker in such visual representations could not be defined as one homogeneous group. Like the plurality of the strike movement it represented:

Protesters photographed in the streets, workers who mobilised themselves in urban spaces were not distinguished from artisans, intellectuals and the bourgeoisie in their groups. The workers therefore contributed to their social indistinctness.²³

However, despite the peculiarities of the Swiss industrial model and what defined its workers, there existed a well-established practice of strikes and industrial protest.²⁴ According to data compiled in the *Historische Statistik der Schweiz*,²⁵ the number of those involved in Swiss strikes steadily increased from 1870 onwards. 1880-1914 saw a total of 2,426 strikes. The number of strikes peaked in 1907, a

²¹ “Confirmée par le fait que la Suisse se trouve parmi les rares pays ayant introduit le suffrage universel, la démocratie semi-direct (le référendum populaire) au 19e siècle déjà.” Ibid. p. 276.

²² “Presque exclusivement consacré à la guerre, aux loisirs ou alors aux travaux de la campagne en Suisse, [...] l'actualité politique et artistique occupe pourtant une place importante, mais on cherchera en vain des représentations d'ouvrier.” Philippe Kaenel, “L'histoire et les images. La figure de l'ouvrier en Suisse”, *Schweizerischen Zeitschrift für Geschichte*, N.1, (SZG, 2004), p. 33.

²³ “Les manifestants photographiés dans les rues, les travailleurs qui se mobilisent dans l'espace urbain ne se distinguent pas des artisans, des intellectuels et des bourgeois dans leur ensemble. Les ouvriers ont donc contribué à leur indistinction sociale.” Ibid. p. 55.

²⁴ Christian Koller, “Streikkultur; La grève depuis le Moyen Âge: 600 ans de conflits du travail en Suisse”, in Ralph Hug and Stefan Keller (eds.) *La grève, ça paie! Les conflits du travail en Suisse depuis la grève générale de 1918*, (Union syndicale Suisse, Bern, 2008), pp 42-51 ; Erich Gruner, *Die Arbeiter in der Schweiz im 19. Jahrhundert: Soziale Lage, Organisation, Verhältnis zu Arbeitgeber und Staat*, (Fancke, Berne, 1968); Hans Hirter, “Die Streiks in der Schweiz in den Jahren 1880-1914: Quantitative Streikanalyse”, in Hans Hirter et al (eds.) *Arbeiterschaft und Wirtschaft in der Schweiz 1880-1914: Soziale Lage, Organisation und Kämpfe von Arbeitern und Unternehmern, politische Organisationen und Sozialpolitik*, Vol. II, (Chronos, Zurich, 1988), pp. 837-1008.

²⁵ Heiner Ritzemann-Blickenstorfer (ed.), *Historische Statistik der Schweiz*, (Chronos, Zurich, 1996), pp.1007-11.

year that witnessed 282 strikes in which 52,777 workers (1.5% of Swiss population) participated.²⁶ Despite established tradition of strike action, in line with the Swiss union sacrée discussed in chapter two, there were no major strikes during the war until the general strike of 1918.

6.3 Development of the Right and Left Wing Opinion

The liberal democratic republican model which existed in Switzerland since 1848 offered the open environment necessary to cultivate a relatively free labour movement. However, this also exposed the public sphere to movements, rhetoric and ideology from outside its borders. The tendency was substantially reinforced by the reliance of Swiss industry on foreign workers and the fact that the main markets for its products were abroad.²⁷ However, the war disrupted Switzerland's access to these transnational markets. The nationalistic divisions of the war undermined the transnational industrial sphere leaving its workers vulnerable to the rise in xenophobia. All three of the main Swiss parties, radical, conservative and socialist, responded with xenophobia and hostility towards immigrants.

For Heinz Meier, the 1918 General Strike in Switzerland was the climax of mounting conflict between the socialism and the political dominance of the radical party.²⁸ Yet the biggest rival to the radical party was not the socialist party but the Christian conservatives whose party held 18% of seats in comparison to 5% of various socialist groups.²⁹ Before and during the war, both conservatives and socialists increased their voter strength. As proportional representation had not been introduced, the political make-up of the general assembly during the war did not reflect this changing reality. The political agendas of both political movements responded to this situation in different ways. While the socialist movement petitioned for constitutional reform and advocated strike action, the Christian conservatives focused on the organisation of oppositional voting alliances which slowed and in some incidences halted the law-making process of the radical party.³⁰

The linguistic divide during early years of the war contributed significantly to the fractious nature of Swiss public opinion. The disillusionment with the radical party's response as the war progressed, undermined public support for the party. Crucially, however, the rise of socialist and conservative politics catered to the emergent needs of splintered public opinion. In fact political opposition in

²⁶ Appendix 2.

²⁷ Christian Koller, "Local Strikes as Transnational Events: Migration, Donations, and Organizational Cooperation in the Context of Strikes in Switzerland (1860-1914)", *Labour History Review*, Vol. 74, No.3, (Liverpool University Press, December, 2009), pp. 305-318.

²⁸ Heinz K. Meier, "The Swiss National General Strike of November 1918" in Hans A. Schmitt (ed.), *Neutral Europe Between War and Revolution 1917-23*, (University Press of Virginia, Charlottesville, 1988), p. 66.

²⁹ Bundesarchiv, Bern, *Bundesversammlung/Assemblée fédérale, Nationalrat/Conseil National, Gewählt für die 21. Amtsperiode 1908-1911* <http://www.amtsdruckschriften.bar.admin.ch/viewOrigDoc.do?id=40001206> [Accessed: 7 October 2013]; Swiss Parliament Online Database, *Datenbank der Ratsmitglieder seit 1848*, <http://www.parlament.ch/d/suche/Seiten/ratsmitglieder.aspx> [Accessed: 7 October 2013]

³⁰ Urs Altermatt, *Katholizismus und Moderne. Zur Sozial- und Mentalitätsgeschichte der Schweizer Katholiken im 19. Und 20. Jahrhundert*, (Benziger, Zürich, 1989), p. 146.

Switzerland was multifaceted in ideology and was driven by a proletarian class who differed from the more homogenous portrait offered within general socialist rhetoric. The lack of proletarian agitation was not unusual where socio-economic stratification differed in definition and was influenced by national context. For economic historian Jean Francois Bergier, the key exception in the Swiss case lay in the development of a variant class-consciousness.³¹ In their study examining social stratification and occupational homogamy in Switzerland before and after the General Strike of 1918, Reto Schumacher and Luigi Lorenzetti's findings indicate that class consciousness and social agitation in Switzerland was regionally determined.³² The decentralised nature and disparate location of Swiss industrial areas made it somewhat difficult to consolidate support nationally for the Swiss socialists before the war. Nevertheless, support for the socialists grew dramatically during the war. For example in Bern 1914, 9% of seats in the *Grossenrat* were socialist and that figure rose to 22% in 1918. Before the war, in the more industrialised city of Zurich, the social democrats represented a sizable minority, holding 38% of seats, in the Zurich parliament. By 1916, the minority became overwhelming majority as the social democrats held 88% of seats. According to Meier,

The dominant bourgeois class and its political parties received a shock that imprinted the general strike on its memories for decades as a national crisis and a moment of grave danger to its values.³³

General historiography of the strike emphasises the influence prominent international socialists, resident in Switzerland, exerted on the Zimmerwald and Kienthal conferences which was key they argue to the development of a minority extreme revolutionary wing within Swiss social democracy.³⁴ Both conferences emphasised socialist opposition to the war but Zimmerwald saw the beginning of the fracture in the coalition between revolutionary and reformist socialists. However, there seems to have been very little interaction with the general Swiss public in relation to either event. For example, while the Kienthal conference was not reported on in the *Gazette de Lausanne*, the Zimmerwald Conference was. However, the first report on the Zimmerwald conference was only reported on ten days after the event had concluded and featured as a small back page article. More importantly, the content and analysis of the articles, rarely presented the conference and its conclusions within a Swiss context. The conferences were presented predominantly as a collection of foreign representatives who happened to hold their conference in Switzerland, due to the tumult which had engulfed their countries abroad. The role of prominent Swiss social democrats like Robert Grimm who had chaired both events, was given a cursory mention. The only mention of Robert Grimm in the Swiss press' initial reports of the Zimmerwald conference was when the Swiss were named as signatories to the subsequent manifesto: "those last ones were M.M., Grimm and Naine".³⁵ Despite

³¹ Jean François Bergier, *Histoire économique de la suisse*, (Payot, Lausanne, 1984), p. 239.

³² Schumacher and Lorenzetti, "We have no proletariat", p. 65.

³³ Meier, "The Swiss National General Strike", p. 66.

³⁴ Steinberg, *Why Switzerland?*, p. 55.

³⁵ "Ces derniers étaient MM. Grimm et Naine", *Gazette de Lausanne*, 19 September 1915, "Discours et déclarations", p. 5.

the fact that the Swiss socialists were well represented at the conferences, the *Gazette de Lausanne*'s first report of the conference was keen to stress that "official French, German and Swiss parties were not invited".³⁶ While it was reported that the Italian socialist party alone took the initiative to call for a further conference:

Whose purpose would not be the creation of a new "international" but rather to rally the proletariat in favour of a common peace, to create a hub of action which would try to bring the working class back to its historic mission.³⁷

Support for the Swiss Social Democratic movement was strong and had increased dramatically during the war, but among the general populace, there seemed to have been little identification with the internationalist movement that leaders like Robert Grimm invoked at conferences like Zimmerwald. The Zimmerwald Conference for example, identified strong support for revolutionary socialism within Switzerland. While both francophone and germanophone communities adopted the rhetoric of the socialist movement, both appeared to have been united in their centrist position and nationalistic rhetoric:

[...] the balance between capital and labour, to share profits with the workers and employees in large companies, for the livelihood of all Swiss comrades, to foster as always a strong commitment to the development and promotion of both public and private welfare institutions.³⁸

Indeed, the police report on the Zimmerwald Conference and the perceived risk of revolutionary socialist agitation in Switzerland, concluded that the risk to and influence on the general Swiss populace was minimal - "We don't attach any great importance to the matter".³⁹ Campaigns to introduce proportional representation, unemployment and pension benefit and banking secrecy were not solely instigated by Swiss socialists. Crucially increased taxation to fund the Swiss military was endorsed unanimously by the Swiss voters.⁴⁰ Thus, it could be concluded that social reform was generally advanced within a national rather than class framework. According to G.D.H. Cole, a strong

³⁶ "Les partis officiels français, allemand et suisse n'avaient pas été invités." Ibid.

³⁷ "Dont le but ne serait nullement la création d'une nouvelle "international", mais plutôt de rassembler les prolétaires dans une action de paix commune, de créer un centre d'action et d'essayer de ramener la classe ouvrière à sa mission historique.", Ibid.

³⁸ "Ausgleich zwischen Kapital und Arbeit, für die Gewinnbeteiligung der Arbeiter und Angestellten in den großen Unternehmungen, für die Existenzsicherung aller Volksgenossen, so wie überhaupt durch ein energisches Eintreten für den Ausbau und die Förderung der staatlichen und privaten Fürsorgeeinrichtungen." *Vaterland*, 8 February 1918.

³⁹ "Wir messen der Angelegenheit keine grosse Bedeutung bei." Bundesarchiv Bern, Documents diplomatiques Suisses (1848-1945), lettre du commandant de la Police cantonale de Berne du 23 septembre 1915, p. 280.

⁴⁰ Office fédéral de la statistique, Neuchâtel, Collection générale, *Encyclopédie statistique de la Suisse* "Votations populaires fédérales 1901-1950: résultats par cantons", 6 June 1915, 94.3% of the Swiss electorate voted in favour for the proposed military tax.

faith in the legislative process defined the Swiss socialists' approach to reform and their rejection of Marxist theory and revolution. At the Second International, "the Swiss made no particularly active or distinctive contribution except when matters of labour legislation were being discussed."⁴¹

6.4 *Überfremdungsdiskurs*⁴² - The Swiss Discourse of Race and the Linguistic Divide

As was outlined in the previous chapters, xenophobia and public calls to restrict immigration increased during the final year of the war. Contrary to current perception, these were not the exclusive preserve of the conservatives but had also crept into the narrative of the Radical and Socialist parties and as well as general public discourse. By 1918 the most common target of such hostility were the *Ostjuden* (Eastern Jews) who according to Patrick Kury's analysis of *Überfremdungsdiskurs* (overforeignisation discourse) during the war acquired a "A double strangeness".⁴³ In a series of lectures given in 1917, engineer and Winterthur resident, Max Koller emphasised this in his social-Darwinian scale of assimilation where the *Ostjuden* was one, "who [had] always lived under very different conditions, [...] It would take them first a long time, if it was even at all possible, to organically attach itself with our [Swiss] National body".⁴⁴

However, mainstream politics had also begun to incorporate the xenophobia which, as the previous chapter has shown, increasingly began to feature in public opinion. For example in their attempts to foster links with the social democrat party, radical party politician and germanophone editor in chief of the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, William Bissegger and Emil Göttisheim, gave lectures in the Zurich town hall on what they saw as the twin issues of "the preservation of our individual Swissness and the strengthening of our nationhood"⁴⁵ and "the foreigner problem – a national question".⁴⁶ Such attitudes were laced with a particular hysteria regarding the perceived threat of foreign influence which reached its zenith following the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia. Despite the fact that the vast majority of Russian revolutionary socialist émigrés had left Switzerland to join the revolution, public opinion became more vocal in its fear of the influence such émigrés might have within Switzerland. Five days after the November revolution, the Federal Department of Justice and Police adopted a resolution to expel all military refugees and deserters engaged in "anarchist and anti-military intrigue".⁴⁷ According

⁴¹ G.D.H Cole, *The Second International, 1889-1914*, Part II, (Macmillan, London, 1967) p. 616.

⁴² Trans. Overforeignisation Discourse

⁴³ "Doppelten Fremdheit."

⁴⁴ Die seit jeher unter ganz anderen Bedingungen lebten, [...] sich erst nach langer Zeit, wenn überhaupt je, unserem Volkskörper organisch anschliessen können. Max Koller, *Das Schweizervolk und die Fremden vom Standpunkt des Heimatschutzes: Vortrag gehalten in der Gruppe Rorschach der N.H.G.*, (Benno Schwabe, Basel 1916), p. 20.

⁴⁵ "Die Erhaltung schweizerischer Eigenart und die Stärkung unseres Volkstums", Walter Bissegger, *Die Erhaltung schweizerischer Eigenart und die Stärkung unseres Volkstums*, public lecture, der Jahrhundertfeier der Schweizerischen Gemeinnützigen Gesellschaft, Zürich, 20th September 1910, in *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Gemeinnützigkeit* (SZG), (1910), p. 325.

⁴⁶ "Das Ausländerproblem: eine nationale Frage."

⁴⁷ "Anarchistischen oder antimilitaristischen Umtrieben." Passim.

to Uriel Gast, despite the fact that most revolutionary socialists had left Switzerland, such a reaction was “symptomatic” of the acute fear of the “socialist menace” which had gripped not only Switzerland but Europe in general.⁴⁸

As the first anniversary of the November revolution loomed, fear of social unrest increasingly concerned fellow neutral states like Denmark and the Netherlands. However, Swiss military intelligence and the Swiss Federal Council anticipated the possibility of a general strike and by August 1918 had begun preparations to quash any social unrest. By June 1918, some members of the workers' movement went on strike in support of a female organisation, which was calling for female suffrage. The strike was abandoned when, according to newspaper reports, a shot was fired from a civilian residence to disperse the crowd.⁴⁹ In line with the *union sacrée* during the war there was no major incidence of Swiss strikes. However, throughout the war, both the state and the military remained alert to the possibility of strike action. Three months before the general strike, the Federal Council, in conjunction with the high command, founded a secret commission, headed by three members of the seven member Federal Council, Eduard Müller (Justice and Police Department), Camille Decoppet (Military Department) and Robert Haab (Post and Railway Department), along with the high command and Attorney General Franz Stämpfli. By the summer of 1918, 692,000 people had been registered as “emergency benefit claimants”,⁵⁰ though this was not the driving factor behind the measures taken by the government and military authorities. The assembled secret commission would be in charge of bringing attention to or alerting provincial governments regarding the appropriate measures they were to take in the event of a nationwide strike or *Landesstreik*. On 16 August 1918, Federal Council and high command discussed preparations to quash a public strike with military force, which it was stressed should only be used “if it came to an extreme emergency”.⁵¹ The beginning of this phase of social unrest began in Zurich when bank employees decided to strike between 30 September and 1 October 1918.

6.5 Who was the Swiss Worker?

According to Philippe Kaenel's analysis of visual representations of the “Swiss worker” in Swiss illustrated periodicals during the war, representations of the “worker” generally did not feature in the

⁴⁸ Uriel Gast, *Von der Kontrolle zur Abwehr: Die eidgenössische Fremdenpolizei im Spannungsfeld von Politik und Wirtschaft 1915-1933*, (Chronos Verlag, Zürich, 1998), p.33, Robert Gerwarth and John Home, “Bolshevism as Fantasy: Fear of Revolution and Counter-Revolutionary Violence, 1917-23”, in *War in Peace: Paramilitary Violence in Europe after the Great War*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2012).

⁴⁹ “Des troubles à Zurich”, *Gazette de Lausanne*, 15 June 1918, p. 4.

⁵⁰ “Notstandsberechtigte” Hans von Greyerz, “Der Bundesstaat seit 1848”, in *Handbuch der Schweizer Geschichte*, (Berichthaus, Zurich, 1972/77), Vol. 2, p. 1134.

⁵¹ “Äußersten Notfall – zur Geltung gekommen waren”, René Zeller, *Ruhe und Ordnung in der Schweiz: die Organisation des militärischen Ordnungsdienstes von 1848 bis 1939*, (Stämpfli, Bern, 1990), p. 59; Willi Gautschi, *Der Landesstreik 1918*, (Benziger, Zurich, 1968), p. 198.

mainstream press. *La Patrie suisse*, generally regarded as a neutral mainstream publication,⁵² and a minor periodical *Le Papillon* were the first illustrated periodicals to depict the “worker”. One of their earlier representations of the Swiss worker was, however, “Zurich bank employees”.⁵³ On 30 September 1918, the trade union of Zurich based credit establishments decided with 706 votes for, 29 against and 18 abstentions to go on strike in favour of increased salaries, official recognition of the trade union and increased integration of cantonal banks and credit institutions.⁵⁴ Inflation had increased dramatically as a result of the war, however, and as was outlined in chapter three’s analysis of Swiss economic development, the economic outlook was more complex than senior government officials and the general public assumed.⁵⁵ While a supposed scarcity of imports may have demanded increased money supply to pay for what had increased in price, chapter three of the thesis argued that the rapid increase in money supply was a more significant contributor to inflation. There are two key pieces of evidence which support this argument. First, unlike the French and Germans, the Swiss never appeared to have lost confidence in the value of their currency.⁵⁶ Second, evidence of an increased money supply was further verified by the ability of the government body, *Schweizerische Finanzgesellschaft*, to provide loans for importers which enabled them to finance their imports on credit.⁵⁷ While Swiss exports abroad increased dramatically during the war, it was foreign direct investment that accounted for the deficit in the balance of trade.⁵⁸ This adds further weight to the argument that inflation was due to increased monetary supply and growth within Switzerland. However, this did not mean that many citizens did not suffer as a result of inflation. The financial hardship inflicted on the lower rural and urban wage earners, however, had less to do with inflation and more to do with state and military measures. The average individual Swiss soldier served for a total of between 500 and 600 days over the course of the war and received no compensation for work lost, thus causing much hardship for Swiss families.

6.6 The General Strike

By the end of the war Zurich had become the epicentre of what had emerged as an international holding company industry.⁵⁹ Unlike other workers and civil servants, Zurich banking staff were better informed of the phenomenal growth within the Zurich banking sector which had developed during the

⁵² Historisches Lexikon der Schweiz (HLS), (Schwabe AG, Basel, 2002-) <http://www.hls-dhs-dss.ch/textes/f/F44888.php> [Accessed: 7 October 2013]

⁵³ “Des employés de banque de Zurich”, in Kaenel, “L’histoire et les images.”, p. 33.

⁵⁴ *Gazette de Lausanne*, 1st October 1918, “Grève d’employés de banque”, p. 2.

⁵⁵ See Chapter Five, Appendix 4. Swiss GDP 1913-1919.

⁵⁶ Bauer and Blackman, *Swiss Banking*, (1998), p. 188.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* p. 185.

⁵⁹ Youssef Cassis, *Capitals of Capital – The Rise and Fall of International Financial Centres 1780-2009*, (Cambridge University Press, New York, 2010), p. 127, Walter Adolf Jöhr, *Schweizerische Kreditanstalt (1856-1956)*, (Privat, Zürich, 1956), p. 532, Hans Bauer, *Société de Banque Suisse (1872-1972)*, (Société de Banque Suisse, Basel, 1972), p. 441.

war. It would appear logical, therefore, that they would have been the first sector to call for a general strike. Though it was not commented upon in press, the strikers' demands for increased cooperation between credit institutions, holding companies, and general banks, showed their awareness of where the real growth within the sector had occurred, in the Zurich based holding companies. What the francophone and germanophone press did examine was how atypical it was for banking staff to use the language of class conflict: "It is worthy of note that the bank workers are a sort of aristocracy among workers in general; "for the first time an association of workers has adopted the methods of class struggle."⁶⁰ Nevertheless, the *Gazette de Lausanne* and *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* both argued that "the leaders of the socialist movement would be happy to open the ranks of the Red Guard to these new recruits".⁶¹

Within twenty-four hours, the Federal Council responded to the strikers, agreeing to all their demands. This is further evidence, perhaps, of the power and influence the banking sector exerted on the stability of the state. The *Gazette de Lausanne* alluded to the power of the financial sector as it assessed the government's swift and positive response:

Two interpretations have been put forward regarding the subject of the strike of banking staff and the attitude the government is prepared to take to prevent the damage resulting from this strike.⁶²

The Swiss government put pressure on the key banks to implement the demands as soon as possible. The majority of Zurich banks complied and the banking staff's salary was doubled. The reaction of the military authorities however, reflected the paranoia which had gripped areas of the Swiss military and government as well as the rather atypical interpretation of what was deemed to be a revolutionary socialist. Chief of General Staff Theophil von Sprecher declared:

What has happened 1 October in Zurich is no more and no less than the capitulation of bourgeois government to the revolutionary mass. Whether the bank employees were right to strike or not is absolutely no concern of the army. We do not hinder those who want to strike, but lawful order under the control of the troops may not be toppled. Not even for one day. ⁶³

⁶⁰ "Il est à remarquer que les employés de banque sont parmi les employés en général une sorte d'aristocratie [...] pour la première fois, une association d'employés a adopté les méthodes de la lutte de classes." *Gazette de Lausanne*, 11 October 1918, "Une grève symptomatique".

⁶¹ "Les chefs du mouvement socialiste [...] seraient heureux d'ouvrir les rangs de la Garde Rouge à ces recrues." Ibid.

⁶² "Deux interpellations ont été déposées au sujet de la grève du personnel des banques et les mesures et l'attitude que le gouvernement compte prendre pour prévenir les dommages résultant de cette grève." *Gazette de Lausanne*, 2 October 1918, "Les grands conseils".

⁶³ Paul Schmid-Amann, *Die Wahrheit über den Generalstreik von 1918. Seine Ursachen, sein Verlauf, seine Folgen*, (Morgarten, Zurich, 1968), p. 186.

While reporting on the Zurich banking strike was widespread across both germanophone and francophone Switzerland, foreign commentators residing in Switzerland tended not to comment on it. This was probably due to the fact that the majority of foreign Swiss residents were less concerned with Swiss internal affairs than external events - the collapse of the Central Powers and rumours of armistice. Romain Rolland, for example, did not mention the banking strike in his war diaries; however, during October 1918 his commentary on Swiss affairs, though limited, highlighted the escalating fear of Bolshevik revolution, which had gripped the general public as well as the Swiss authorities. For Rolland, the terror was similar to that in Germany and France but in acknowledgement of the peculiarities of the Swiss narrative of class, he warned that the Swiss were "the most reactionary of the entire European bourgeoisie".⁶⁴

Following the strike, the Swiss military developed counter-measures to quash any further unrest.⁶⁵ Such paranoia within the high command, the government and public opinion allowed increased acceptance of the military's inflated wartime role. The publication by the moderate Social Democrats of a proclamation which stated that "the approaching revolution is reddening the sky over Central Europe", in the *Volksrecht* newspaper, did little to calm mounting fear.⁶⁶ On 31 October, during the banking strike, the Zurich cantonal government urged the Federal Council to call for increased mobilisation⁶⁷. This threatened to award powers to the military which would have greatly undermined cantonal autonomy and thus Swiss democracy itself. General Ulrich Wille twice requested the authority to intervene with extended powers of arrest which would not require prior approval of the canton's government.⁶⁸ However, as was explained in the first chapter, Ulrich Wille was never well liked by either the francophone public or francophone delegates. His showy antics and professed affinity for Germany during the war had also diminished support for him among some germanophone delegates. On 4 November 1918, following the rejection of his second appeal, Ulrich Wille moderated his original position and called for increased deployment instead.⁶⁹

Swiss stability relied on the balance of two strong neighbouring powers. The news of the disintegration of the central powers heightened the general assessment that Switzerland faced the biggest threat to national security since the outbreak of the war. Pressure on the Federal Council to acquiesce to the military's demands increased with mounting pressure from the Italian and French governments abroad. In the minutes of the Federal Council meeting, 4 November, it was revealed that the French embassy in Bern had threatened to close France's border with Switzerland, if they did not

⁶⁴ "La plus réactionnaire des bourgeoisies d'Europe" Romain Rolland, *Journal des années de guerre, 1914-1919*, Cahier XXVI, (Éditions Albin Michel, Paris, 1952), p. 1627.

⁶⁵ Bundesarchiv, Bern. E2813#1000/724#8 (1918), Army Staff, *Instructions for the Chiefs of Staff of the Divisions and Army Corps*, Bern, 1 November 1918.

⁶⁶ *Volksrecht* 31 October 1918.

⁶⁷ Bundesarchiv, Bern, E2813#1000/724#8 (1918), *Council President Gustav Keller to President Calonder*, 31 October, 1918.

⁶⁸ Ibid, *Wille to Calonder*, 1 November 1918 and *Minutes of the Meeting of the Federal Council* 1 November 1918

⁶⁹ Ibid, *Wille to Federal Councilor Camille Decoppet*, 4 November 1918.

do more to quash and control revolutionary activity.⁷⁰ Woodrow Wilson and American secretary of state Robert Lansing viewed Switzerland as potentially volatile, complaining that Switzerland had become "saturated with every poisonous element", "the headquarters of Bolsheviks and other revolutionaries."⁷¹ While Romain Rolland, during July, October and November 1918, wrote of fears of the growing force of America and the Americanisation of France⁷², rumours were rife in Bern that the American Expeditionary Force was poised to invade Switzerland.⁷³

On 5 November 1918, the Federal Council compromised and ordered the mobilization of two infantry regiments and two cavalry brigades from Luzern and Thurgau to maintain peace and order in the city of Zurich.⁷⁴ The following day a further four additional units were mobilised. Labour organisations, based in Zurich, publicly accused the government and military of collusion in having conspired to establish military dictatorship in Switzerland and cited the mobilisation of the troops as a provocation of the working class. The actions of the Federal Council and Swiss military took the Social Democrats by surprise. The Olten Action Committee of which Social Democrat and government minister, Robert Grimm, was a founding member, had been engaged in negotiations with the Federal Council regarding Social Democrat proposals for political and economic reform (proportional representation and increased banking regulation). Sufficient concessions, reform regarding the distribution of parliamentary seats and pension and welfare introduction and reform had been promised and begun to be implemented. In return the Social Democrats and umbrella Socialist representatives - the Olten Action Committee - held to its promise not to engage in or plan for strike action.

On 7 November, a meeting was hastily convened in Bern to discuss the Olten Committee's response to the Federal Council's call for mobilisation. The meeting proposed a 24-hour strike, in nineteen Swiss industrial centres, against what was referred to as the authorities' "provocation."⁷⁵ Although geographically limited, the strike was presented as a warning to the federal authorities, that the committee would sanction a more widespread general strike.⁷⁶ Perhaps in an attempt to reason with the authorities the committee ordered the limited strike for the half-work day of Saturday, 9 November. However, despite the committee's display of unity, both of the chosen francophone industrial centres; Lausanne and Geneva, refused to participate citing insufficient time to prepare for such a strike.⁷⁷

⁷⁰ Ibid, Minutes of the meeting of the Federal Council, 4 November 1918.

⁷¹ Heinz K. Meier, *Friendship under stress: U.S. – Swiss relations 1900-1950*, (Herbert Lang & Co., Bern, 1970), pp 106-7.

⁷² Rolland, *Journal des années de guerre 1914-1919*, p. 1952, p. 1493 (June 1918), p. 1515 (1st July 1918), p. 1633, p. 1645 (October - November 1918).

⁷³ Hans Beat Kunz, *Weltrevolution und Völkerbund: Die schweizerische Aussenpolitik unter dem Eindruck der bolschewistischen Bedrohung 1918-1923*, (Stämpfli Verlag, Bern, 1981), pp. 65-66.

⁷⁴ Bundesarchiv, Bern, E2813#1000/724#8 (1918), *Minutes of the meeting of the Federal Council 6th November 1918*; *Appeal of the Federal council 17 November 1918 to the Swiss people*.

⁷⁵ Ibid, *Minutes of the 21st meeting of the Olten Action Committee*, 7 November, 1918.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid, *United Union Leaders Biel to the Olten Action Committee*, 8 November 1918.

Perhaps it had more to do with the fact that the jubilant atmosphere in Geneva, as it waited for announcement of the armistice, undercut the necessary anger needed to engage in strike action. Romain Rolland's account of the local francophone reaction suggested increased vigilance despite the celebratory atmosphere which prevailed:

In a sort of paradoxical spectacle; on the road, the French interned soldiers going arm in arm, wrapped in tricolour sashes, singing and shouting, zigzagging across the pavement and the armed peasants, workers and Swiss employers and the women carrying their husband's weapons.⁷⁸

The Olten Committee's supposed authority had thus been questioned by both linguistic communities. While its orders were refused in Geneva, in Zurich, where Swiss troops had begun to be deployed en masse, labour and party leaders saw the Olten Committee as too cautious. Already news of the concentration of Swiss troops in Zurich had reached the wider public. According to Romain Rolland's diary entry on 8 November, news of the deployment was widespread but largely greeted as unexpected. The focus of the mobilisation was clearly Zurich: "Suddenly on 7 November, the general mobilisation of the entire Swiss cavalry. From Bern and Luzern the troops mass on Zurich".⁷⁹

Helmeted cavalry had already been deployed on the main street, *Bahnhofstrasse*⁸⁰, in Zurich. Heavy machine gun nests were stationed near the main train station. Further units were assigned to Zurich's financial headquarters, *Paradeplatz*. The mounting military presence around such sites of previous strikes added to the sense of tension and perception of a state of siege. There seemed to have been considerable confusion and miscommunication within the socialist movement itself. On Sunday, 10 November, in addition to the extended strike by workers' unions, a small number of Zurich based socialists planned to strike to commemorate the Bolshevik Revolution. While neither Bolshevik affiliation nor incitement to revolution was a declared aim or a defining ideology of the strikers, both loomed large in the mind of the government and military authorities. The proposed commemoration of the Bolshevik revolution, however minor, contributed nonetheless to the legitimisation of the government and military line. As Romain Rolland commented, on 8 November, "one talks of an imminent Bolshevik revolution in Switzerland".⁸¹ The loose grouping of Zurich workers' unions declared a "state of siege" in their city and decided to revoke the Olten Committee's instructions and

⁷⁸ "En sorte qu'on a ce spectacle, paradoxal: sur les chemins, les soldats français, internés, qui vont bras dessus, bras dessous, enroulés dans des écharpes tricolores, chantent, crient, zigzaguent en travers du trottoir, et les paysans, ouvriers, employés suisses, qui s'arment, des femmes qui portent le fusil de leur homme..." , Rolland, *Journal des années de guerre*, p.1644.

⁷⁹ "Le 7 novembre, subitement, mobilisation générale de toute la cavalerie Suisse. De Berne, de Lucerne, les troupes se massent à Zurich." Ibid. 8 November 1918, p. 1639.

⁸⁰ Trans. Train station street.

⁸¹ "On parle d'une revolution bolcheviste imminente en Suisse." Ibid, p. 1639.

continue their strike beyond the 24-hour deadline, until the troops withdrew from the city.⁸² Despite being referred to in the francophone press as “the socialist capital of Switzerland”,⁸³ Bern’s strike movement appeared rather casual. According to the *Gazette de Lausanne*’s Berne correspondent “the strikers exerted the manner of perfect calmness”. Indeed the striking restaurant staff reportedly returned to reopen their restaurants during the main meal of the day.⁸⁴ While there was an increased military presence at *le palais fédérale*, there seemed to have been little of the tension exhibited in Zurich. Single soldiers and officers reportedly mingled with the crowd in a successful attempt to defuse tension.⁸⁵

6.7 Francophone and Germanophone Reaction

While no newspapers were issued during the strike the *L’agence télégraphique Suisse* posted key news updates on billboards around the capital.⁸⁶ Around 3pm, news reached Bern of the abdication of Wilhelm II. In response, the francophone battalion from Fribourg conducted what appeared to have been an impromptu parade and marched into the town – “drums beating”.⁸⁷ The crowd of both strikers and spectators welcomed the battalion according to the francophone newspaper; “with the kind of passivity and apathy which makes the neutrality of our fellow confederates predestined”.⁸⁸ The francophone press responded in a sarcastic assessment of the government and military’s motives and actions – the *Gazette de Lausanne* headline read: “the Zurich state council pretends to deliver Switzerland from the Soviets”.⁸⁹ The level of criticism and sarcastic tone in the francophone press during the final days of the war contrasted with the more cautious and often hesitant tone of analysis which was established shortly after the heated francophone response to the invasion of Belgium 1914. This suggested that the approaching armistice induced a relaxation of the Swiss *Burgfrieden* mentality. While the divergent reaction to the armistice highlighted the divisions which had developed during the war, during the final weeks of the war there was a small but growing attempt within the germanophone press to readdress their initial reaction to the beginning of the war. For example the conservative germanophone newspaper *Ostschweiz* in October 1918 offered an attempt to re-examine their initial reaction to the invasion of Belgium. The article was quoted and commented upon in the francophone media and examined within the context of a certain triumphalist in tone. Following

⁸² “Broadside of the Workers Union to the Workers of Zurich”, Willi Gautschi, *Dokumente zum Landesstreik 1918*, (Benziger, 1971), Doc. No. 88, pp. 234-35.

⁸³ “La capital socialiste de la Suisse” *Gazette de Lausanne* 10 November 1918, “La grève générale à Berne”, p. 1.

⁸⁴ “Les grévistes ont eu une attitude parfaitement calme”, *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ “Tambour battant” *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ “Avec cette passivité et cette apathie qui font de nos confédérés des neutres predestinés.” *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ “Le Conseil d’Etat de Zurich prétend livrer la Suisse aux Soviets.” *Gazette de Lausanne*, 11 November 1918, “le Conseil d’Etat de Zurich prétend livrer la Suisse aux Soviets”, p. 4.

the introduction which contained extensive quotes from the *Ostschweiz* article the *Gazette de Lausanne*'s front page article declared

This is what the francophone press has consistently said for four years. So for us it is particularly sweet to see the number of our fellow confederates which acknowledge the obvious, increase day by day.⁹⁰

The germanophone *Ostschweiz* article had argued that the influence of German propaganda had been a significant factor in the lack of empathy exhibited by certain Swiss citizens in relation to Belgium. However, the article stressed that though the rumours of the franc-tireurs were most likely a myth, even if they had existed this should not have swayed Swiss public opinion against their fellow neutral Belgians as "we Swiss can well understand this as a form of legitimate defence. [...] the Belgian question is also a Swiss question."⁹¹ In their assessment of the key events of the war both the germanophone and francophone articles seem to have been united in their assessment of who the main victims were. For this emergent unified Swiss response, the civilian "innocent people"⁹² not the soldiers were the main victims. Viewed within this context there was therefore one overriding perpetrator: "Belgians repeatedly told me in despair: "What have we done to Germany to deserve such a fate?" Germany will never answer this question".⁹³

The *Gazette de Lausanne* concluded with a wry observation:

The entrance of this francophone battalion sent to maintain order in Bern was a poignant, instructive flashback to what had happened previously. It was reported, March 1916, that the high command was preparing special trains to pour into francophone Switzerland the day after the trial of the colonels, who were from germanophone battalions. Today, as it was then, it is the francophone cantons of Switzerland which are the true bulwark of order and democracy, but this of course is something that our fellow confederates would never admit.⁹⁴

The *Gazette de Lausanne*'s comment here reflected the general Swiss experience of the war by proxy. The military parades, impromptu or otherwise from the 9 to the 13, appear as the final act in an

⁹⁰ "C'est ce que la presse romande n'a cessé de répéter sur tous les tons depuis quatre ans. Aussi nous est-il particulièrement doux de voir s'accroître de jour en jour le nombre de nos confédérés qui se rendent à l'évidence.", *Gazette de Lausanne*, 3 October 1918, "La question belge est une question Suisse", p. 1.

⁹¹ "Nous autres Suisses pouvons fort bien comprendre cette légitime défense. [...] la question belge est aussi une question Suisse", Ibid.

⁹² "Peuple innocent" Ibid.

⁹³ "Maintes fois des Belges m'ont dit dans leur désespoir: "Qu'avons-nous fait à l'Allemagne pour mériter un sort pareil?" Jamais L'Allemagne ne pourra répondre à cette question. " Ibid.

⁹⁴ "L'entrée de ce bataillon romand envoyé pour maintenir l'ordre à Berne prêtait à un piquant et instructif retour en arrière : On se reportait en mars 1916, alors que l'état-major préparait des trains spéciaux pour déverser sur la Suisse française au lendemain du procès des colonels des bataillons alémaniques. Aujourd'hui comme alors, ce sont les cantons romands qui constituent en Suisse le véritable rempart de l'ordre et de la démocratie ; mais certains de nos confédérés ne voudront jamais l'admettre. ", Ibid.

elaborate proxy theatre of war, the surreal nature of which reached its height during the final days of the war and the beginning of the armistice. On 12 November, the *Gazette de Lausanne* reported how the whole town greeted the armistice as “the triumph of good over evil” and that the *Suisse Romande* could be “proud of itself”, vindicated as result of victory of France and can now declare itself “the patriotic guardian of Swiss morals”. The front page article expressed its “gratitude to all people who poured their blood for the liberation of the world but especially France who though in mourning, shines more resplendent than ever”.⁹⁵ The end of the war overshadowed the general strike and reaffirmed the linguistic division.

6.8 Public Opinion Regarding the Strike

Lists of Swiss soldiers who died from accident or illness while in “active service” were regularly published in both the germanophone and francophone newspapers throughout the war but the occasional death of a Swiss soldier in the line of duty became worryingly frequent during the final months of the war, as the influenza pandemic affected Switzerland.⁹⁶ While the vast majority of influenza deaths were foreign interned soldiers, of the 742 Swiss nurses in the service of the Swiss Red Cross, 63 died as a result of influenza.⁹⁷ The military schools were particularly affected. According to new figures provided by Walter Nussbaum, between 1918 and 1919, 1,895 mobilised Swiss soldiers died as a result of influenza, 926 in November 1918.⁹⁸ These deaths (about 1% of the average mobilised between 1914 and 1918) added a whisper of authenticity to the Swiss war experience and contributed to the escalating impatience of the general public for the war to end and their men to return home. The Swiss socialist movement appears to have been out of step with public opinion. By the end of the war, demobilisation relativized the strike. The extent of the movement’s lack of awareness can be seen in a commonly held interpretation of the strikes which emerged in francophone Switzerland. When describing the troop deployments and the disappointment of the Swiss public, who had been eagerly preparing for the return of their men to civilian life, one reporter described the attitude of the general public towards the strike organisers:

⁹⁵ “La gardienne du patrimoine moral de la Suisse” dont la pure figure brille d’un éclat plus resplendissant que jamais, *Gazette de Lausanne*, 12 November 1918, p. 1.

⁹⁶ Appendix 3 ; *Gazette de Lausanne*, 3 October 1918, “Chronique militaire – Décès”, p. 2

⁹⁷ Jean-Jacques Langendorf and Pierre Streit, *Face à la Guerre: L’armée et le peuple suisses 1914-1918/1939-1945*, (Infolio éditions, Gollion, 2007), p. 119.

⁹⁸ Walter Nussbaum, “Die Grippe-Epidemie 1918/1919 in der schweizerischen Armee” in *Gesnerus. Vierteljahrsschrift für Geschichte der Medizin und der Naturwissenschaften*, (Verlag Sauerländer, Aarau, 1982), Vol. 39, Heft 2, pp. 243-259.

These troops will, hopefully have the opportunity to make their views known on the dictatorial conduct of the Olten Committee which has forced these soldiers to undertake additional service.⁹⁹

For the general Swiss public the real workers, who had spent four years of unpaid service to the state, were the Swiss soldiers. The Swiss media confirmed that it was their sacrifice, the loss of income and man-power, which had imposed the greatest hardship on the rural and industrial Swiss home front. In not recognising this, the Swiss strike organisers, it would seem, had unwittingly dismissed Swiss public support for their movement before it had even begun. Comparison with two other small neutral countries (Denmark and the Netherlands) facing similar industrial unrest and class politics at the end of the war is instructive, since there was a lack of public support for strike action. While the germanophone socialist movement supported the strike, the public response, particularly francophone, matched the indifference found in the Netherlands and Denmark.

Similar to their Swiss counterparts, the Danish authorities were fearful of infiltration by foreign revolutions which increasingly had come to surround its borders, yet they appeared to have been more aware of general public opinion in relation to their mobilised forces. Unlike Switzerland, which remobilized its troops despite public impatience to have their men returned, Danish authorities suddenly reversed their plans mid-mobilisation and sent their soldiers home. According to Erik Rasmussen's account of the origins of the Danish welfare state, "The officers were afraid that revolutionary feelings would take control of the men".¹⁰⁰ By contrast, the Dutch authorities like the Swiss persisted in using military measures against a perceived threat of revolutionary politics. In the Dutch case, the official decision 23 October, to cancel leave for all military personnel nation-wide was met with one of the most serious incidences of insubordination and unrest the Dutch military had seen. According to Maartje Abbenhuis, the Harskamp riots in one of the largest isolated barracks in the country "presented a serious case of widespread insubordination and violence to the bemused authorities."¹⁰¹ Mutinies increased as news of the Kiel mutiny became increasing topic of interest between 29 October and 3 November. According to the memoirs of a Dutch conscript; "All the bottled-up suffering, all the un-communicated grievances [...] broke lose all of a sudden in places where they had flourished".¹⁰² Despite similar grievances regarding the length of deployment, lack of remuneration for work lost, and the francophone public's intense dislike of the Ulrich Wille's germanophone high command, the Swiss did not break or challenge discipline. As the wider Swiss public became increasingly vocal in their exasperation, unlike the Dutch public, which blamed their

⁹⁹ Ces troupes auront, souhaitons-le, eu le loisir de faire leurs réflexions sur les menées dictatoriales du comité du Olten qui les obligent à faire ce service supplémentaire. *Gazette de Lausanne*, 10 November 1918 "La grève générale à Berne", p. 1.

¹⁰⁰ Erik Rasmussen, *Velfærdsstaten på Vej*, (Politikens Danmarks Historie, Copenhagen, 1965), Vol. 13, p. 184.

¹⁰¹ Maartje Abbenhuis, *The Art of Staying Neutral: The Netherlands in the First World War, 1914-1918*, (Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, 2006), p. 239.

¹⁰² A. M. de Jong, *Frank van Wezels Roemruchte Jaren. Militaire roman*. (Nederlandse Boekenclub, The Hague, 1928), p. 415.

government and military, the Swiss public began to target their criticisms at the Socialist movement which they blamed for the hardship inflicted by re-mobilisation.¹⁰³ The difference between Dutch and Swiss opinion in this regard was significant as even in the Dutch Socialist Movement the majority, particularly the Dutch Social Democrats, recognised the lack of public enthusiasm for a strike and disagreed with Troelstra's calls for revolution.¹⁰⁴ In Switzerland, reaction for and against the socialist movement ultimately transcended the linguistic divide and that in itself was arguably its most significant contribution to post-war Switzerland. Vuilleumier constructed his analysis around the key question to what extent was the general strike "an accident due to external causes or a manifestation of a deeper crisis?"¹⁰⁵ Vuilleumier interpreted this "profound crisis" in terms of a supposed gulf which had developed between the working and upper classes. However, analysis of social structure revealed that such a significant gulf of opinion did not exist. The divisions which emerged during this period were not class based but linguistic in definition, and they had their origins in the contrasting reactions of both linguistic communities to the outbreak of the war.

6.9 Federal and Military Response

General Ulrich Wille ordered Division Commander Colonel Emil Sonderegger to maintain order in Zurich, stationing troops both in the city centre and around the outskirts. Sonderegger warned the Zurich public not to engage in demonstrations of any kind. Nevertheless, on Sunday, 10 of November a crowd gathered at the central Zurich meeting point of the Fraumünsterplatz. Colonel Sonderegger ordered his troops to disperse the crowd and in the ensuing melee four civilians were wounded and one soldier was killed. The crowd regrouped a considerable distance away at a place called Milchbuck which lay on the outskirts of the city at the foothills of the Zurich Uetliberg. However, the heavy handed approach of the Swiss military stationed in Zurich, pushed the Olten Action Committee to abandon its attempts to negotiate and call for further action. The heavy military response in Zurich had taken the committee by surprise. A hurried meeting was called by the Committee for Sunday 10 November. No minutes were taken but it was reported that the meeting was turbulent and continued into the night. It was in this pressurized atmosphere that the Committee drafted its proclamation "To the working people [of Switzerland]"¹⁰⁶ and decided to call a national general strike. The proclamation featured eight key demands, the most significant of which was electoral reform – the introduction of proportional representation and the subsequent re-election of the National Council. The others included female suffrage, a 48 hour working week in both public and private enterprise, the reorganisation of the army as a people's army, guaranteed food supplies in cooperation with farmers,

¹⁰³ *Gazette de Lausanne*, 10 November 1918, "La grève générale à Berne", p. 1.

¹⁰⁴ B.B. van Dongen, "De SDAP, de Eerste Wereldoorlog en de vredesbeweging in de SDAP", *Socialisme en Democratie*, (July/Aug. 1982), 39, no. 7/8, p. 351.

¹⁰⁵ "D'un accident dû à des causes externes ou de la manifestation d'une crise profonde?" Marc Vuilleumier, "Le mouvement ouvrier en Suisse", p. 97.

¹⁰⁶ "an das arbeitende Volk"

old-age and disability insurance, state monopolies for import and export and the payment of all government debts by the "propertied class".¹⁰⁷

The Federal Council's response was immediate and firm. It refused the strikers' demands yet it did not deviate from the rule of law and increase the military powers, despite intense pressure to do so, both from the military and from governments abroad. In its own proclamation, addressed to the people of Switzerland, the Federal Council declared they had no choice but to reject the demands of the Action Committee but were ultimately willing to entertain the demands for social and political change which were proposed.¹⁰⁸ The Olten Committee's ultimatum had given the federal council under 24-hours to implement a series of complex reforms and the Federal Council pointed out reasonably enough, that such dramatic reforms would be contrary to the democratic process by violating the existing political and legal procedures.¹⁰⁹ Unlike other European states, Swiss voters had a long tradition of voting on political, economic and social reform. It was in this way that protective measures for factory workers had been introduced in the nineteenth century. Despite the Burgfrieden mentality such referenda on political and social reform continued throughout the war. The process was slow but enjoyed legitimacy.

Faced with this ultimatum, the clear division within the Swiss socialist movement and the waning authority of the Olten Committee it seemed likely that the strike would remain confined to the city centres of Zurich, Bern and Basel. Within this context the committee focused its correspondence for Monday 11 November, on the one group which had the potential to turn this Zurich based protest into a national strike – the Swiss public transport unions. Special appeals were sent to railway road workers and unions which urged them to join the strike in an act of solidarity.¹¹⁰ The majority of workers relied on Switzerland's highly developed rail network in particular to come to work each day. If this was shut down the majority of workers would become inadvertent strikers. The Federal government saw ploy as extremely provocative and undemocratic and issued a further announcement to the general public which reiterated its position that the strike movement had violated existing political and legal procedures and that reform as result of threats and violence was undemocratic, leaving government with little option but to declare that all public transport workers would now be subject to Swiss military law. The announcement also urged Swiss citizens to rally to the defence of the fatherland by supporting the government's response.¹¹¹ Following this, the Federal Council

¹⁰⁷ Bundesarchiv, Bern, E2813#1000/724#8 (1918), *Olten Action Committee*, 11th November 1918.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, *Proclamation by the Federal Council to the People of Switzerland* 11th November 1918.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, *Leaders of the cartel of the united railroad personnel organisations to the Railroad workers of all categories*, 11 November 1918.

¹¹¹ Ibid, *Public announcement concerning the measures against the threat to and disruption of the domestic security of the Swiss Confederation*, Bern, 11 November 1918.

ordered the renewed call up of 110,000 Swiss men. This amounted to one third of the total strength of the Swiss army.¹¹²

The proposed general strike scheduled for Tuesday, 12 November, passed without incident. Zurich and Basel saw relatively enthusiastic support for it and in most industrial areas of northern and eastern Switzerland work stopped and the rail network was crippled. On the morning of the strike the Federal Assembly were called to a special session in Bern. The Olten committee's plan to paralyse the railway network was not a nationwide success. While in eastern Switzerland around Zurich the rail network came to a halt, only a handful of delegates required military transport to attend the session. When the Council ordered the expulsion of Jan Berzin's Soviet mission in Switzerland, the thirty-three mission employees were escorted through eastern Switzerland to the German border via military transport, with just a few hours' notice. The vast majority of rail tracks remained open as most Swiss railroad workers defied their union leaders and continued to work. This was especially the case in francophone Switzerland for two reasons.¹¹³ First, francophone Switzerland was particularly critical of Robert Grimm who was often referred to by its media as dictatorial. Second, the mood of jubilation particularly in the francophone industrial heartlands of Lausanne and Geneva meant that the francophone Swiss were preoccupied with celebrating privately or publicly the defeat of Germany and the Central Powers. The president of the Pan-German league and right-wing German politician, Heinrich Claß, wrote of his "resentment" and "shock" at what he described as the widespread rejoicing in Switzerland following the defeat of the German army.¹¹⁴ Francophone press reaction to the armistice was intertwined with its rejection of the strike movement. A prime example of this was the *Gazette de Lausanne*'s announcement of the armistice and allied victory - "the supreme manifestation of justice" - while in the second half of the article it described the Olten Committee and the strike movement as "the menacing shadow [which] hangs over our happiness". The article described the francophone community as being vindicated in allied victory and how "armed in pride and [new found] energy" they would seek to protect their interpretation of Switzerland once again from germanophone "arrogance": "Spontaneously, in Lausanne, Geneva, Neuchâtel, numerous [Swiss] patriots gathered to organise civic resistance [to the strike movement]".¹¹⁵ Despite the differing levels of xenophobia expressed during the war in Geneva and Zurich, the proposed civic resistance groups represented a shift to the right, which initially may have transcended the linguistic divide. However, unlike the germanophone civic guards, the francophone civic guard were disbanded after November 1918 while their germanophone counterparts (Christenwehr in St. Gallen and Kreuzwehr in Zurich) adopted an

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Constant Frey, *La grève générale de 1918. Légendes et réalités*, (Ed. Générales, Geneva, 1969).

¹¹⁴ Bundesarchiv Koblenz, *Nachlass Heinrich Claß*, Heinrich Claß, *Wider den Strom*, unpublished second volume of Claß's memoirs, pp. 589-90.

¹¹⁵ "Une manifestation souveraine de la justice", "une ombre menaçante plane sur notre bonheur", "Armons-nous de fierté et d'énergie", "orgueil", "Spontanément, à Lausanne, à Genève, à Neuchâtel, des patriotes nombreux se sont groupés pour organiser la résistance civique." *Gazette de Lausanne*, 12 November 1918.

increasingly militaristic image.¹¹⁶ Though not defined by the physical violence of some of their European counterparts,¹¹⁷ these, predominantly germanophone paramilitary groups would become a thuggish feature of inter-war Swiss public life and rightwing xenophobic politics. Like the Swiss experience of the war by proxy, the existence of such paramilitary groups suggests a proxy experience of the “brutalization of post-war society” described by Robert Gerwarth and John Horne.

While the linguistic division between both francophone and germanophone socialists diluted the potency of the planned strike action, internal division among germanophone socialists further weakened the movement. One of the starkest examples of this lack of unity was the actions of the Bern city council in which the social democrats held a majority. On 11 November 1918, the council’s social democratic representatives issued an urgent request to all city employees to “appear punctually at work and to fulfil their duty in their usual manner”¹¹⁸ Nevertheless in the special session of the federal assembly in Bern, social democrat delegates of the assembly argued in favour of the strike and the Olten committee’s proposals. During the session every motion that the social democrats proposed in support of the strike was voted down and eventually the federal council’s proposal to take measures to break the strike were passed 136 votes to 15. Given that there were 16 Social Democrat delegates it would appear that at least one delegate voted for the strike to be broken. As a result of the vote the Federal Council issued an ultimatum to the Olten action committee to call off the strike by 5 pm Wednesday 13 November.¹¹⁹ The committee and the Social Democratic national councillors waited until the 14 November to give their response, in which they accepted the ultimatum and ordered their workers to resume work on Friday morning. Only Robert Grimm and Basel labour leader Friedrich Schneider objected.¹²⁰ The majority of strikers obeyed their representatives’ decision to halt the strike. However the Basel strike movement refused to believe that their two day strike was over almost as soon as it had begun. Many strikers were highly suspicious of the official news agency which continued to post news on billboards around key towns which had been deprived of newspapers as a result of the strike. Many areas had become more isolated from the key hubs of Zurich, Basel and Bern, as public transport had ground to a halt in north-eastern germanophone Switzerland. Friedrich Schneider had to go in person to convince his fellow strikers of the validity of the decision. For strikers in Solothurn which was situated outside the main hub of agitation Zurich, the strikers in the town of Grenchen continued to rip up railway tracks in the area. The francophone Vaudois battalion sent to quash the uprising there responded with live rounds, as a result of which

¹¹⁶ Thomas Metzger, *Antisemitismus in der Stadt St. Gallen 1918-1939*, (Paulusverlag Academic Press Fribourg, Switzerland, 2006).

¹¹⁷ Robert Gerwarth and John Horne, *War in Peace: Paramilitary Violence in Europe after the Great War*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2012).

¹¹⁸ Bundesarchiv, Bern, E2813#1000/724#8 (1918), *City Council of Bern to the Employees and workers of the city administration*, 11th November 1918; Fritz Marbach, *Der Generalstreik 1918: Fakten, Impressionen, Illusionen*, (Haupt, Bern, 1969), p. 50.

¹¹⁹ Bundesarchiv, Bern, E2813#1000/724#8 (1918), *Federal Council to Robert Grimm for the Olten Action Committee*, not dated (13th November).

¹²⁰ Gautschi, *Landesstreik*, pp. 318-21.

three strikers were killed and several were wounded.¹²¹ The Zurich strikers, though better informed and perhaps therefore more obedient to their representative's instructions, were vocal in their disapproval. The editor of the Zurich based social democrat daily newspaper *Volksrecht* denounced the decision to call off the strike as a betrayal of the Swiss labour movement.¹²² In many areas it was not until Monday 18 November that all workers returned to work.

On 16 November, General Ulrich Wille personally reviewed the army units deployed in Zurich. Public reaction was supportive. The crowds of spectators who gathered along the lake shore applauded the troops and showered them with flowers. However, this celebration and adulation of the troops who had quashed the strike by the general public could have also been an example of the conflicted celebration of the armistice. Ulrich Wille's decision to parade was generally perceived as needlessly triumphalist and un-Swiss in its showiness. Crucially, Wille's showboating was not in line with the actions of previous Swiss generals and the Swiss military spirit. The great Swiss general Dufour, when faced with the division of the Swiss civil war, rejected any humiliation of the defeated opponent as offensive. The francophone press cited the allies' perceived "generosity to their enemies" as example of honour in victory.¹²³ It was with this disapproval that many lower ranking military commanders, like the Commander of the Bern forces, Corps Commander Eduard Wildbolz, did not follow Wille's suit, and refused to hold a military parade.¹²⁴

The aftermath of the strike reflected the wider divisions which had emerged within the Swiss socialist movement. The second general Swiss labour congress in Bern on 22-23 December 1918 concluded that the Olten Committee's actions were to blame for having "stirred up the masses with revolutionary slogans, which they themselves did not believe in"¹²⁵ despite the fact that it was initially reluctant to take part in the strike. The divisions which plagued the movement were laid bare as the Labour Congress denounced key figures of the Radical labour movement. Key member of the Zimmerwald movement and Swiss citizen of St. Gallen, Fritz Platten, was told to recognise that "Swiss workers were not interested in a violent overthrow of the government," that "reform not revolution" was to be the aim and that any future strike was to be launched only with the express approval of the Swiss labour congress.¹²⁶ The reaction of Olten Committee itself was a further indictment of the failure of the strike. It admitted in an address to the "workers of Switzerland":

Even though the strike had been a success in many localities, in Switzerland as a whole, it had not had the desired response and impact [...] the continuation of the strike would have

¹²¹ Ibid. p. 328.

¹²² Bundesarchiv, Bern, E2813#1000/724#8 (1918), Ernst Nobs editorial "The Swiss General Strike", *Volksrecht*, No. 267, Zurich, 15 November 1918.

¹²³ "Les Alliés se sont montrés généreux envers leurs ennemis", *Gazette de Lausanne*, 12 November 1918, p. 1.

¹²⁴ Gautschi, *Landesstreik*, (1968), pp. 330-31.

¹²⁵ Ibid. pp. 342-49.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

led to bloody confrontation in which all the advantages were with the armed forces of the government.¹²⁷

Among Swiss public opinion and among the mainstream press there seemed little appetite for retribution for the organisers of the strike. Though highly critical of the Olten committee and the strike movement, francophone mainstream press was distinctly sceptical of both the government and military's motives and actions. The linguistic divide had helped to undermine public support for the Radical party during the war, but with the armistice the triumphant francophone public could consolidate itself once again around a newly united Swiss opposition. Unlike during the war Christian conservatives appeared linguistically divided. The catholic, francophone canton of Vaud's support for the Swiss Christian Democrats was reasserted. It was from this strengthened base that the Christian Conservative members of parliament began to campaign for the prosecution of the Socialists representatives involved in the strike. On 10 December 1918 rising star of the Christian Conservative movement, francophone, Jean-Marie Musy delivered a speech to the National Council entitled "the General Strike and Bolshevism in Switzerland".¹²⁸ The speech according to the recorded minutes received rapturous applause from most of the delegates assembled and outlined a revisionist interpretation of the Swiss experience of the war. It was not the linguistic divide, which was ignored by Musy, but the socialists who "impaired our patriotism".¹²⁹ In the conservative party's revisionist interpretation, the trauma of the Swiss war experience was what it had always been - a battle "between Christ and Lenin",¹³⁰ despite the fact that during the war such an interpretation never featured in general public discourse.

While Musy's reinterpretation was extreme, both the Dutch and Swiss authorities generally also viewed the unrest of the final weeks of the war through the spectre of socialist revolution. For example, the Dutch military and government investigation into the military riots of October-November 1918 concluded that there was no concrete evidence of an ideological movement behind the riots; nevertheless they "considered the infection of Bolshevik ideas in the army as a true danger."¹³¹ The Dutch and Swiss general publics seemed less convinced. As one Dutch conscript soldier stated:

Those who did not know any better believed that the Dutch army stood at the point of immediate revolution. This was not the case, but the military authorities were nonetheless left pale from shock by this unexpected, mass resistance.¹³²

¹²⁷ Bundesarchiv, Bern, E2813#1000/724#8 (1918), *To the workers of Switzerland*, Bern 14 November 1918.

¹²⁸ "La grève générale et le bolchevisme en Suisse"

¹²⁹ "À altérer notre patriotisme", Jean-Marie Musy, *La grève générale et le bolchévisme en Suisse*, (L'imprimerie J. Perroud, Bulle, 1919).

¹³⁰ "Entre le Christ et Lénine", Ibid.

¹³¹ "Rapport van de Commissie", Archive of the Instituut voor Militaire Geschiedenis/Koninklijke Landmacht, The Hague, IMG/DC Mobilisatieverslag, 91A.

¹³² De Jong, *Frank van Wezels Roemruchte Jaren*, (1928), p. 415.

The sarcastic tone of the francophone public's assessment of the authority's response "the Zurich State Council pretends to deliver Switzerland from the Soviets"¹³³ confirmed their general scepticism regarding the official interpretation.

6.10 Aftermath

Following the armistice, Swiss public opinion appeared more willing to develop and contribute to the exchange of reinterpretation and conspiracy theories which dominated the increasingly xenophobic post-war discourse. While the francophone media did not pander excessively to the Christian conservatives and germanophone public's hysteria, in the weeks after the armistice it too began to exhibit a certain fear of a perceived socialist menace albeit one which reflected its previous experience of the war. For example, ten days after Musy's speech to parliament the *Gazette de Lausanne* published a rather lengthy article which offered its own take on the perceived socialist menace. The front page article "the Prince and the Anarchists"¹³⁴ argued that following the armistice new facts had emerged regarding "the evils that bandits in the German terrorist service had dared to commit in Switzerland".¹³⁵ While the germanophone media saw the strike as the first battle of a "world revolution"¹³⁶ the mainstream francophone media tended to view the strike in terms of a German conspiracy. Germanophone Swiss reaction coincided with "the fear of revolution [which was] deeply embedded in the minds of Germany's liberal and conservative elites"¹³⁷ but in the case of both Germany and Switzerland had been previously contained as a result of the *Burgfrieden*. Francophone interpretation of the strike as a German conspiracy echoed the fears of their French neighbours where "the revolutionary threat was added to the German threat."¹³⁸ In the *Gazette de Lausanne* editorial by subsequent editor in chief Georges Rigassi, the argument was put forward that German agents and prominent officials like Prince von Bülow had conspired to provoke the revolution in Switzerland, just as they had supposedly done among fellow neutral states like Holland and Denmark, who along with Switzerland were "the three countries where socialism was orientated towards Germany".¹³⁹ However, the accommodating tone of the article reflected the new found sense of reconciliation the armistice had brought to the linguistic divide: "If the Swiss workers had known that the General Strike was a game played by a beleaguered imperialist Germany, they would have refused to obey one word of the Olten Committee's order."¹⁴⁰ In the aftermath of the general strike, the Social Democrat National

¹³³ "Le conseil d'Etat de Zurich pretend livrer la Suisse aux Soviets" *Gazette de Lausanne*, 11 November 1918, p. 4.

¹³⁴ "Le prince et les anarchistes"

¹³⁵ "Les méfaits que les bandits du service terroriste allemande ont osé commettre en Suisse"

¹³⁶ "Weltrevolution"

¹³⁷ Gerwarth and Horne, *War in Peace*, p. 41.

¹³⁸ P. 43

¹³⁹ "Les trois pays dont le socialisme est orienté vers L'Allemagne."

¹⁴⁰ "Si les ouvriers suisses avaient su que la grève générale faisait le jeu de l'Allemagne impérialiste aux abois, ils auraient refusé [...] d'obéir au mot d'ordre du comité d'Olten." *Gazette de Lausanne*, 20 December 1918, Georges Rigassi, "Le prince et les anarchistes", p. 1.

Council delegates and the Swiss *Gewerkschaftsbund* (Trade Union Federation) campaigned against the wave of deportations which had been instigated with the support of the government, the Christian conservative opposition and the general public. Colloquially known as "Russian trains"¹⁴¹ eastern European Jewish immigrants appear to have been the main group targeted in such deportations. As the deported Jewish Ukrainian writer Schemarya Gorelik wrote in his account of the deportation:

I sat myself down beside the people with whom I had to share this internment, and I said to myself that even if they are not all lovers of lovely sunsets they were at the very least harmless people, who had little to do with politics [...] all good Jewish faces.¹⁴²

However, the Social democrat and Swiss Trade Union Federation did not reflect their declared internationalist ethos and were rather specific in who they wished to save from the Swiss "Russian Trains". According to Patrick Kury's analysis

It concerned the representatives of the Social Democrat delegation but mainly politically engaged Italians who in the opinion of the Social Democrats were illegally deported from the country.¹⁴³

In the subsequent military tribunal held the following spring 1919, the government prosecuted the Olten Action committee. Though there were other actors responsible for the earlier strikes, the Olten action committee was the most organised representative and had become in the public mind the main instigators of the strike. Of the twenty one strike leaders brought to trial it was the members of the Olten action committee; Robert Grimm, Friedrich Schneider and Fritz Platten (in absentia) who were found guilty of incitement to mutiny through the publication and distribution of the 11 November proclamation "To the working people of Switzerland."¹⁴⁴ All three were given the minimum sentence available to the court – six months imprisonment. The editor of *Volksrecht*, Ernst Nobs, was found guilty of incitement for his editorial published in response to the Olten committee's decision to halt the strike. Nobs was sentenced to four weeks imprisonment. All four sentenced were required to pay half of the trial costs. The relatively moderate response of the military tribunal was summed up in the

¹⁴¹ "Russenzüge"

¹⁴² "Ich sah mir näher die Menschen an, mit denen ich die Internierung teilen sollte, und sagte mir, dass, wenn sie auch nicht alle Liebhaber schöner Sonnenuntergänge seien, so jedenfalls höchst harmlose Leute, die mit Politik wenig zu tun hatten [...] lauter gute jüdische." Bundesarchiv, Bern BAR E 21 10603, 22 November 1918, Gesichter. Schemarya Gorelik, *Fünf Jahre im Lande Neutralien: Schweizer Kriegserlebnisse eines jüdischen Schriftstellers*. Berlin, 1919, p. 129 ; Gorelik's interrogation Procès-verbal d'interrogatoire, "Je ne suis pas bolchevik et n'appartiens à aucun parti révolutionnaire." Bundesarchiv, Bern BAR E 21 10603, 22 November 1918.

¹⁴³ "Dabei ging es den Vertretern der sozialdemokratischen Delegation jedoch hauptsächlich um politisch engagierte Italiener, die aus ihrer Sicht nicht rechtens des Landes verwiesen wurden." Patrick Kury, *Über Fremde reden, Überfremdungsdiskurs und Ausgrenzung in der Schweiz 1900-1945*, (Chronos, Zürich, 2000), p. 146; Bundesarchiv, Bern, BAR, E21 10566, *Soz. Partei der Schweiz, Ausweisungen*.

¹⁴⁴ "An das arbeitende Volk."

court's conclusions that the four men sentenced had not acted with "personal, greedy or dishonourable motives" and therefore the court decided not to suspend their political rights. The government's move to introduce proportional representation ushered in the political reintegration of the workers movement within the Swiss political system. Robert Grimm continued to serve as national Councillor, while imprisoned and went on to be elected president of the Swiss National Council in 1946. Ernst Nobs became mayor of Zurich in 1943 and went on to become President of the Swiss Confederation (Swiss Federal Council) five years later. The implementation of the majority of the movement's key proposals highlighted the strength of the Swiss democratic process but also the degree to which it was willing to reconcile which reflected the general will of the electorate but not the demands of the strike movement.

6.11 Conclusion

Despite agitation for change and proposed social upheaval, the general strike failed to instil a real change in public attitudes regarding class and socialist internationalism. 31% of industrial workers were credited with having taken part in the strike.¹⁴⁵ The strikers made up just 14% of the Swiss workforce overall.¹⁴⁶ Though support for left wing parties had increased by November 1918 Swiss public opinion, like that of fellow neutrals, the Netherlands and Denmark, did not support strike action. Xenophobia increased dramatically during the war. While General Ulrich Wille retired shortly after its end, his colonel in charge of the Zurich, during the strike, Colonel Sonderegger became a key figure in the burgeoning Swiss far-right. His self-styled "saviour of the Fatherland" image would appear to have begun with his actions in November 1918. His covert arms dealing with Germany and significant involvement in the rearmament of Germany during the interwar period was highlighted by Jean Francois Bergier's investigation published in 2002.¹⁴⁷ However, this rise in xenophobia came to define both extreme right and left wing politics. Many of the key actors within the strike movement where vehemently opposed to immigration and, as was shown in the previous chapter, supported and campaigned for legislation restricting immigration to Switzerland.

As the Swiss proxy experience of the war concluded, the question of what Switzerland fought for began to be discussed. Despite the reconciliation between the linguistic communities, the linguistic divide defined this debate. For example, the francophone press greeted the news of the abdication of Wilhelm II triumphantly declaring "the hour of atonement has arrived".¹⁴⁸ Yet this hour of atonement was not just a triumph for the allied powers. It vindicated the stance for francophone opinion during

¹⁴⁵ Gautschi, *Landesstreik*, (1968), pp. 296-97.

¹⁴⁶ Bundesarchiv, Bern, *Statistische Jahrbuch der Schweiz, Handbuch der Schweizerischen Volkswirtschaft*, (Bern 1911).

¹⁴⁷ International Commission of Experts (ICE), *Switzerland: National Socialism and the Second World War*, (Pendo Verlag, Zurich, 2002).

¹⁴⁸ "L'heure de l'expiation est venue", *Gazette de Lausanne*, 10 November 1918, "L'abdication de Wilhelm II", p. 1.

the war: "Civilisation can now maintain and consolidate its happy victory!"¹⁴⁹ For the francophone press, which had championed the plight of fellow neutral Belgium and widely published accounts of German atrocities, their war was won. This suggests that germanophone Switzerland may have experienced a proxy "mobilisation of defeat" which according to Gerwarth and Horne may best explain the varying degrees of paramilitary violence which swept predominantly defeated nations in the post-war period.¹⁵⁰ For the increasingly inward looking germanophone community, the First World War was a Swiss defensive battle which had not ended but would continue as the foreign phantom menace fantasy of foreign socialist revolution threatened to breach the carefully maintained Swiss defences. The germanophone *Tagesanzeiger* greeted the news of the armistice not with jubilation but with great foreboding. The front page headline of 11 November 1918 read "from world war to world revolution".¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ "Puisse la civilisation maintenir et consolider son heureuse victoire!" Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Robert Gerwarth and John Horne, *War in Peace: Paramilitary Violence in Europe after the Great War*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2012), Chapter Three.

¹⁵¹ *Tagesanzeiger* 11th November 1918 "Vom Weltkrieg zur Weltrevolution".

CONCLUSION

Nuanced affinity with France and Germany but not division defined internal Swiss relations in the pre-war period. At the outbreak of the war the dominance of Germany's influence in Swiss trade, banking and migration informed a logical preference for German victory. However, unlike the outbreak of the war, the invasion of Belgium provoked deep division between the francophone and germanophone communities during August 1914. This thesis has shown that while neutral Switzerland had its own experience of the First World War, simply opting out of the maelstrom that swept Europe as a whole was not a possibility. Despite neutrality, the war was refracted into Swiss opinion from every angle.

During the pre-war period, francophone affinity with France and germanophone affinity with Germany was cultivated by extensive pre-war trade, banking and migration links. However, Swiss trade was overwhelmingly dominated by Germany, who was its largest trading partner¹ and accounted for 40% of all migration to Switzerland.² By contrast, migration to francophone areas like Geneva was more linguistically diverse. This seemed to have contributed to francophone cities like Geneva and Lausanne's more cosmopolitan outlook in comparison to the germanophone Swiss' more inward looking homogeneity. These opposing outlooks, which solidify during the war, seem to have remained and it could be said are reflected in the the voting patterns and opposing attitudes to immigration in Zurich and Geneva today.

Both francophone and germanophone Swiss representatives remained unified in the run up to the declaration of war, in their general diplomatic aims, approach and outlook.³ When the war broke out, the Swiss state, military and press drew immediate parallels with the Franco-Prussian War and defined the current war not as a European War but as a Franco-German conflict.⁴ However, unlike the outbreak of the war, it was the invasion of Belgium which provoked deep division between the francophone and germanophone communities during August 1914. This change found expression within the Swiss press. Analysis of four main newspapers *Journal de Genève*, *Tribune de Genève*, *Tagesanzeiger*, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* showed a clear division between the allegiances of each linguistic community. The germanophone press's resounding silence betrayed a sense of unease with the actions of their linguistic brethren.

¹ Bundesarchiv, Bern, *Statistisches Jahrbuch der Schweiz 1914*, (Bundesamt für Statistik (BFS), 1915), p.102; John Maynard Keynes, *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*, (Indo-European Publishing, Los Angeles, 2012), p. 7.

² Bundesamt für Statistik, Neuchâtel, „Foreigners from the European continental area according to country of origin 1900-2003“, in *Ausländerinnen und Ausländer in der Schweiz*, Swiss Federal Statistics Office, 2004, P. 93.

³ Bundesarchiv, Bern, E2300 Paris, Archiv-Nr. 67 *Le Ministre de Suisse à Paris*, Ch. Lardy, au Chef du Département politique, A. Hoffmann, 12 July 1914 ; Bundesarchiv, Bern, E2001 Archiv-Nr. 733 *de Claparède au Hoffmann*, 31 July 1914 ; Archiv-Nr. 719 *Le Ministre de Suisse à Paris*, Ch. Lardy, au Chef du Département politique, A. Hoffmann, 28 July 1914.

⁴ *Journal de Genève*, 6 August 1914; *NZZ*, 6 August 1914.

The francophone press's remarkable analysis of the invasion of Belgium may have been motivated not simply by a tradition of international awareness among the francophone community and linguistic allegiance. It might have been motivated also by a genuine fear, which in turn inspired sympathy for the Belgian plight. By the end of August, the beginnings of a debate in the Swiss press regarding the issue of national unity in the face of war had emerged. Swiss politicians saw the perception of Swiss unity abroad as a vital element of Swiss national defence.

Despite the attempt to establish a Swiss Union Sacrée, the linguistic divide manifested itself to varying degrees within politics, institutions and the military. The government in 1914 sought to establish national unity in the face of a war that potentially threatened neutrality. Chapter Two showed that despite public declarations of unity by members of the Federal Council, political unity was beset by divisions, owing to the lack of proportional representation,⁵ the rise of support for Socialist and Christian right parties,⁶ the dominance of the Radical Party and the deepening linguistic divide. On the left, for example, there was a growing aloofness between the francophone left and germanophone left. At the Swiss Party Congress, 1914, Germanophone Swiss socialists were supportive of the German Social Democrats' decision to abide by the *Burgfrieden* political truce and support the war, but the francophone Swiss objected.⁷ The socialist press was similarly divided in its reporting of the invasion of Belgium. The germanophone *Tagwacht* and *Volksrecht* resembled the mainstream germanophone press in their coverage of the invasion of Belgium – an event initially ignored, briefly addressed but mostly excused. The francophone socialist press, *Le Réveil* and *Le Falot*, *La Libre Fédération*, etc., resembled the mainstream francophone press in their consistent outrage at German atrocities and their commitment to the issue of Belgium throughout the war.

The Swiss police was highly localised and this made it susceptible to the linguistic bias the divide had provoked. The germanophone police force of Basel was particularly highlighted by the French press as being "anti-French".⁸ Files on individual cases related to espionage investigations, held at the Basel cantonal archives, confirmed that such bias among the Basel police force existed. However, major cities in other neutral states, like the Netherlands, sometimes also displayed bias. The strength of the affinity of key Dutch trading towns, like Rotterdam and Amsterdam, for example, lay in the focus of their trade. Rotterdam, situated on the Rhine, had a pro-German stance that lay in the German

⁵ Bundesarchiv, Bern, Ref. Nr. 40001206, "Bundesversammlung/Assemblée fédérale, Nationalrat/Conseil national, Gewählt für die 21. Amtsperiode 1908–1911", *Eidgenössischer Staatskalender*, (1909); Swiss Parliament Online Data Base, *Datenbank der Ratsmitglieder seit 1848*, (<http://www.parlament.ch/d/suche/Seiten/ratsmitglieder.aspx>) [accessed 28 September 2013]; Jonathan Steinberg, *Why Switzerland?*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996), p. 57.

⁶ François Masnata & Claire Rubattel, *Le pouvoir suisse. Séduction démocratique et répression suave*, (Editions de l'Aire, Vevey, 1995).

⁷ *Ibid.* p.398.

⁸ Editorial, *Paris-Midi*, 12 January 1915, p. 1.

focus of its trade.⁹ This could be said to have been similar to Basel, which was also situated on the Rhine. By comparison, the focus of Amsterdam's trade lay in overseas exports, which was dominated by the allies and so its affinity lay with the allied powers rather than with Germany¹⁰. While the focus of trade may have been a potent factor in the affinity of certain Swiss trading cities, primary evidence in particular confirmed that it was the linguistic familiarity which cemented the allegiance. This allowed a stronger manifestation of affinity with the warring camps to be expressed in Geneva and Basel than in Amsterdam or Rotterdam. Yet despite rising dissent and the influence of the linguistic divide, the electorate voted unanimously in support of the introduction of a war tax, 6 June 1915. Just as the linguistic division could be described as a Swiss experience of the divisions of the war by proxy analysis of both the press and political debate in the run up to the election displayed evidence to suggest that Swiss politics experienced a *union sacrée*/Burgfrieden by proxy.

Chapter three showed how francophone outrage at a germanophone military spying scandal in 1916 exposed the fragility of the image of unity of the Swiss *union sacrée*. The Swiss military increasingly usurped the role of the police, undermining their authority in dealing with cantonal unrest. Internal linguistically-defined division undermined the image of impartiality and national unity that institutions like the Swiss citizen militia army were supposed to embody, and cultivated a heightened sense of exceptionalism. The germanophone high command's handling of the *Affaire des Colonels* and their reluctance to prosecute the colonels involved displayed the sense of exceptionalism that had developed in the Swiss military.¹¹ Senior press and political figures from the francophone community viewed the germanophone officials's response as corrupt, and evidence of the morally corrupt response of germanophone officials towards the violation of Belgian neutrality.¹² The affair ushered in a new phase in reaction to the war. It reaffirmed the unity of the francophone community, which ultimately further exacerbated the linguistic divide. While evidence of growing dissent and linguistic division existed by the end of 1915, the *Affaire des Colonels* escalated such division into an open breach of the Swiss *union sacrée* in 1916.

The symbolic capital of Swiss neutrality was a crucial factor in the development of the burgeoning Swiss banking industry, we know today, while the manipulation of linguistic identity was the key to the maintenance and development of Swiss global trade. But from 1914 to 1917, there was a significant increase in economic activity and growth related to the war.¹³ Inflation during this period was

⁹ C.K. Elout, "De Nederlandsche oorlogspysche" in Brugman (ed.) *Nederland in den oorlogstijd. De geschiedenis van Nederland en van Nederlandsch-Indië tijdens den oorlog van 1914 tot 1919, voor zoover zij met dien oorlog verband houdt.* (Uitgevers-Maatschappij, "Elsevier", Amsterdam, 1920), pp. 353-369; Wim Klinkert, J.W.M. Schulten, Luc de Vos (eds.), *Mobilisatie in Nederland en België: 1870-1914-1939.* (Amsterdam, De Bataafsche Leeuw, 1991), pp. 67-73.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Marcel Guinand, *Un procès militaire. L'affaire des deux colonels*, (Georg, Genève, 1916).

¹³ Felix Andrist, Richard G. Anderson and Marcela M. Williams, "Real output in Switzerland: New estimates for 1914-1947", *Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis Review*, (May/June, 2000), pp. 43-69; Stefan Gerlach and Petra

significant but its impact was only severe during the final two years of the war. While it is impossible to determine exactly, given the nature of banking secrecy, for example, Swiss growth¹⁴ was not mainly due to inflation but primarily due to a surge in foreign direct investment in Switzerland and multi-national trading abroad which exploited the potential opportunity for development the war offered. In global trade, the influence of the linguistic divide, in particular the linguistic identity of Swiss trading companies, was even more significant. Without access to the sea, Switzerland had to exploit its linguistic connections with Germany and France to gain access to global markets. The two main centres of Swiss trade in Asia were India and Singapore. By 1914 and during the height of the economic nationalism of World War, Switzerland's neutral status and exceptional place above the struggle became symbolic capital in their own right. They were the key to success in global economic trade which propped up the country's finances, and thus ensured relative Swiss independence during the war.¹⁵ Analysis of Germanophone Swiss merchant companies and banks, particularly showed how global economic interaction was influenced by foreign perception and their national allegiance, which was in turn influenced by the linguistic divide. The allies' dominance in global trading networks made it more difficult for germanophone Swiss trading companies to operate, but switching linguistic identity and successful rebranding (in the case of the bank *Crédit Suisse*) turned a difficulty into opportunity.

However, the Swiss minister for Foreign Affairs, Arthur Hoffmann, did not acknowledge these key emergent sources of real wealth in Switzerland - growth areas which sustained Swiss economic stability during the war. These fears for the Swiss economy, along with a typically germanophone interpretation of Swiss exceptionalism, led Hoffmann to send socialist councillor Grimm to Russia in an attempt to negotiate a peace settlement between Russia and Germany. Ultimately, Hoffmann's actions undermined the country's valuable asset- the symbolic capital of Swiss neutrality. The public supported Hoffmann's resignation and further emphasised the gulf between public opinion and the key centralised institutions of power - the military and the political establishment. It was a unique moment of social and political public unity, where for the first time in the war, the francophone and germanophone communities, even the socialist and far right parties, appeared to have found common ground in their rejection of the Radical party's dominance and the interventionist interpretation of the role of Swiss neutrality's exceptionalism.

Gerlach-Kristen, "Estimates of Real Economic Activity in Switzerland, 1886-1930", *Empirical Economics* Volume 30, Number 3, (9 July 2004), pp.763-781.

¹⁴ See Appendix 4. Swiss GDP 1913-1919.

¹⁵ Christof Dejung and Andreas Zangger, "British Wartime protectionism and Swiss trading companies in Asia during the First World War", *Past and Present*, no. 207, (May 2010), p. 183; Paul Bairoch, "Le Volume des exportations de la Suisse de 1851 à 1975", *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Geschichte*, xxviii, 1978, pp. 29-50; Béatrice Veyrassat, "La Suisse sur les marchés du monde: Exportations globales et répartition géographique au XIXe siècle. Essai de reconstruction," in Paul Bairoch and Martin Körner (eds.), *Die Schweiz in der Weltwirtschaft (15.-20. Jh.)*, (Zürich, 1990), pp. 287-316.

The symbolic capital of the ICRC's humanitarian action also helped ensure Swiss independence during the war, but encounters with foreign civilian and military prisoners of war further emphasised the division that existed between the two main linguistic communities. During the final two years of the war, xenophobia increased dramatically. During the conflict a total of 67,726 civilians and soldiers were interned in Switzerland. Switzerland's neutrality but also its humanitarian action remained mutually beneficial for the surrounding belligerent states and so there were few overt attempts by belligerent powers to court Swiss participation in the war. While francophone Swiss public opinion was consistently more supportive of the French cause and the ICRC's mission, both communities became increasingly nationalistic. Arlettaz's interpretation links the dramatic rise in xenophobia to Swiss mobilization and the *union sacrée* examined in earlier chapters.

However, this would be to neglect the defining division in reaction to the war, as demonstrated by this thesis. Internal Swiss divisions during the war were less political than linguistic – between the francophone and germanophone communities. Parties across the political spectrum campaigned for the restriction of immigration. Representatives from both linguistic communities made xenophobic statements. However, the germanophone community was consistently more extreme in its xenophobia.¹⁶ The defining division among the Swiss public reaction was not political but linguistic. New political movements like socialism failed to unify both sides. Despite agitation for social and political change the General Strike failed to transform public attitudes regarding class and socialist internationalism. As Switzerland's proxy experience of the war concluded the francophone communities' sense of triumph was contrasted by the germanophone community's proxy "mobilisation of defeat" which began to look to the phantom menace of socialist revolution as an outlet for its sense of disillusionment. Though support for left wing parties had increased by November 1918, Swiss public opinion, like that in the neutral Netherlands and Denmark, did not support strike action. Xenophobia increased dramatically during final two years of the war. While General Ulrich Wille retired shortly after the war, the colonel in charge of Zurich during the strike, Colonel Sonderegger, became a key figure in the burgeoning Swiss far-right.¹⁷ However this rise in xenophobia came to define both extreme right and left wing politics, many of the key actors within the strike movement where vehemently opposed to immigration, and campaigned for legislation restricting immigration to Switzerland. Perhaps this went on to shape Swiss attitudes towards immigration during the Second World War.

The thesis' analysis of the Swiss experience of the war as an experience of the war by proxy, has helped move the topic away from the national parochial focus which has come to define Swiss

¹⁶ Patrick Kury *Über Fremde reden – Überfremdungsdiskurs und Ausgrenzung in der Schweiz 1900-1945*, (Chronos Verlag, Zurich, 2003); Bundesarchiv, Bern, E 27/13934, *Letter from the Regierungsrat of Basel-Stadt to the Federal Council*, 18 September 1915; Rudolf Bollinger, *NZZ* No. 90, 92, 93 30 March, 1 & 2 April, 1912, p.1.

¹⁷His significant involvement in the rearmament of Nazi Germany was highlighted by Jean Francois Bergier's investigation published in 2002.

International Commission of Experts (ICE), *Switzerland: National Socialism and the Second World War*, (Pendo Verlag, Zurich, 2002).

historiography. By drawing comparison with a fellow neutral state like the Netherlands, also helped to situate the Swiss experience within a wider European context. Therefore to bring this approach to its ultimate conclusion, this proxy experience of the war may have included a proxy culture of defeat. As the Swiss experience of the war concluded, the question of what Switzerland “fought” for began to be discussed. However, the focus of this debate was not the allied and central powers’ actual sacrifice, but rather for what, and against whom, had Switzerland fought and won. Despite the reconciliation between the post-war linguistic communities, the linguistic divide defined this debate. Thus, the francophone press greeted the news of the abdication of Wilhelm II triumphantly declaring “the hour of atonement has arrived”.¹⁸ Yet this hour of atonement was not just a triumph for the allied powers. According to the francophone public opinion it vindicated their stance during the war: “civilisation can now maintain and consolidate its happy victory!”¹⁹ For the francophone press which had championed the plight of fellow neutral Belgium and widely published accounts of atrocities carried out by the German armies, their war was won. This suggests that in ideological defeat, germanophone Switzerland may have experienced a proxy “culture of defeat”, which according to Gerwarth and Horne may best explain the varying degrees of paramilitary violence which swept predominantly defeated nations in the post-war period. For the increasingly inward looking germanophone community the First World War was a Swiss defensive battle which had not ended but would continue as the foreign phantom menace of socialist revolution threatened to breach the carefully maintained Swiss defences. The germanophone *Tagesanzeiger* greeted the news of the armistice not with jubilation but with great foreboding. The front page headline of 11 November 1918 read “from world war to world revolution”.²⁰

¹⁸ *Gazette de Lausanne*, 10 November 1918, “L’abdication de Wilhelm II”, p. 1.

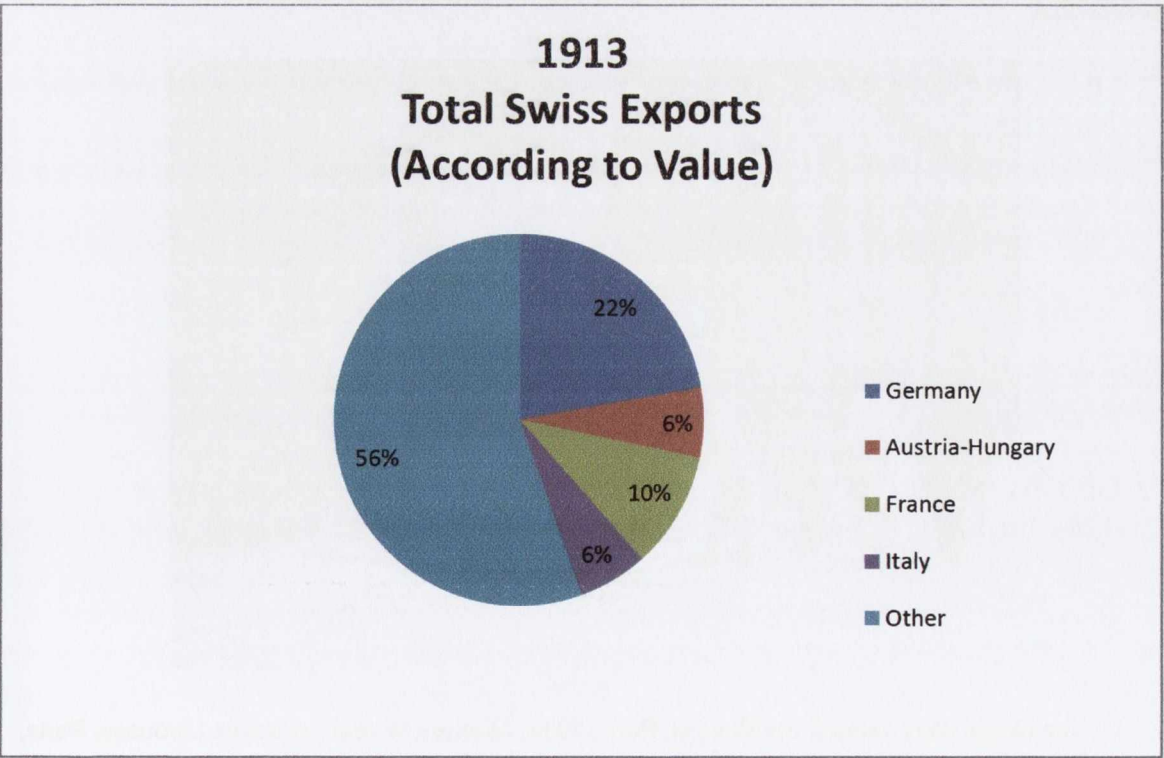
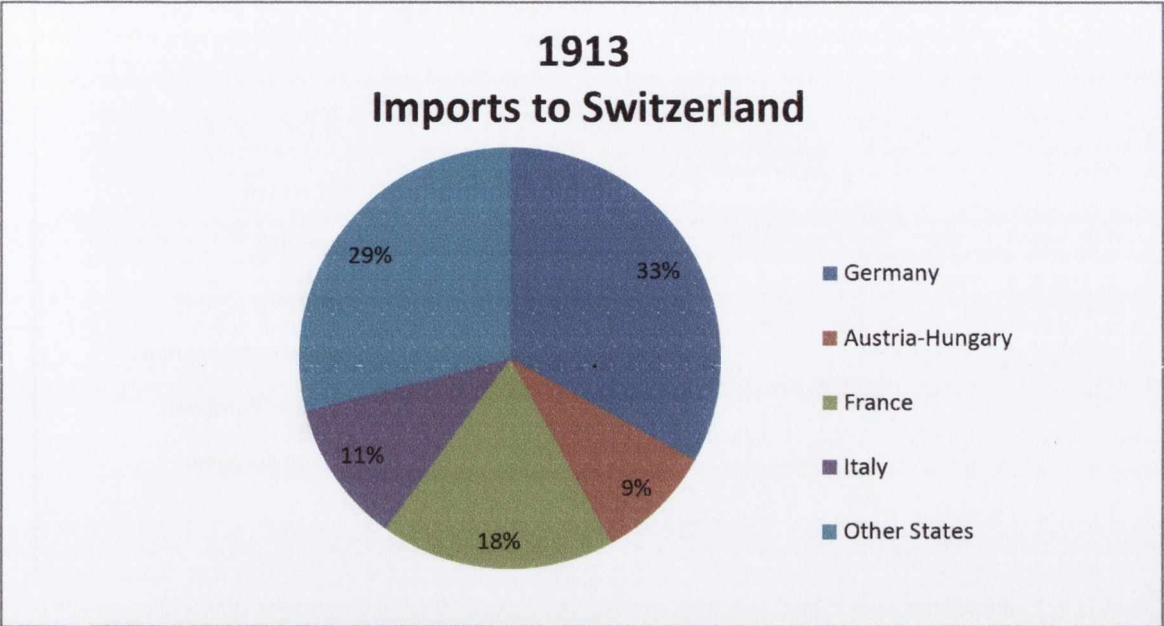
¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Tagesanzeiger* 11th November 1918 “Vom Weltkrieg zur Weltrevolution”.

APPENDIX

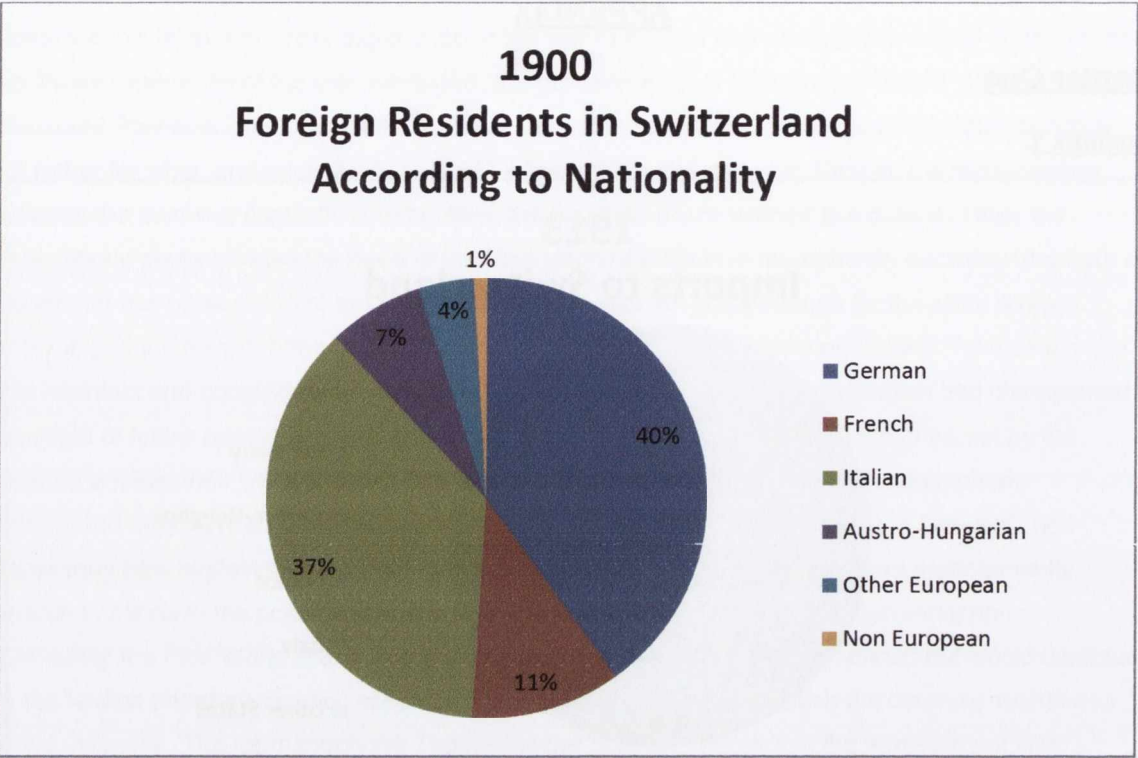
Chapter One

Appendix 1:



Source: *Statistisches Jahrbuch der Schweiz*, 1914, Bundesamt für Statistik BFS, Bern. P. 102, 126.

Appendix 2:



Source: *Statistisches Jahrbuch der Schweiz*, 1914, Bundesamt für Statistik BFS, Bern. P. 15

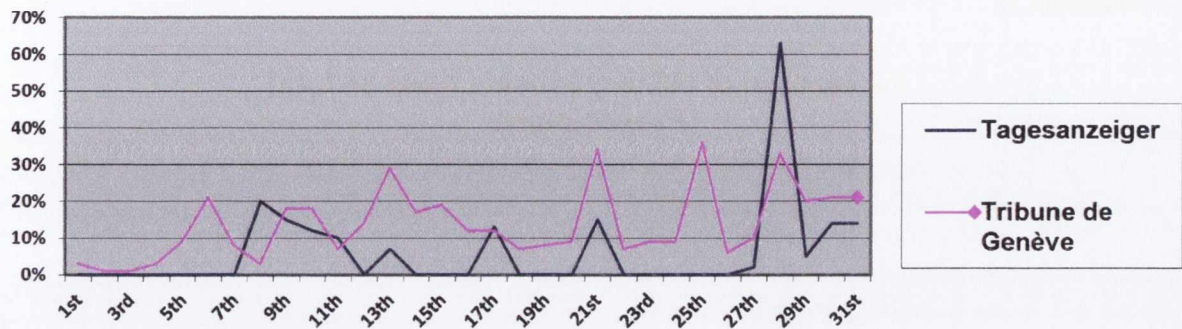
Appendix 3:



The Maggi dairy sacked, rue Clauzel, Paris, 1914, Jacques Moreau, Archives Larousse, Paris, France, Giraudon, The Bridgeman Art Library.

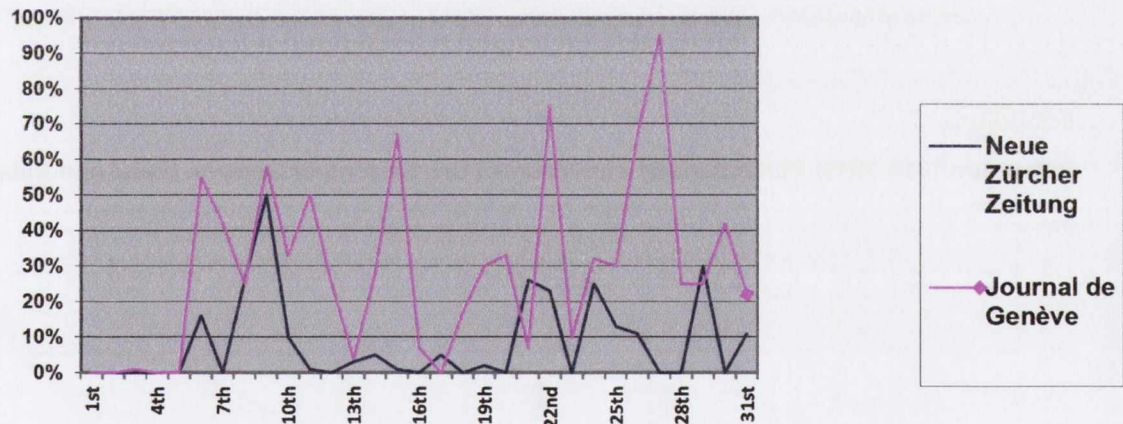
Appendix 4:

Percentile breakdown of *Tribune de Genève* and the *Tagesanzeiger* front page coverage of the German invasion of Belgium, August 1914.



Percentage of words given in proportion to the total number of words per front page

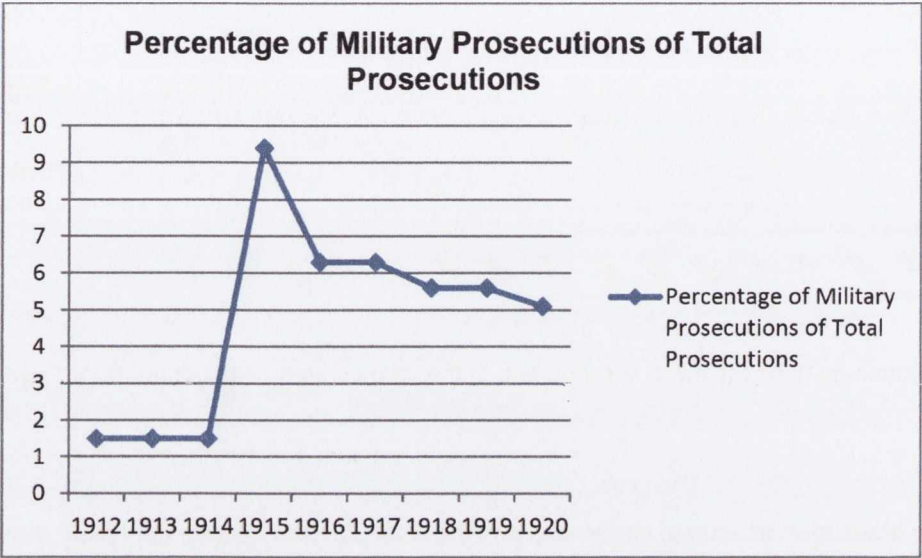
Percentile breakdown of *Journal de Genève* and the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* front page coverage of the German invasion of Belgium, August 1914.



Percentage of words given in proportion to the total number of words per front page

Chapter Two

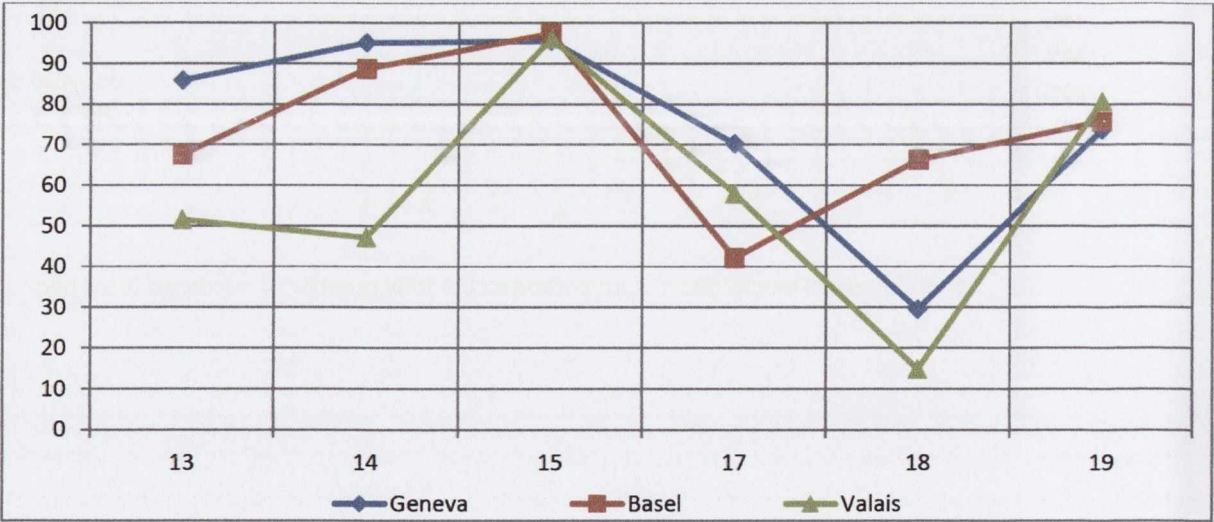
Appendix 1:



Hansjörg Siegenthaler & Heiner Ritzmann-Blickenstorfer (eds.), "W.13 Neue Urteilsauszüge des Zentralstrafregisters 1906-1986", *Historische Statistik der Schweiz*, (Chronos Verlag, 1996), p. 1027.

Appendix 2:

Referenda 1913-1918: Percentage of Yes-Votes of the cantons of Geneva, Basel and Valais

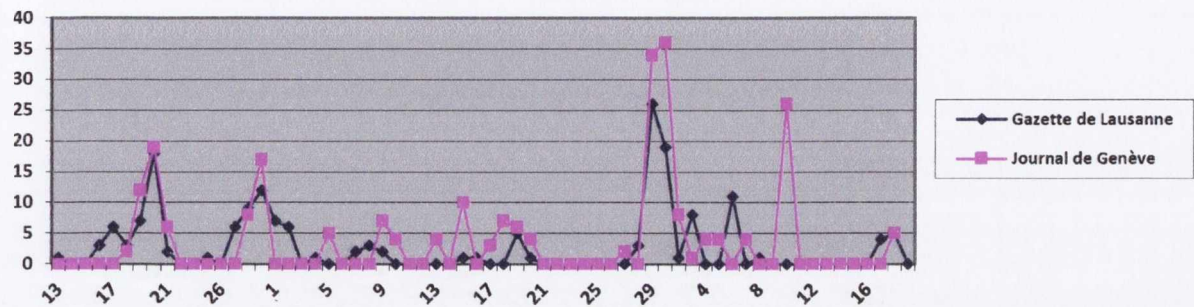


Office fédéral de la statistique, Neuchâtel, Collection générale, *Encyclopédie statistique de la Suisse*, Votations populaires fédérales 1901-1950: résultats par cantons.

Chapter Three

Appendix 1:

Percentage as a proportion of total daily coverage of *L’Affaire des Colonels*
18 January – 19 March 1916



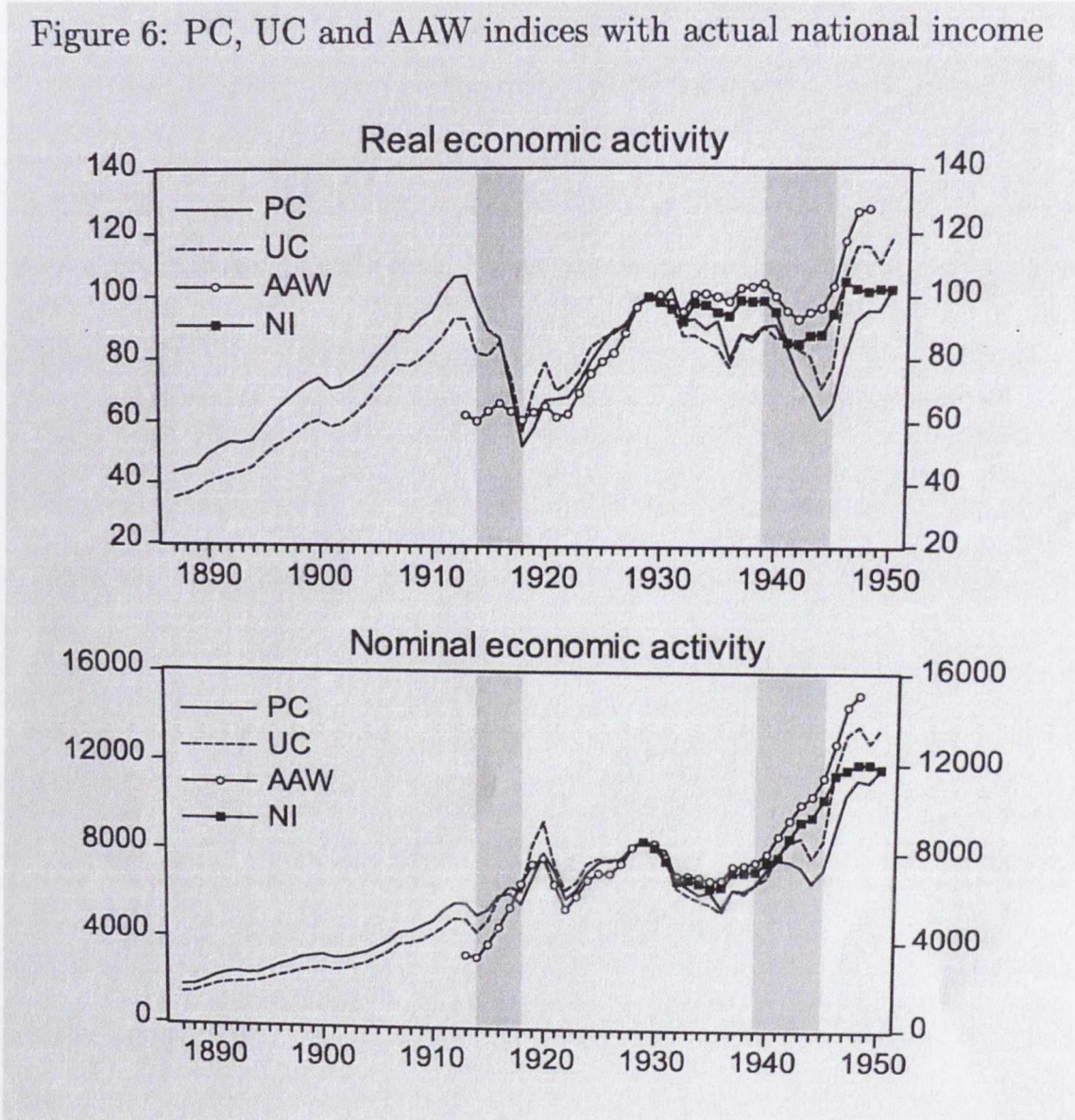
Percentage of words given in proportion to the total number of words per front page

Chapter Four

Appendix 1:

Real and Nominal Economic Activity

Figure 6: PC, UC and AAW indices with actual national income



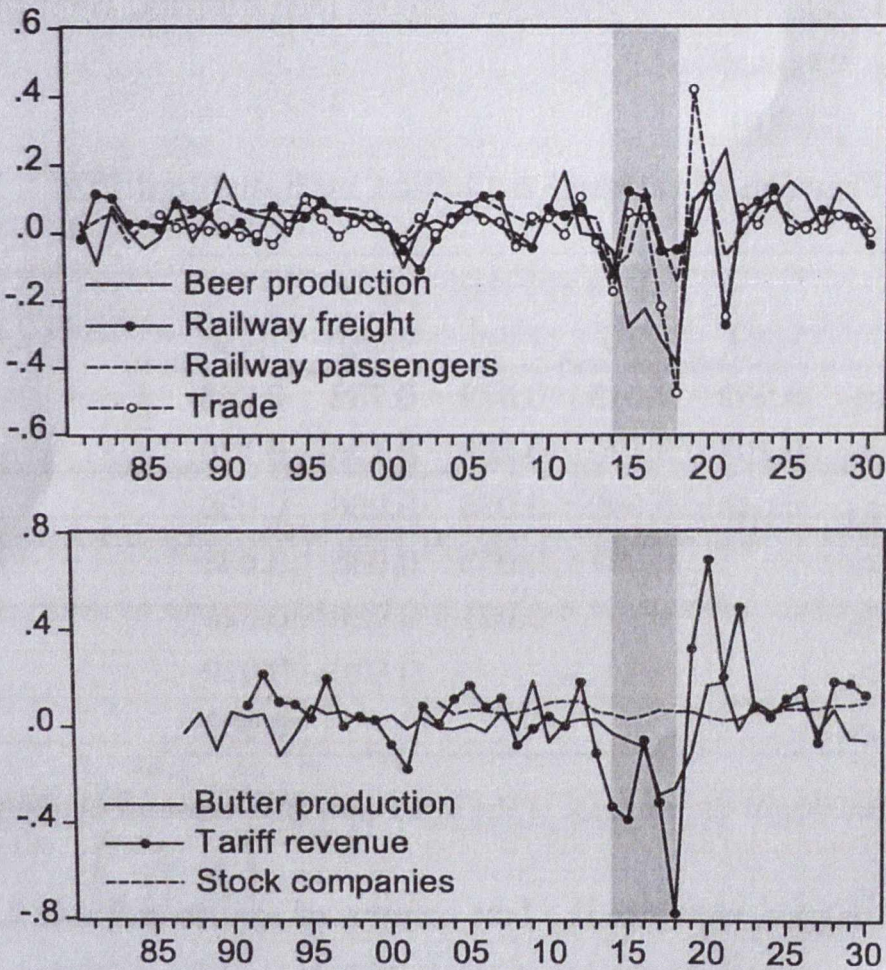
- Key: PC Principal Components
UC Unobserved Components
AAW Anders, Anderson and Williams Data
NI Official national income series from the Swiss National Bank

Source: Stefan Gerlach and Petra Gerlach-Kristen, "Estimates of Real Economic Activity in Switzerland, 1886-1930", *Empirical Economics*, Volume 30, Number 3, 9 July 2004.

Appendix 2:

Principal Components Analysis

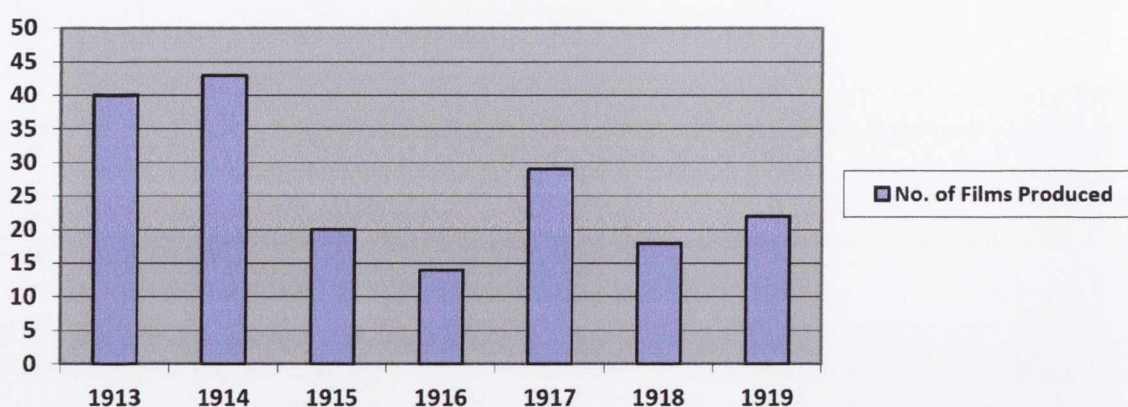
Figure 1: Growth rates of indicator series



Source: Stefan Gerlach and Petra Gerlach-Kristen, *Estimates of Real Economic Activity in Switzerland, 1886-1930*, Empirical Economics Volume 30, Number 3, 9 July 2004

Appendix 3:

Numbers of Films Produced and Financed within Switzerland from 1913-1919.



Source. Data compiled from the Swiss Filmographie Archive, Écublens, Vaud.

Appendix 4:

Swiss Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in millions of Swiss franc at current prices

1913	4,432	-2.6
1914	4,302	-2.9
1915	5,102	18.6
1916	6,161	20.8
1917	7,372	19.6
1918	8,828	19.8
1919	9,997	13.2

Source: Figures compiled for me (16th February 2012) by Klaus Leemann, Eidgenössisches Departement des Innern EDI, Bundesamt für Statistik BFS, Neuchâtel Switzerland

Appendix 5:

Stock of Foreign Investment in 1913 (In billions of dollars)

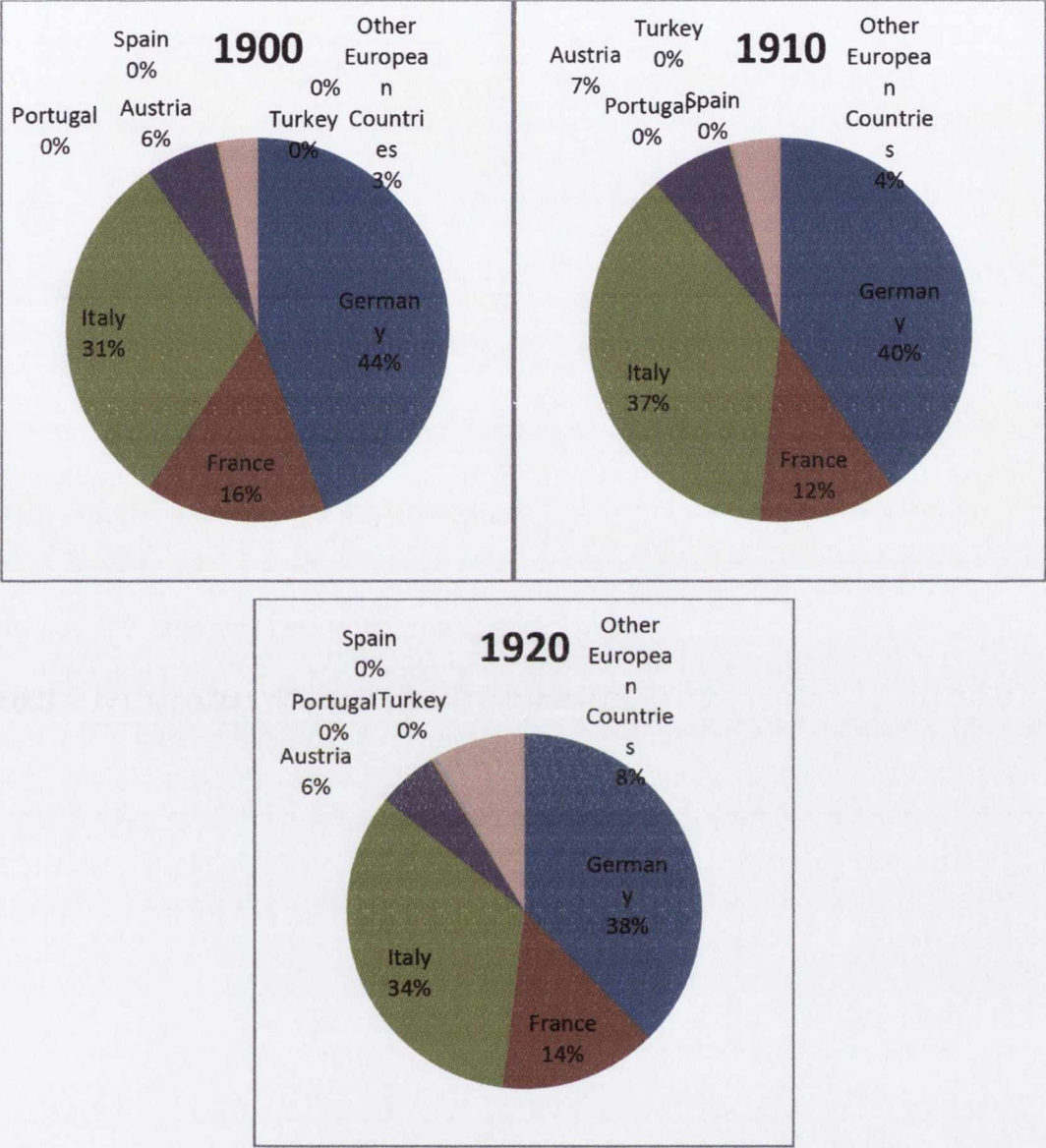
Assets in Foreign Countries

Great Britain	18.3	42%
France	8.7	20%
Germany	5.6	13%
Belgium, The Netherlands and Switzerland	5.5	12%
United States	3.5	8%
Miscellaneous	2.4	5%
Total	44.0	100%

Source: United Nations, International Capital Movements during the Interwar Period, New York, 1949.

Chapter Five

Appendix 1



Ständige und nichtständige Wohnbevölkerung nach Geschlecht und detaillierter Staatsangehörigkeit, 1910, Bundesamt für Statistik (BFS) Statistisches Lexikon der Schweiz.

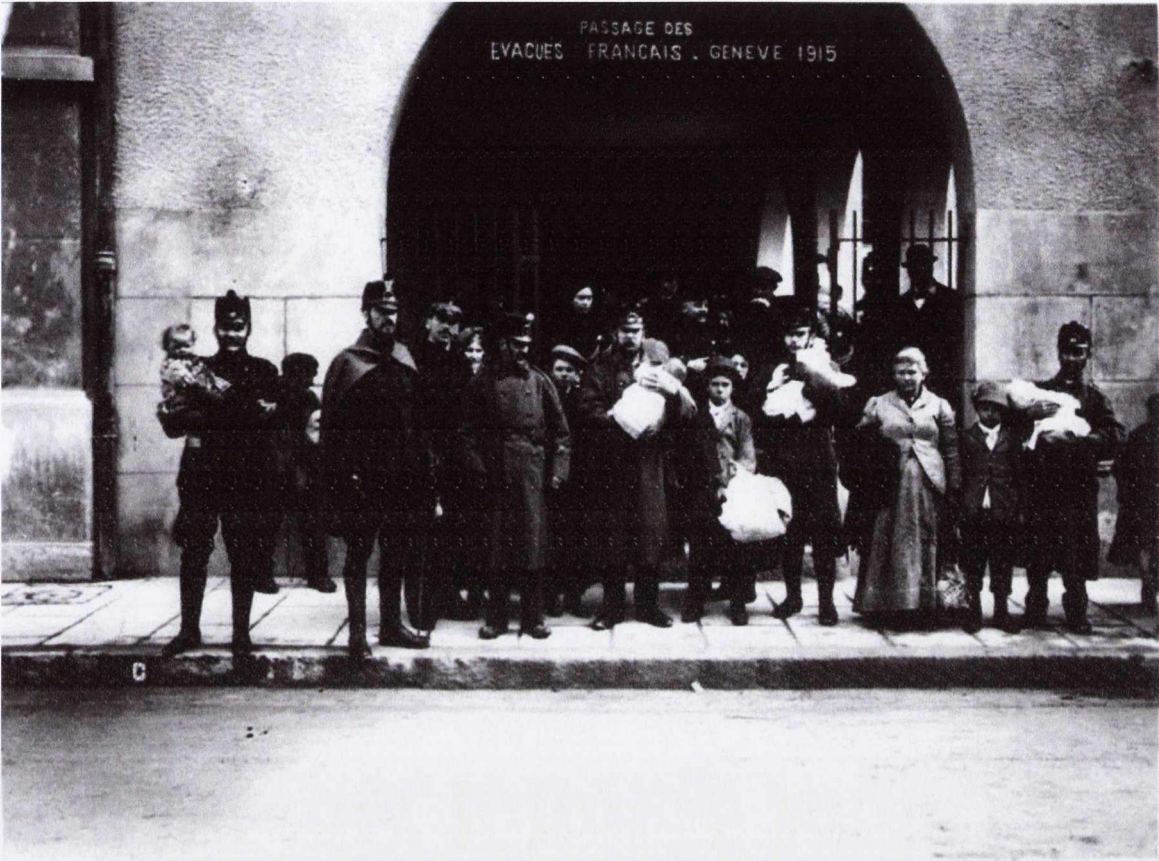
Appendix 2:



Improvisierte Grenzsperrre bei Lysbüchel, 31st Juli 1914

Staatsarchiv Basel Fotoarchiv Höflinger, Hö C 22658.

Appendix 3:



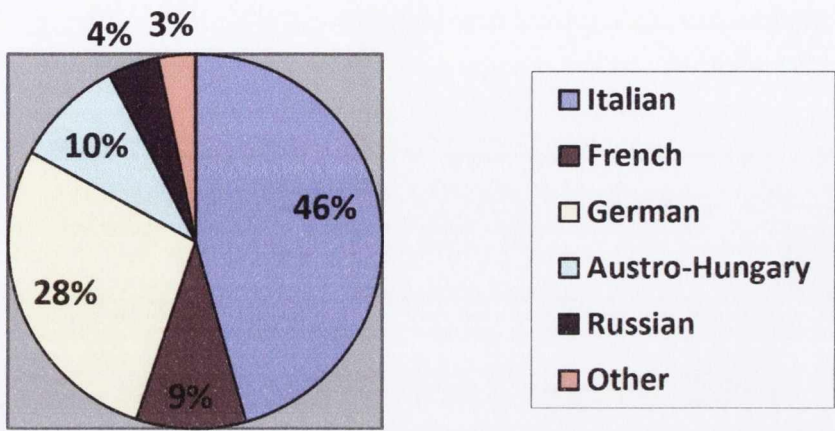
Archives of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent, Geneva, V-P-HIST-03529-15A
*French refugees passing through, from Germany to the French free zone. 1915 Geneva. ©
Photothèque CICR (DR)*

Appendix 4:



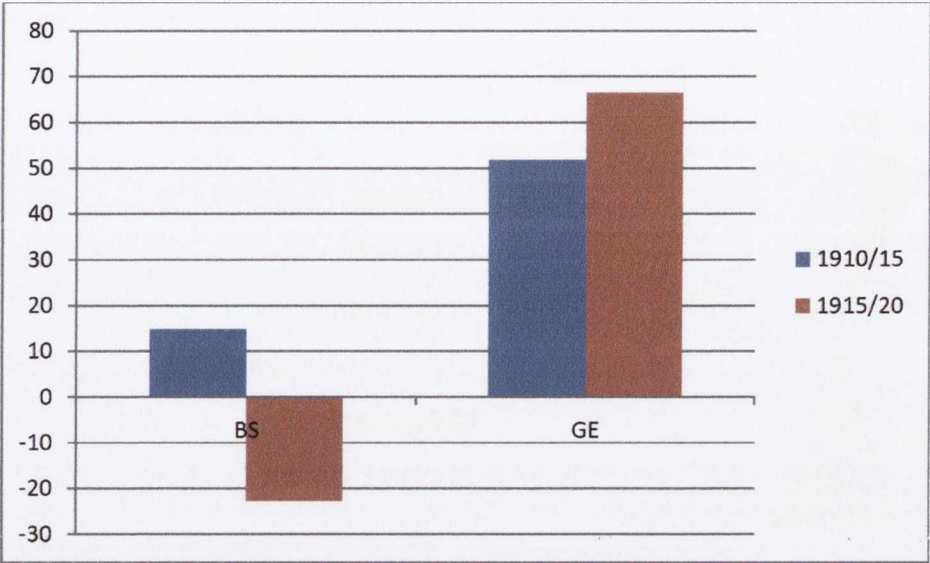
Michel Vauthey, *700 ans d'histoire suisse: la carte postale raconte*, Slatkine, Geneva, 1991.

Appendix 5



Percentage breakdown of Swiss asylum applications following the census of May 1919
Based on data collected by J. Ruchti, *Geschichte der Schweiz während des Weltkrieges 1914-1919*, Volume II, Bern 1928, p. 411.

Appendix 6:



The Swiss Economic and Social History Online Database, University of Zurich, E.1b.
Estimated Migration Balances by Canton 1910-1985 (Estimation by Ritzmann, Multiple Year
Averages) (1)

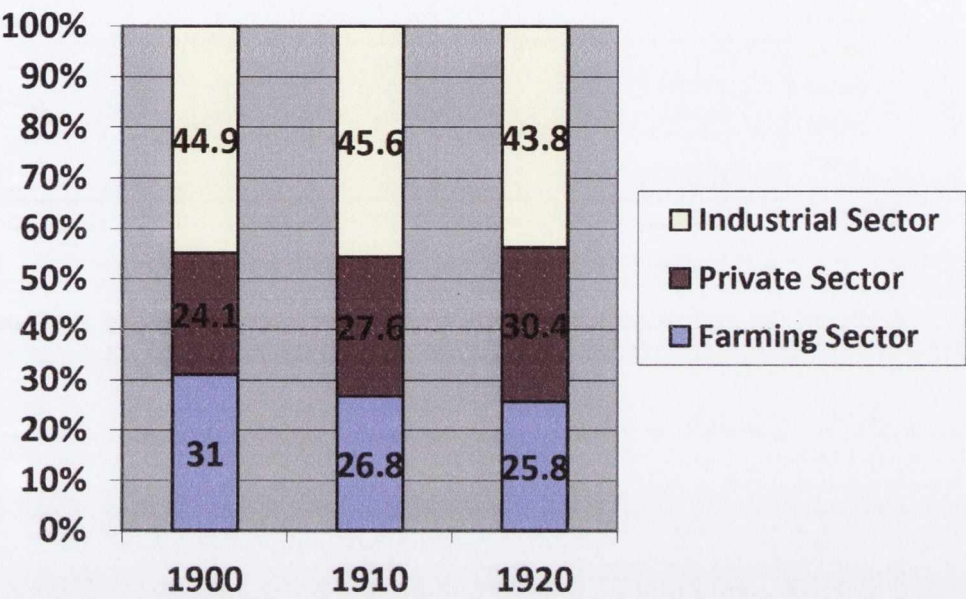
http://www.fsw.uzh.ch/hstat/nls/lis_files.php?chapter_var=../e//&timeline=no&lang=en

Estimate for every 1000 inhabitants

Chapter Six

Appendix 1:

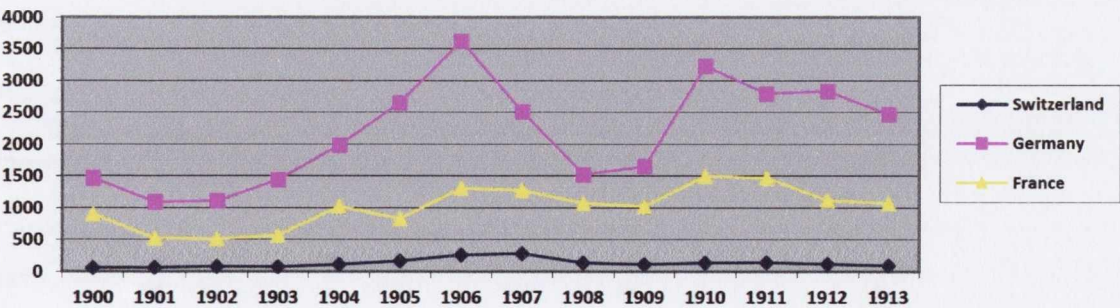
Industrial, Private and Farming Employment Sectors, Switzerland, 1900-1920



Bundesarchiv, Bern, *Statistische Jahrbuch der Schweiz; Handbuch der Schweizerischen Volkswirtschaft*, Bern 1911.

Appendix 2:

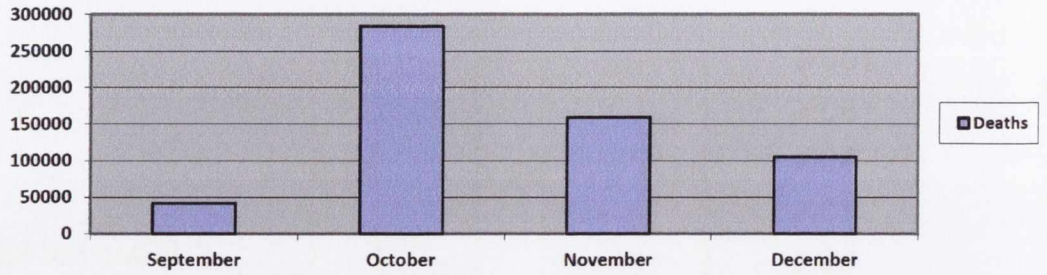
The Annual Number of Strikes in Switzerland, Germany and France 1900-1913



Data compiled from: Friedhelm Boll, *Arbeitskämpfe und Gewerkschaften in Deutschland, England und Frankreich: Ihre Entwicklung vom 19. zum 20. Jahrhundert*, (Dietz Nachf., Bonn, 1992), pp. 633-5; Christian Koller, "Streikkultur", (2008), pp.48-9, 198.

Appendix 3:

Number of Swiss Influenza Deaths Recorded from September – December 1918



J. Wyler, *Die schweizerische Bevölkerung unter dem Einfluß des Weltkrieges*, (Zürich, 1922), p. 73.

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13934 Regierungsrat, Basel-Stadt - Federal Council Correspondance, 1915

13971 Swiss Bundesanwaltschaft to the Swiss political department 1916; Deutsche Internierten Zeitung, (A. Franke, Bern 1916), 15. September 1916

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14022 Oberst Beyerlin 4th December 1917 Verfügung Kontr. Nr. 98/1310 9 July 1918.

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14040 Interned Civilians: Circulaire du Conseil federal à tous les gouvernements cantonaux concernant le traitement des déserteurs et réfractaires étrangers, 29 October 1915.

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A.733 Berlin – Bern Correspondance 1914

A.835 Procès-verbal du Conseil federal, 19 May 1916.

A.1000/45 British, German and Swiss correspondance

B.170.13 War and Neutrality 1898-1917

B.170.14 Citizenship, Co-ops and Organisations, Agreements on citizenship and immigration workers.

B.21 Swiss Neutrality, Switzerland and the First World War 1914-1918

B.272.15 Breaches of Neutrality

Vol 1: General, 1917-1918

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Vol 3: Protest and sympathetic organisations, 1917

Vol 4: Censored foreign telegrams, 1917

Vol 5: Newspaper cuttings, 1917

B.274 Refugees, Interned Soldiers and Deserters

D4 Emigration

D5 Swiss citizens engaged in foreign military service

D.51 Military service exemptions regarding Swiss citizens abroad.

D.112 Citizenship and Military Service

D.523 France: Swiss men engaged in the service of the French 1914-1918 Investigations, military service exemptions.

D.527.1 Germany: Individual files: exemptions from military service and pension issues

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M28	Die Affäre Hoffmann, 1917,

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JJ3 Weltkrieg 1914-18, Spionage 1913-1916-1917

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